



caeledro

Making the most
of **Academic
Conferences**

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Learning outcomes

By the end of the workshop, you will be able to:

- Articulate clear goals for your conference attendance and demonstrate the ability to select relevant conferences that align with their research interests and career aspirations.
- Use networking skills, including initiating conversations, to deliver concise research introductions, and engage in meaningful discussions with fellow researchers.
- Create well-structured and visually compelling presentations, incorporating engaging storytelling techniques, and deliver them with clarity.
- Design concise and visually appealing research posters that effectively convey research, engage viewers, and respond to questions during poster sessions.
- Present yourself professionally, including appropriate behaviour and respectful use of technology.
- Apply strategies to reflect on their conference experiences, organize acquired materials, follow up with new contacts, and leverage their conference participation for enhanced career development and collaborative opportunities.

PART 1: Before you go

What's the point?

Attending academic conferences is a central to your professional research journey, offering a diverse range of benefits. Any gathering where researchers meet provides a platform for you to talk about your work and hear others talking about theirs, share findings with the academic community and get valuable feedback that can help you and others refine your research. Beyond this scholarly exchange, conferences are networking opportunities, giving you and other researchers the opportunity to connect with peers, more senior academics, and professionals from connected fields. These connections can lead to collaborative projects, partnerships, and further research opportunities.

Conferences also serve as a dynamic space for your continuous learning and professional development. Through workshops, seminars, and panel discussions, you and other researchers can stay abreast of the latest advancements in your fields, refine your research skills by hearing about the experiences of others, and gain insights into emerging trends. The exposure to diverse perspectives at conferences deepens and broadens researchers' understanding of their subject matter and, when there is an international audience, promotes a global outlook. Conferences also often offer avenues for publication, contributing to the broader dissemination of research findings.

Attending academic conferences and any event where researchers share their research methods and findings is more than just the presentation of research. These events are about networking, learning, professional growth, and the exchange of ideas within the academic community.

Build your confidence

Use a range of local opportunities to grow the skills that will help you make the most of academic conferences, such as introducing yourself and your research, handling questions, and networking.

If none exist, how about pulling together a group of researchers with a shared interest, applying for funding from an appropriate source, and hosting something yourselves?

Informal Colleague Discussions:

- Hosting a small discussion or seminar with colleagues in your department.
- Participating in regular research group meetings.

Departmental Seminar Series: Presenting your research as part of your department's seminar series.

Internal Research Symposium: Participating in or organising an internal symposium within your institution.

Poster Sessions:

- Presenting a poster at a departmental or institutional event.
- Participating in poster sessions at conferences.

Brown Bag Lunch Sessions: Organising or participating in brown bag lunch sessions within your department.

Work-in-Progress Seminars: Sharing your ongoing research in work-in-progress seminars.

Online Webinars: Hosting or participating in online webinars to present your research.

Interdisciplinary Workshops: Participating in workshops that bring together researchers from different disciplines.

Research Colloquia: Presenting at research colloquia organized by your institution.

Consortium Meetings: Participating in consortium meetings or collaborative research groups.

Upgrade or Progression presentations: Presenting your research to a progression panel.

Local Academic Conferences: Presenting at conferences hosted by local academic organizations.

National Conferences: Larger conferences in your field, that bring together in-country researchers.

Annual International Conferences: Larger conferences in your field that attract the widest range of researchers from different countries.

Professional Association Meetings: Participating in meetings organized by professional associations relevant to your field.

Public Engagement Events: Presenting your research at events aimed at engaging the general public.

Research Symposia: Participating in or organising research symposia at the national or international level.

Invited Talks: Accepting invitations to speak at other institutions or conferences.

Journal Club Presentations: Leading discussions or presentations in a journal club related to your research.

Collaborative Research Presentations: Presenting collaborative research findings with other researchers.

Online Platforms and Blogs: Contributing to online platforms, blogs, or podcasts to share your research insights.

Participate with purpose right from the start

There are lots of different reasons to attend a conference, or a smaller local event that brings researchers together. Be clear about what your reason is, which may not be the same as others'. Set yourself some goals to achieve during the event to maintain your focus.

