

Business English- Tips and Useful Phrases for Starting Presentations

Cross off bad tips on presentation introductions from the list below. Leave any others as they are, including ones which depend on the situation or could be argued to be okay (there is no need to decide which are best or tick any).

- The best start for your presentations is probably “Can I have your attention, please?”
- Greet the audience with “Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming to my presentation” or “It’s an honour to be able to present for you today”.
- “How are you?” is a good way of making a personal connection to an audience (like saying the same thing in a one-to-one face-to-face meeting).
- Mentioning something specific to that moment is a good way of making a personal connection to the audience (time of day, something that happened just before, something happening after, etc).
- Showing that you have noticed the audience (number of people, specific people, things that they are holding, positions, etc) is a good way of making a personal connection to them.
- Mentioning how the audience probably feel (mood, temperature, thoughts, feelings, etc) is a good way of making a personal connection to them.
- Apologise in advance for your presentation.
- Always give your name and organisation which you belong to.
- Only include personal information which is relevant to your presentation topic.
- Think about what your audience already knows and will be interested in when deciding what personal information to include.
- A good “hook” is one which interests the audience in the topic they are going to hear such as a connection to a recent news story, a connection to their lives or an intriguing question which will be answered during the presentation.
- A good hook is one which wakes the audience up, e.g. making them laugh or shocking them, such as a witty or surprising quotation, a joke, amazing fact or interesting statistic.
- Surveying the audience can be a good hook, as long as people are interested in what other people’s answers are.

- If you use questions in your introduction, make sure it is obvious that they are survey questions (response obviously needed, usually hands up) or that they are rhetorical questions (grammatically a question, but no answer is needed, and an answer would perhaps be a bit strange, like the question “Why don’t you be careful?” in normal life).
- State your aim (= what you want to achieve by presenting that information to that audience).
- Stating your aim means the same as saying what information will be in your presentation.
- Explain how the body of your presentation is organised (e.g. into three sections, with the topic of each).
- Explain your policy on the audience asking questions (at any time and/ or at the end).
- Move from the introduction to the body by silently bringing up the first slide and then start to talk about it.
- It’s okay to write out the introduction and summary/ conclusion as a full script (as long as the body is only written in note form) and you highlight important words in the script part.

Hint: There are seven which are probably not good ideas.

Starting presentations tips and useful phrases

Suggested answers

*Ones which aren't recommended are in **bold** below. Note that some depend on the situation of your presentation.*

- **The best start for your presentations is probably “Can I have your attention, please?”**
- **Greet the audience with “Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming to my presentation” or “It’s an honour to be able to present for you today”.**
- **“How are you?” is a good way of making a personal connection to an audience (like saying the same thing in a one-to-one face-to-face meeting).**
- Mentioning something specific to that moment is a good way of making a personal connection to the audience (time of day, something that happened just before, something happening after, etc).
- Showing that you have noticed the audience (number of people, specific people, things that they are holding, positions, etc) is a good way of making a personal connection to them.
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- A good “hook” is one which interests the audience in the topic they are going to hear such as a connection to a recent news story, a connection to their lives or an intriguing question which will be answered during the presentation.
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- If you use questions in your introduction, make sure it is obvious that they are survey questions (response obviously needed, usually hands up) or that they are rhetorical questions (grammatically a question, but no answer is needed, and an answer would perhaps be a bit strange, like the question “Why don’t you be careful?” in normal life).
- State your aim (= what you want to achieve by presenting that information to that audience).
- **Stating your aim means the same as saying what information will be in your presentation.**
- Explain how the body of your presentation is organised (e.g. into three sections, with the topic of each).
- Explain your policy on the audience asking questions (at any time and/ or at the end).
- **Move from the introduction to the body by silently bringing up the first slide and then start to talk about it.**
- It’s okay to write out the introduction and summary/ conclusion as a full script (as long as the body is only written in note form) and you highlight important words in the script part.

What things can you put into a presentation introduction? (= What functions should the different sentences in a presentation introduction have, greeting etc?) Look above to see what things are mentioned there, then compare the parts of an introduction below with what you just talked about. .

Getting people’s attention/ Starting the introduction/ The first few words before you really get started

Greeting

Showing awareness of the audience/ Making a personal connection with the audience

Giving your name

Giving personal information

Giving the title/ topic

Hooking the audience

Explaining your aim

Explaining the structure (= organisation) of the presentation

Explaining your policy on asking questions

Ending the introduction and moving onto the body of the presentation

Brainstorm at least three suitable phrases for doing each of these things, looking back at the tips on the previous page to help you if you like.

Give similar advice and brainstorm similar phrases for ending presentations.

Homework

Starting from a mind map brainstorming, write out the body of your presentation as notes (= just the information, with no full grammatical sentences or paragraphs). Then write an introduction for that presentation as a script (= everything that you will say as full sentences and paragraphs). Do not write the body as a script. Write your body (as note form) and introduction (in script form) on the same page, i.e. don't write in the spaces above. You can also add a conclusion as a script if you had time to discuss that in the last stage above.