



Useful tips for international online conferences and presentations

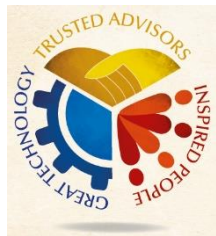
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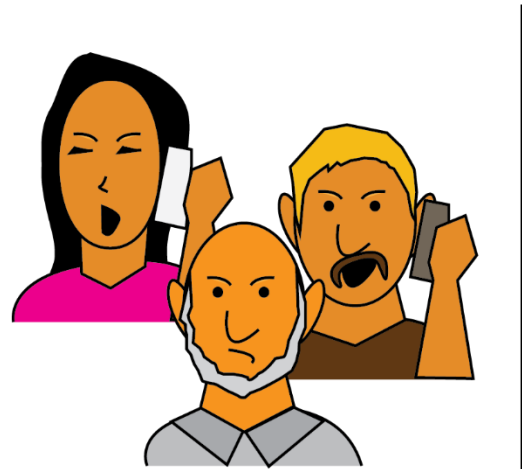
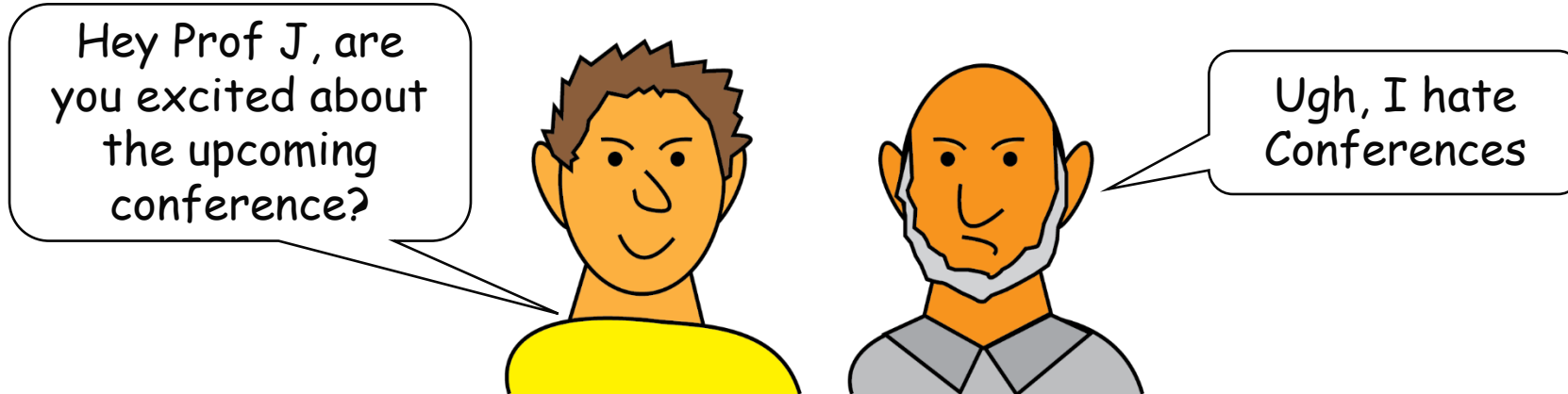
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Mind the
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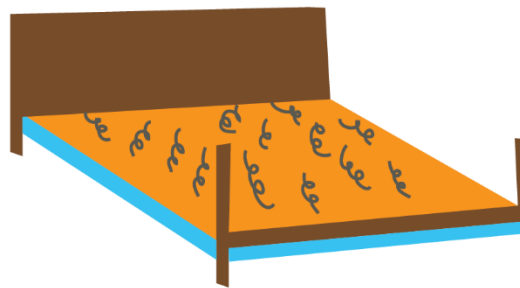
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Conferences

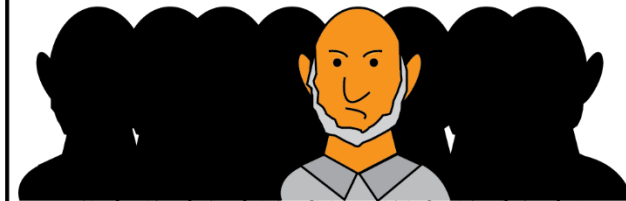
Why attend conferences?



"The travel, the noise ..."



"... The hotels ..."



"... The crowds ..."

Why go to a conference?