Examples of different types of goal could be:

- To practice initiating conversations with people I don't already know.
- To talk about my research informally with a "safe" group and practice fielding questions.
- To gain feedback on my presentation structure and style from other researchers in my department.
- To present my research to a new audience and manage questions more confidently.
- To practice my "elevator pitch" when asked the question "what do you do?"
- To practice talking to people about my research on my poster stand.
- To make the initial approach to someone I want to meet, and get contact details to follow up.

Not all of these goals are about presenting your research, but they are all about the range of skills you will need to make the most of attending larger conferences.

Do your homework

There are some basics here:

Location-related

- Where is the conference being held? Use Google Maps and find out the precise location.
- How do you get there? By car? Where do you park? How much will that cost? Public transport? Is it walkable from the station? If not is there a direct bus/tram? Again, Google Maps can help you out with all this.
- Where can you stay? Named conference hotels can be expensive and you don't have to stay there. Pick something walkable, check the area is safe.



Can you extend your stay and have some personal time – your university's insurance may even cover you for this without you having to worry about an additional policy.

Procedural and funding

- Some universities require you to log your trip for it to be eligible under their insurance policy – make sure you find out what you need to do – and do it!
- Are there funding sources you can apply for? How far in advance do you have to apply? How can you claim against any award? Don't assume you will be able to access funds in advance, most awards are made on a spend-then-claim basis.

Conference-related

- Register in time to take advantage of any early-bird registration reductions. Even if you are presenting you usually have to register – and most often still pay – to attend the conference.



- If you have any accessibility requirements, check these out with the conference organizers in advance – don't assume things will be in place, eg. hearing loop, accessible rooms, quiet areas.
- If you intend to submit a paper to present at the conference, read the guidelines carefully – they vary massively from conference to conference (see below).

Submission guidelines

A quick look at a range of conferences found different requirements in all these areas:

Font and size	Times, Arial, 11pt, 12pt
Paper size, margins and spacing	A4, different margins, single or double spacing
Required headings	Some require specific headings in abstracts
Layout, eg. columns	Some ask for column format, some specifically not
Mathematical spacing	Eg. $p = 0.01$ rather than $p=0.01$
LaTeX?	Some conferences specify this as the preparation format
Attribution format	Very specific guidelines on how to identify your affiliations, including funders
Reference format	Which style?
What save format (.doc .rtf .pdf)	Varies between conferences – you will be rejected if not in correct format
Embedded fonts	If using .pdf format, usually required to embed fonts.

Word counts and page limit	Can vary between different conference streams, as well as conferences
Footnotes/ Endnotes?	Allowed or not allowed?
Logos	Allowed or not allowed?
Headers/ footers/ page nos	Sometimes required, sometimes not allowed
Permitted abbreviations	Some conferences are very specific about these.
UK/US English?	Specified for some conferences
Inclusive language	Preferred use of they/them
Different rules for different sessions	Even within a conference, abstract lengths, formats, and other requirements can vary
Anonymous submission	Some conferences have anonymous review so your submission must be free of identifiable data
Register to submit	Some conferences require you to be registered to submit. Don't get caught out close to the deadline.

EXERCISE

Find a conference in your field to which you might like to submit a paper.

Find the answers to the following questions

Deadlines

1. When is the deadline for submissions? If this information is not yet available, can you find out what the deadline was last year?
2. Do you need to register before you can submit a paper?
3. What is the deadline for early bird registrations?

Formatting

4. What font and size are required?
5. What margins and line spacing?
6. What are the word limits?
 - a. For the abstract
 - b. main article
7. Are there any required headings?
8. What is the submission formatting?
9. What format are references required in?

Other

10. Is submission anonymous?
11. Any other requirements not included above?

If you have put all the work into an abstract to submit, you don't want to have it rejected on procedural grounds.

However, there are more academic reasons abstracts can get rejected as the following list highlights. Make sure your submission cannot fall at any of these hurdles.

