Greetings and introductions

What you say and do when meeting the people and getting started with your presentation all counts towards the first impression.

This chapter will help you to find the right phrases and feel confident about making a good start:

- what to say when you enter (page 42),
- introducing your presentation well (page 45),
- introduction components (page 48),
- dealing with handouts (page 53),
- taking care of technical problems (page 53).
What to say when you enter

We all know that greetings are not the same the world over. If you choose to match style, points to watch for are:

- whether handshakes are made or not (less common after the first meeting)
- strength of handshake: you should mirror, strong with strong and gentle with gentle
- amount of eye contact or looking away: again, mirror – don’t force someone to look in your eyes if they don’t want to
- distance between persons: could be much further or closer than you are used to
- use of first or last names: this often causes uncertainty. Listen carefully and then match the style. Americans, Australians and British tend to use first names very soon, if not immediately – “You can call me Robert.” Other cultures use “Mr” and “Ms” to start with and may or may not switch to first names later. Chinese often have an additional western first name, which you should then use. Japanese often add “san” at the end of the name
- conversation making: be prepared to do it!

Example

When doing business with the Far East, watch out for card exchanging when greeting. Koreans, for example, will stand apart, approach each other, bow, exchange business cards using both hands, step back and then read each other’s business card aloud, with appropriate remarks “I see you are the Business
What to say when you enter Director ...”. This shows respect for the persons and their positions. As a foreigner, you are not expected to know how exactly to bow (different depths show different levels of respect), but you should not write on the business card and definitely not put it into the back pocket of your trousers. Watch to see what the other does.

Meeting people for the first time

Example

"Hello, good morning. My name's Heinrich Melke. Nice to meet you." – "Hello. It's nice to meet you, too. I'm Alexander Thomson. Call me Alex, it's easier." – "Okay then Alex, I'm Heinrich, or Henry, whatever you prefer." – "Henry's easier for me!" – "I'm not surprised, Heinrich is a bit of a mouthful if you don't speak German." – "Yes, I'm always impressed by how well Germans speak English." – "Oh, it's not easy, you know. We are perfectionists – it's never good enough!"

"Hello, good afternoon. I'm Wolfgang Steinecke from ABC GmbH." – "Ah, yes, good afternoon. I'm Roger Silvestre and this is Sylvie Dalmar." – "Nice to meet you." – "Nice to meet you too." – "Did you find the way here okay?" – "Yes, it was no problem at all. It's a very nice place. Is it new?" – "Well..."

Useful phrases

- Hello, I'm Andrew, Andrew Smith. It's good / nice to meet you.
- Hi, I'm David Jones. (I'm) pleased to meet you, too.
- Hello, I'm James Morrison. It's good / nice to meet you, too.
- Hi, I'm Mary Thompson. Pleased to meet you, too.
“It’s good / nice to meet you.” and “(I’m) pleased to meet you” are interchangeable. “How do you do?” is rather more formal British English. It means “Pleased to meet you” and does not mean “How are you?” The answer is simply “How do you do” or “Nice / good / pleased to meet you.”

Most people all over the world use “Good to meet you” for the first meeting, then say “Good to see you again” for further meetings. Americans, however, often use “Good to see you” for the first meeting, too.

**Making conversation**

Making conversation is often a very important part of the business. Try not to fire questions “bullet style” but say a little yourself first before asking.

Phrases like “It’s a nice day, isn’t it?” are usually not really invitations to talk about the weather, but an opening to see if the other person wants to talk. A suitable answer if you want to talk is “Yes, it’s lovely. Much nicer than when I left home in Kiel, northern Germany yesterday. Where do you come from?”

If someone asks “How are you?”, you should not only give an answer, but also ask back. You shouldn’t directly translate into German and answer with a list of your latest illnesses, but think of it as meaning “Good morning”.