- To share your work and get feedback
- To place your work in the context of your field
- Hear the latest updates in the field (often, very new findings are presented in conferences before they come out as a published paper)
- Meet your collaborators or find new ones
- Learn about a new field: if you want to branch out, identify multidisciplinary aspects of your work
- Networking
- Find a job

Learn about the latest trends



Choose the type of conference most pertinent to you

- Traditional/core conferences
- New formats
- Writeshops (social sciences)
- Methods/development-based meetings: industry, instrumentation

Choose the format wisely. Posters in online format: limited visibility? Opt for oral presentation

Finding conferences relevant to you



- Peers, faculty, mentors
- Consult academic societies' websites for conference, meeting, or event information
- Follow relevant societies on social media sites to receive announcements and updates
- Conference listings
- Check out conference listings

Create a winning abstract

Goal of the abstract

- Get your work accepted to the conference
- Encourage people to see your poster/attend your talk

How should the abstract be?

- Concise, clear (check the word limit)
- Correctly formatted
- Interesting (catchy title, less jargon)



Preparing for the conference



- READ READ READ: be sure you are well informed about the history, breakthroughs, latest developments of the field.
- Will boost your confidence, help answer questions, participate in discussions
- Prepare and practice different versions of “elevator pitches”: 1-min, 5-min: who are you, what is the importance of your work
- Revisit and modify/tailor according to the audience

Preparing your content

- Keep the format in mind

Poster

Split in columns (not rows): 3 columns, left to right.

Print the poster in advance, proofread, check for technical details, errors.



Oral presentation

Slides: not too much text (1 min per slide).

Practice your talk, time yourself.



Make the most of the conference's offerings

- Review the conference booklet/app and plan which you will attend
- Attend as many sessions as you can: great for understanding current trends, overarching themes. Mingle and get talking!
- Don't be rude: don't use your phone. To avoid getting distracted, take notes with pen and paper
- Notes/questions will serve as talking points later over coffee breaks etc.



Make the most of the conference's offerings

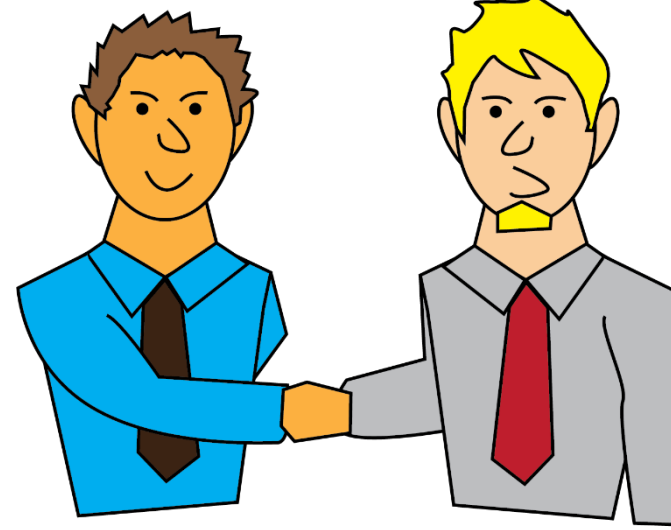
- Be friendly. Make eye contact
- If you are tongue-tied, remember your elevator pitch and start talking about your work, which might be your comfort zone
- Ask for business card, offer yours (makes quite notes to remember what you spoke about. You will be meeting many people!)
- The more open you are, the better your interactions will be
- Follow up and connect on LinkedIn: don't delay. DO it within a few days when your face/work will be fresh in their minds



Oral Presentations

What is an oral presentation?