Top 10 reasons conference abstracts are rejected

1. Incomplete submission
2. Irrelevance to conference theme
3. Poorly written abstract
4. Lack of originality or significance
5. Insufficient data or results
6. Failure to follow formatting guidelines
7. Poor quality graphics or figures
8. Ethical concerns
9. Failure to register for the conference
10. Incomplete research

PART 2: Presenting and Engaging

At a conference you may be presenting a poster or giving an oral presentation, but even if you are there only as a delegate you will probably want to engage with others!

Conference etiquette

Before you even start engaging with others, there are some principles of conference behaviour that will keep you from being “that person”.

- Put your phone away and switch it off/to silent/do not disturb.
- Only use your laptop for making notes – the people behind can see you answering your email and browsing Amazon.
- Enter and leave rooms *between* presentations.
- If you attend a panel session, try and stay for the whole thing.
- Ask succinct clear *single* questions.
- If you are sharing insights on social media, use quotations to make it clear you are quoting someone else, and give them attribution. Share others’ insights with comment and they may reciprocate.
- Dress – this is a tough one. It shouldn’t matter but it can. If you want to play it safe, go for business (academic) casual – the rationale being this is a professional event, and you are a professional, and representing your institution. However, you are you, and how you dress may be very much part of your personal brand. If this is important to you, dress how you are comfortable!

Conference etiquette around the world

Expect differences in conference etiquette in different countries – it will reduce the risk of surprises or awkward moments.



UK – polite questioning, culture of thanks, “controlled viciousness”



USA – self-promotion, status-conscious, lots of networking



France – debate and discussion, formality



Germany – direct questioning, on time schedule



Japan – formality and quiet listening, exchanging gifts



Brazil – flexibility on timings, active audience engagement, warmth



Saudia Arabia – gender segregation, modest dress, hospitality



Australia – informality, humour, directness

Contributing to the conference

You have something to give to any conference, even if you are at the start of your doctoral research.

Be a proactive participant where you can and:

- Listen well and read abstracts closely – this will help you ask better questions.
- Use the opportunity in session to network with presenters, even if it is just to introduce yourself and thank them.
- Participate in discussions where they arise.
- Ask thoughtful questions – don't be a troll!

Check out this article:

"Don't be a conference troll – a guide to asking good questions" – The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2015/nov/11/dont-be-a-conference-troll-a-guide-to-asking-good-questions>

Be prepared for conference networking

Conference networking is often the most dreaded part of participation. Sometimes this fear arises from a lack of familiarity, in which case practice can help to develop confidence.

However, other times the fear arises from personality preferences (introversion), or neurodiversity, in which cases conference anxiety is not just a "mindset" issue that can be easily overcome.

In both cases, three key strategies can help though, although the preparation and execution might be different. These are:

1. Be ready to talk about yourself and your research.
2. Set goals and expectations for your networking interactions.
3. Practice active listening.

Create an authentic elevator pitch

This is the answer that you have ready when someone asks you “so, what do you do?”. It’s just a short description of you and your research that is intended to stimulate some interest and promote further discussion.

An elevator pitch is not a sales pitch, although they are sometimes described in this way in other sectors. It is just a door opener to further conversation and a way of easing you into conversation as well.

There’s a lot of advice on elevator pitches out there. What this advice sometimes lacks is flexibility – so a good suggestion is to treat your elevator pitch like a pick and mix and have various bits ready to go for different situations.

You can use one part, two parts or all parts of your selection, depending on the situation. The key is having the words in your head ready to go.

Practice

The only way to create a natural delivery is to practice. Otherwise, you run the risk of sounding as though you are reciting a script.

- Practice to yourself
- Practice to a trusted friend
- Practice to a trusted colleague
- Practice to your supervisor
- Here!

EXERCISE

Have a go at writing some of your pick and mix elevator pitch.



What is the topic of your research?



What is the problem, issue, or question that you are asking and addressing in your research?



Why is that problem interesting and important? (i.e. So what?)



How does your work connect with a broader disciplinary conversation about this topic/problem in your field, and what does it add to that conversation?

1. First, find someone in the room you know well and practice.
2. Then, find someone you don't know well and practice again.

Start the conversation

Be prepared to be the conversation starter. Have some phrases ready to throw out to others to get a conversation going.

Remember to ask OPEN questions. These are ones that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no.