Avoid talking about politics, sex or religion.
Useful phrases

- So, here we are. This is my first trip to ... I have heard so much about it. Do you live nearby?
- I come from ..., myself. Have you ever been to Germany? (British English) / Did you ever go there? (US English)
- There are a lot of trees just starting to flower at the moment. Is it the beginning of the cherry blossom season?
- I’m really looking forward to trying the food / wine / beer here. I have heard so many good things about it.

Examples

Good subjects for Americans can be sport – baseball, basketball or American football – ask about the local teams e.g. “What are the main sports around here?” Chinese people often love to talk about food e.g. “We have a lot of Chinese food in Germany, but I’m really looking forward to a real Chinese restaurant here in Beijing.”

Introducing your presentation well

This is the start – get it right! A good guideline to make sure your presentation will be acceptable for the whole world is to make very sure you clearly (and quite slowly) state who you are and the point of your presentation, with some reference to “here and now” to make it “real” and interesting, together with a few details of the plan. The title and plan should be visualised in simple English – either on a slide or a flipchart (advantage – it remains in view).
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Examples

Presentation 1
Good morning ladies and gentlemen, I’m Benno Donauer from the electronic engineering department at Opus GmbH and it’s good to be here in Rio on this very sunny Friday morning. By the end of this presentation you should be able to see why A, B and C are so very important to you and your company, Omega. First we’ll look at A, then move on to B and finish with C. We have forty minutes altogether. If you have any questions at any time, do please just ask.

Presentation 2
Good morning everybody!
For those who don’t already know me, my name’s Bernd Huber. I’m from the Electronics Assembly Systems Department at Drive Technologies AG in Berlin. Here we all are in Madrid, today, October 5th, 2008, and by the end of this presentation (show title slide, read name of presentation) “Serrano Limitido and Drive Technologies” I hope you will know how technologically advanced, reliable and flexible our machines are for you, and be able to see why we at Drive Technologies are the very best partner for you.
We’ll look at the X-machine technical functionality to start, then move on to possible adaptations for you, Serrano Limitido, and finish with our service offer – how we can work well together.
We have three hours scheduled, with a break halfway through for coffee. If you have any questions at any time, please do ask me. Good. Let’s get started.
Checklist: introducing your presentation

- Be sure to formulate your objective(s) carefully from your audience’s point of view – who they are and what they need (see “Put yourself in your audience’s shoes”, page 25).

- If you know that problems are likely to arise, you can either talk to people about them beforehand or name them at the beginning of your presentation.
  - “So, we are here today to obtain a common understanding of A, B and C. I know that D and E happened this morning and that a lot of people here would probably also like to go over F and G, but the plan right now for the next twenty minutes is A, B and C.”
  - “I realize that the situation regarding ... could change next week or next month – who knows, it may not change at all – and I realize that this would mean that we would immediately change the product, no question. Today, however, I want to use our time to deal with the present situation, the conditions that we have now, at the moment and not spend time speculating. If things change, then we will need to change, too.”

- A rhetoric question, real-life story or example can be a good opening if you want to do a little more.

- Be as authentic as possible. If you are not “happy to be here today”, then use another phrase – don’t say it.
Avoid humour if you have a multi-national audience. Test your funny stories with cultural insiders beforehand if you have a single nationality audience. Humour can be very “unfunny” or even offensive if it falls flat. People may feel unsure or even stupid if they don’t understand. If you’re not sure, don’t do it.

Also avoid apologies (“I didn’t really have enough time to prepare the slides”) or making yourself appear less significant than you really are (“I’m not really the boss, I just let people do their thing”) – these are both typical for the UK but could be seen as “losing face” in a lot of Asian countries.

**Introduction components**

An introduction needs four components: an opening, objective, overview and some information about organisation.

**Openings**

- Good morning, I’m ... *(name)*, from ... *(department and/or company)*.
- Good afternoon everybody. For those who don’t already know me, my name’s ..., from ...
- Hello everyone. I know most people here already, for those I don’t, my name is ... and I’m from ...
- I’m pleased to be here in ... *(place)* with you today, ... *(date)*.