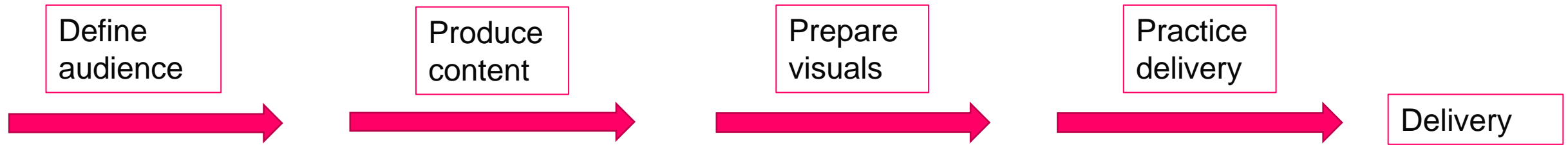
LEARN
SHARE



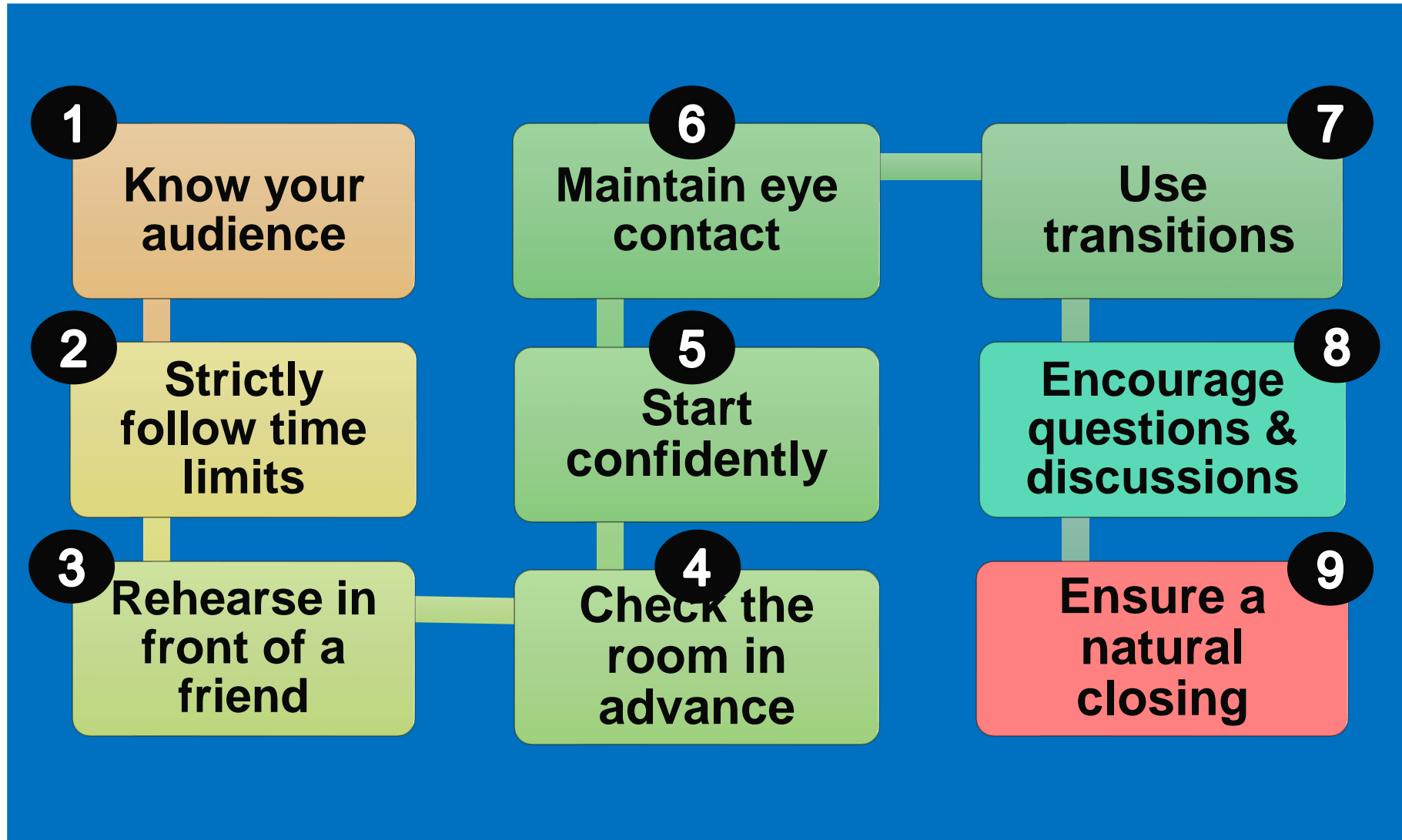
**Network and meet
experts in the field**