Be interested in **them** – rather than worrying about what **you** are going to say next. Always ask a follow up question and listen to the answers. You will be amazed how many people are bad at listening – you will learn a lot more and make a deeper connection with anyone you listen to, than someone you speak at.

Here are some suggestions of questions you could ask:

General conference-related questions

"What brings you to this conference?"

"What sessions/speakers are you looking forward to most?"

"Which ones did you enjoy?"

Person and research-related questions

"Where are you from?"

"What do you research?" – gives them a chance to give you their elevator pitch!

"How does that relate to ..." – if you are familiar with the topic

"How did you end up at <institution> doing what you do?"

Just conversation starters

"I'm not a big fan of energetic networking, do you mind if I join you over here where it's quieter?"

"I can't stop eating these arancini, have you tried them?"

"So, what's your favourite conversation starter at conferences like this?"

Getting away

Sometimes you want to move on – pay a compliment, say you’d like to follow up (if you do), and offer a handshake.

“It was interesting talking to you, I’d really like to talk further sometime...”

If you really want to follow up, make sure you add “... what is the best way of getting in touch with you?”.

Social media at conferences

Engaging with social media before, during, and after attending academic conferences can enhance your experience, expand your professional network, and contribute to the broader academic community.

Here are some principles to guide your social media engagement:

Pre-Conference

Have a Hashtag Strategy	Share Your Agenda	Connect with Attendees
• Check if the conference has an official hashtag and use it consistently in your posts. This helps others find and follow your contributions.	• Before the conference, share the sessions you plan to attend. This can help you connect with others interested in similar topics.	• Follow conference organisers, speakers, and fellow attendees on social media platforms. Engaging with their posts or direct messages before the conference can lead to meaningful connections during the event.

Live-Tweeting and Real-Time Updates

Live-Tweet Key Insights

- Share key takeaways, interesting quotes, and notable moments from the conference sessions in real-time. Use the conference hashtag and mention relevant speakers or organisations to broaden the reach of your tweets.

Visual Content

- Incorporate visual content, such as photos or brief video clips, to make your posts more engaging. Visuals can capture the atmosphere of the conference and grab the attention of your followers.

Encourage Interaction

- Pose questions, ask for opinions, and encourage interaction in your posts. This can spark conversations with both attendees and those following the conference remotely.

Post-Conference Reflection:

Summarize Key Insights

- Share a post-conference summary highlighting the most valuable insights gained. This not only contributes to your online presence but also serves as a resource for others who may have missed the event.

Say Thank You

- Thank speakers, organisers, and fellow attendees for their contributions and interactions. Expressing gratitude fosters positive connections and acknowledges the efforts of those involved in the conference.

Continue Conversations

- Keep the momentum going by continuing conversations initiated during the conference. Connect with new contacts on LinkedIn or Twitter and engage in discussions about shared interests.

Professional Networking and Collaboration:

Use LinkedIn Effectively

- Update your LinkedIn profile before the conference, highlighting your current research, interests, and conference attendance. Connect with new contacts and join relevant groups to extend your professional network.

Tag and Mention Collaborators

- When sharing content related to collaborative projects or discussions, tag and mention your collaborators. This not only acknowledges their contributions but also expands the visibility of your shared work.

Maintain Professionalism and Balance:

<i>Be Mindful of Content Quality</i>	<i>Balanced Sharing</i>	<i>Respect Privacy</i>
•Ensure your social media posts align with professional standards. Proofread your content, use appropriate language, and avoid excessive use of emojis or informal language that may detract from your academic image.	•While it's beneficial to share your conference experience, strike a balance with other content to maintain a diverse online presence. Share relevant articles, insights, or updates from your field in addition to conference-related content.	•Be respectful of others' privacy when sharing content. Avoid posting images without consent and consider the confidentiality of certain discussions or presentations.

Ethical networking

While some of this is obvious – and includes the kind of behaviour most people would not even consider engaging in – other parts, especially around inclusivity and cultural sensitivity, spamming and reciprocity, are definitely worth noting.