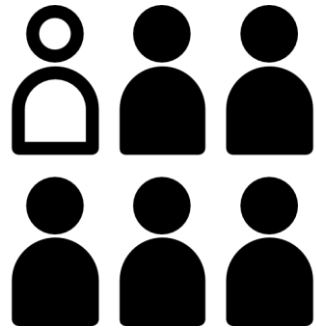
Present your work

Presentation preparation: a timeline

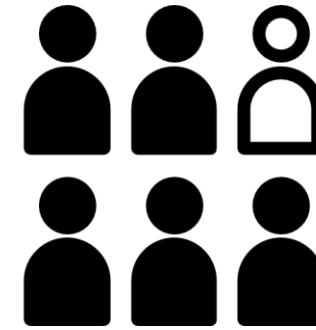


9 tips for an oral presentation





1 Know your audience



Remember

- **Understand** the composition of your audience
- Your research is meant to be **HEARD**, not **READ**.
- Audiences typically have limited attention spans.

Use clear & simple language

Be simple & straightforward

Explain technical terms used

Structure your talk well-background, findings, & conclusions

So what should you do



Use quotations and examples sparingly

Provide a quick recap of points whenever needed

2

Strictly follow time limits



Remember

- It is unlikely that you will be the only speaker scheduled for the day.

? ? ? ? ?
So what
should you
do ? ?

Ensure prepare your slides based on the time allocated to you

3

Rehearse in front of a friend

Remember

Mentally going through your talk will take lesser time than when presenting in front of an audience.

Rehearse your talk

Practice your talk with your slide show

So what should you do

Record a video

4 Check the room in advance

If possible, visit the room you are to make your presentation in, before the actual session.



- **Test the technology you intend to use in the assigned room**
- **Be prepared to improvise in case something goes wrong**

5

Start confidently

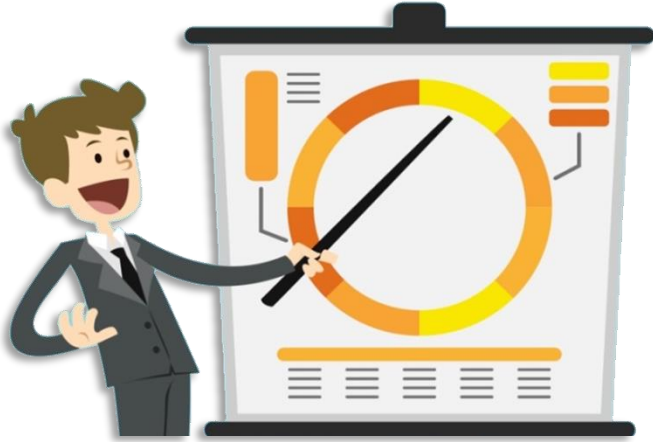


Remember

- Like most first impressions, how you begin your presentation matters a great deal.
- The first 10-20 seconds of your session will mark whether or not you are able to gain the audience's confidence and attention.

6

Maintain eye contact



Audience engagement tips:

As you begin your presentation, **smile, take a deep breath and be calm.** This will help you relax and dissolve any awkwardness between you and the audience.

Be aware of your posture. Always stand straight and hold your head up. This will not only help you make eye contact with the audience but also make you more audible.

Talk “to” your audience. Avoid continuously reading to the desk or constantly looking into your reference material and slides . Be clear, loud, and energetic when you address the audience.

6. Maintain eye contact with the audience (2/2)

Audience engagement tips:

Use timely pauses to your advantage. Use these to give your audience time to process and react to what you are saying, or to give yourself a break to catch your breath.

Sweep your gaze around the room from time to time. This will help to keep your audience's attention and convey to them that you are confident about what you are saying.

Maintain a steady speech pace.

Try not to be too fast. Be mindful of the possibility that some people in the audience may not have English as their native language.



Use transitions

**What are
transitions
?**

While speaking, transitions are **filler words that are used as you move from one idea to another.**

These will ensure that your presentation flows smoothly.

**Some
useful
transitions**

- **Furthermore**
- **In addition**
- **Consequently**
- **Meanwhile**
- **Finally**

7 . Use transitions (2/2)

- ✓ **In case you are using the same idea twice**, begin your statement with “A similar idea is...” or “Another example is...,” etc.



- ✓ **When giving a point-by-point explanation**, you should first mention the total number of points.

For example: “There are reasons for this. The first reason is....; the second reason is; etc.”

- ✓ **When introducing a new section or idea**, you could simply pause. Alternately, you could make a direct statement:
“Let’s move to the next part of the presentation”
“To move on to another idea...”

8

Encourage questions & discussions



**If questions
are asked**

If you don't understand a question

Ask the person to rephrase it. In cases where audience members are excited, unprepared or are rambling, help them reframe a question.

If you don't know the answer

Don't panic! Thank the person for raising the question, and say that you have not explored this angle but will definitely think about it.

**If no questions
are asked**

Give the audience cues. You could point out a weakness of the paper. But don't worry if questions aren't raised even after you've asked a few times.

Ensure a natural closing

What you should do towards the end of the session

When you feel that you have answered enough questions or when you think that you are out of time:

- Ask the audience if there are any more questions (if there are questions, answer them)
- Offer your contact information
- Convey to the audience that you are open to receiving questions from them over email

If there are no more questions, thank your audience for attending the session and walk off the stage or leave the podium.

After your conference presentation

- When your presentation session ends, do not leave the room immediately.
- Take the time to interact further with people who could still have questions.
- Some people might have questions that occurred to them after you concluded the presentation or might want to talk to you one-on-one.
- Ensure that you have handouts and business cards ready for potentially interested individuals.



Common presentation mistakes you should avoid...

DON'T
!

- ❌ Use font that won't be legible to people at the back of the room
- ❌ Use visual aids that you aren't comfortable or haven't rehearsed with
- ❌ Be unstructured (ensure that your points flow sensibly)
- ❌ Go over the time allotted to you
- ❌ Look continuously at the microphone or at your reference notes
- ❌ Skip practice sessions
- ❌ End abruptly
- ❌ Panic if you don't know the answer to a question from the audience

Networking in your career

Networking: an art or skill?

- A **skill** is what you are born with or have acquired over time; the ability to do something efficiently.
- **Art** is what you do creatively using your skills
- How you use your skills to **transform** your creative thoughts into reality is art!



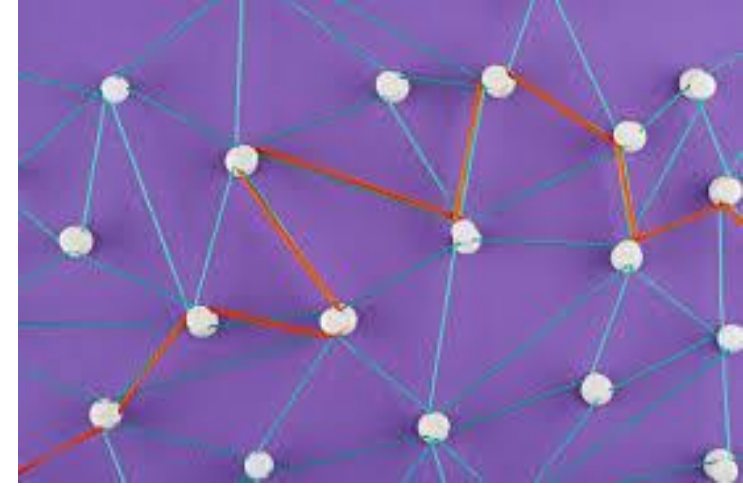
Networking: an art or skill?

- Networking is a **skill** that needs practice
- **Practice** connecting with other people, particularly with non-scientists.
- Networking is also an art: use the skills you develop creatively to **stand out!**



Why should researchers network?

- Build your career
- Connect with researchers to collaborate with and publish with
- Build your presence (online and offline)
- Learn of the latest trends
- Tangential networking for different experiences, viewpoints, and forging unusual collaborations



*Even if you want to **transition out of academia** and into industry, you need industry connections*

Networking: positive or negative? Change the narrative!



Does networking feel inauthentic and fake?

Do you feel you have no access to an influential network, so there's no point in trying?

Do you feel uncomfortable that it feels like you are only “taking”?

- **Change this mindset.** Consider your role as a giver in the interaction. When you ask someone for career advice or support, you are actually *giving* them an opportunity to help you.
- Remind yourself that you possess a **unique** voice and perspective that might be insightful to another.

Networking: A peek into the 19th century

Did you know?

Letter-writing was a space in which women (excluded from universities, professional societies) could participate in science. Darwin corresponded with women botanists, drawing on their expertise and encouraging their work.



The collaboration we wish had happened!

Mendel and Darwin were contemporaries (two most influential nineteenth-century founders of modern biology). Mendel knew much about Darwin, whereas Darwin knew nothing of Mendel.

*<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41437-019-0289-9>



Art of networking: A brief history

An example closer home: Srinivasa Ramanujan



Letter from S. Ramanujan to G.H. Hardy (16 January 1913)

Dear Sir,

I beg to introduce myself to you as a clerk in the Accounts Department of the Port Trust Office at Madras on a salary of only £20 per annum. I am now about 23 years of age. I have had no University education but I have undergone the ordinary school course. After leaving school I have been employing the spare time at my disposal to work at Mathematics. I have not trodden through the conventional regular course which is followed in a University course, but I am striking out a new path for myself. I have made a special investigation of divergent series in general and the results I get are termed by the local mathematicians as "startling".

Just as in elementary mathematics you give a meaning to a^n when n is negative and fractional to conform to the law which holds when n is a positive integer, similarly the whole of my investigations proceed on giving a meaning to Eulerian Second Integral for all values of n . My friends who have gone through the regular course of University education tell me that [eq. 1] is true only when n is positive. They say that this integral relation is not true when n is negative. Supposing this is true only for positive values of n and also supposing the definition [eq. 2] to be universally true, I have given meanings to these integrals and under the conditions I state the integral is true for all values of n negative and fractional. My whole investigations are based upon this and I have been developing this to a remarkable extent so much so that the local mathematicians are not able to understand me in my higher flights.

Very recently I came across a tract published by you styled Orders of Infinity in page 36 of which I find a statement that no definite expression has been as yet found for the number of prime numbers less than any given number. I have found an expression which very nearly approximates to the real result, the error being negligible. I would request you to go through the enclosed papers. Being poor, if you are convinced that there is anything of value I would like to have my theorems published. I have not given the actual investigations nor the expressions that I get but I have indicated the lines on which I proceed. Being inexperienced I would very highly value any advice you give me. Requesting to be excused for the trouble I give you.

I remain, Dear Sir, Yours truly,
S. Ramanujan

P.S. My address is S.Ramanujan, Clerk Accounts Department, Port Trust, Madras, India

A letter dated January 16, 1913, from Ramanujan to Hardy: a letter that changed both their lives.

Source: <https://www.wired.com/2016/04/who-was-ramanujan/>

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/remembering-ramanujan-india/>

Art of networking: A brief history

Did you know?

- Hardy was not the first mathematician to whom Ramanujan had sent his results.
- The first two to whom he had written did not give weight to the letter.
- Hardy was not only an outstanding mathematician but also a wonderful teacher, eager to nurture talent.

And cut to 2023! Networking following a pandemic

- Networking is no longer organic
- Serendipitous meetings are ruled out
- More important now than ever to build networks!
- A boon for those who shy away from in-person interactions – Introvert-friendly(?)
- Zoom fatigue?



How to network following the pandemic?

- Check and enhance your digital footprint
- Leverage your existing in-person network
- Maximize networking platforms, attend online events, follow up



Where to look for people to network with?



What are the major ways to network?

Offline

- Conferences, workshops, writeshops
- Use existing networks to expand (through peers, supervisors)

Online

- Online conferences, workshops, writeshops
- Cold emailing
- Journal editors: express interest in peer review
- Build online profiles and connect (LinkedIn, ResearchGate)



Establish and cultivate connections

- Figure out where to start.
- Find out where researchers “hang out” or interact. Be careful about invading private space.
- Online peer communities: Twitter conversations, Facebook groups, self-hosted forums.
- Invite a host speaker to your institution (or online event!)
- Check that your social media profiles are in order.
- Cold emailing



Build an online presence



- **Polish your profile:** Study other professional profiles. Keep your profile up to date.
- **Keyword optimization:** Use your scientific skills as keywords throughout your profile
- **Get noticed:** Join group discussions. Be sure to like and comment (interaction is easier online!)
- **Keep the network growing:** Aim to add quality connections to your network regularly
- **Project yourself as an authority:** Write a blog, showcase your work through different media

Profile picture: dos and don'ts

- Wear formal attire
- Smile! It makes you appear more approachable
- Ensure good lighting, with a clear view of your face
- A confident countenance
- Good-quality, high-resolution photograph
- Keep it current!
- No to casual photos (demonstrates a casual approach to your career)
- No selfies
- Avoid cropping from group pictures



Networking at Virtual Conferences

Virtual conferences: be mindful of etiquette



- Familiarize yourself with the platform
- Familiarize yourself with the schedule, stick to timelines
- Check audio, video: tools should all be in check
- Minimize distractions
- Speak to the camera, move less
- Know when to speak (avoid interrupting, leaving mic on when someone is presenting)
- Be careful about sensitive information (open tabs, pics on desktop)

Plan to Network in 2023/2024 at Virtual or Hybrid Conferences

- Many scientific meetings have been held virtually or were a hybrid (mix of in-person and virtual)
- Get to know the conference platform BEFORE the meeting
- Figure out how to ask questions during talks (type them to moderator, or ask them live during the Q & A session)

Example – International Congress of Zoology (Nov. 2021)



[Welcome](#) [Theme](#) [Programme](#) [Conference](#) [Virtual Congress Guide](#) [Registration](#) [Sponsors & Prospectus](#) [Contacts](#) [ICZN – Election](#)

Virtual Congress Guide

The following videos are an introduction to the OnAir Virtual Platform. These videos show the different content and different functionality and features that are included in the Virtual Conference Platform. These videos will help you by providing you with some visuals of what to expect in order to enjoy this great virtual conference experience.

Log in

2: Logging into the 3D virtual platform

After exploring the welcome area, click on the entrance of the building to sign in.



Online navigation “Simulated” a real conference experiments with live plenaries, live “Q & A” after recorded symposia talks, and “coffee/tea breaks” where you can join virtually and interact.

Know how to “meet” other delegates

3: Your 3D Profile

Name badge

Your virtual name badge is your chance to shine. To maximise your networking opportunities, follow the steps below:

1. Allow access to your audio and video settings. The first time you log in, the portal will perform a microphone and camera check to confirm your video and audio settings.
2. Kindly update your profile and upload an image. Please scroll right down to the bottom and enable “Full virtual badge display” so that your full name is listed.
3. Complete the “About me” section. Please give as much information as you are willing to share about yourself and your practice. This information will be visible to other convention attendees.

Meeting hub

All delegates can interact with each other virtually on the Meeting Hub. It can be accessed before, during, or after sessions. This is where you can search for other attendees, request meetings in advance, and engage in virtual conversations in real time.

NB: You will need check the meeting hub to accept and manage any connections. Invitations need to be accepted before you can engage.

Thank you!

Dr. Oliver Grünvogel

Life Scientist and Consultant

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Appendix

Emailing a potential collaborator

1. A clear subject line

“Subject: Prospective Research Intern [Summer 2022] Inquiry”

2. Keep it short

3–4 paragraphs (each para with 4–5 lines)

3. Content

A brief Introduction with your recent academic background.

Your research interests and experience

Why do you want to work with the faculty, your future aspirations

Relevant experience, publication, or reference of the people you have worked with, e.g., “I have past research experience with more than X publications in intl. peer-reviewed journals.”



Emailing a potential collaborator (contd.)



4. Customize emails

Never send generalized emails! You could end up making some embarrassing mistakes!

5. Timing and scheduling

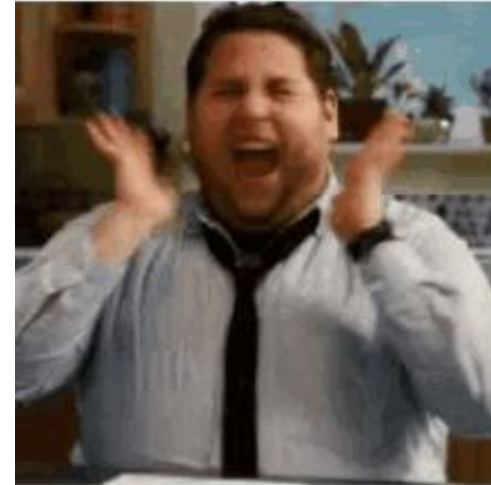
Consider the time zone of the recipient. Aim for sending in the morning. Send emails around 4–5 months before your intended start date. If you are applying for a summer internship, you can send an email around Nov/Dec. This ensures that you get ample time for interviews and other formalities. Always keep some buffer time!

Tips for an impressive email to a potential collaborator

1. Avoid flattery

“I’m so impressed with you!” “You’re amazing!” X

“I like your work because ...”



2. Be polite and formal

3. Strike that balance: gauge interest levels, etc., from their responses and tone

4. Be patient and follow up in small doses: Don’t bombard someone with repeated emails