Ethical issue	Ethical Practice
Misrepresentation, plagiarism, and idea theft	Be honest and accurate in presenting yourself and work. Give proper credit, be transparent about what is your work and what is the work of others.
Confidentiality	Respect confidentiality agreements and seek permissions.
Inclusivity and cultural sensitivity	Be inclusive, avoid discrimination, promote diversity – be an ally. Be culturally sensitive, respect and adapt to cultural differences when in a different country.
Harassment and inappropriate behaviour	Treat all participants with respect and report harassment.

Solicitation and spamming	Engage in meaningful academic discussions, avoid spamming anyone afterwards.
Reciprocity and networking for mutual benefit	Build genuine relationships, offer help – think in the long term.
Data privacy	Respect individuals' privacy and seek consent before name checking to others.

Conference anxiety is not just a mindset issue

For some people conferences can be particularly difficult, regardless of whether a person is giving a presentation or not.

This may be due to a worry about the right food being available for a special diet, travel or social anxiety, or challenges arising from neurodiversity that are sometimes not well-catered for in large public gatherings.

Coping strategies can include:

- Write a detailed itinerary, including maps, bus numbers or train times, taxi firm numbers, emergency contact numbers etc. This will save you scrabbling around for information if you need reassurance.
- Locate any specially-provided quiet spaces provided early on, or find a quiet space that you can retreat to later.
- Keep water handy to cool you down and a suitable snack just in case there is a lack of suitable food.
- Having a wing-person to help you stay grounded.
- Take regular breaks, even if this means missing some conference content. Taking advantage of even 60% of what you intended is better than not having been there at all.
- Acknowledge that you have a valid reason to be anxious and allow yourself some slack.

- Find an authentic “academic voice” that you are comfortable with – even if it feels as though you are performing it, if it gets you through networking situations more comfortably, then it’s a win.
- Create a mental mantra that reinforces both the validity of your situation and your desire to manage it the best you can.

Using storytelling to communicate your research

While this is not a presentation skills course, some basic preparation can really help you present more confidently – both orally and as a poster presenter.

What do you mean, storytelling?

When you talk about your research, the best way to communicate your message is to find a story you want to tell. While a submitted abstract or paper might have required headings, your presentation does not have to follow those and will in fact stand out from the crowd if it doesn’t.

Think hard about the work you want to present in the form of a story. This could be:

- Overcoming a seemingly unsurmountable challenge
- A comedy of errors and confusion, leading to insight
- An unexpected event leading down a new path

Why do stories work?

Stories work because they are memorable – they start somewhere, they build to a climax and the story resolves to a conclusion. This is a benefit not only for your audience but for you. Stories make it easier for you to remember what you want to say, reducing your need to rely on detailed notes where you can lose your place easily.

Method, results, conclusion is a story, but it’s pretty dull – see if you can think of a cleverer, more interesting way to get across the information you want to share.

What do good stories contain?

All good stories have some common elements – and this is true from stories about academic research told orally or on posters, to Hollywood, to Greek epics and Icelandic sagas, to TED talks.

They all have some kind of **HOOK** – this triggers the interest and draws in the audience.

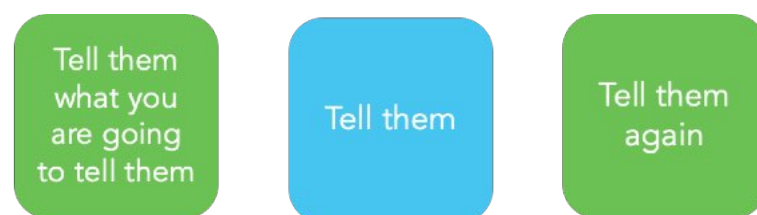
From that, a story will **BUILD** – new information will be revealed, characters will be introduced, and the drama will unfold.

There resolution of the drama – the conclusion – is the **PAY OFF**. This is why it mattered, why it was important, what it meant and where it means you go next.

How to structure a presentation or poster

This is presentation 101 and is a universal rule for making presentations of any kind. Commit it to memory and you are onto a winner.

1. Tell your audience what you are going to tell them.
2. Tell them.
3. Tell them again.



This doesn't mean you give your presentation three times and this isn't method, results, conclusion!

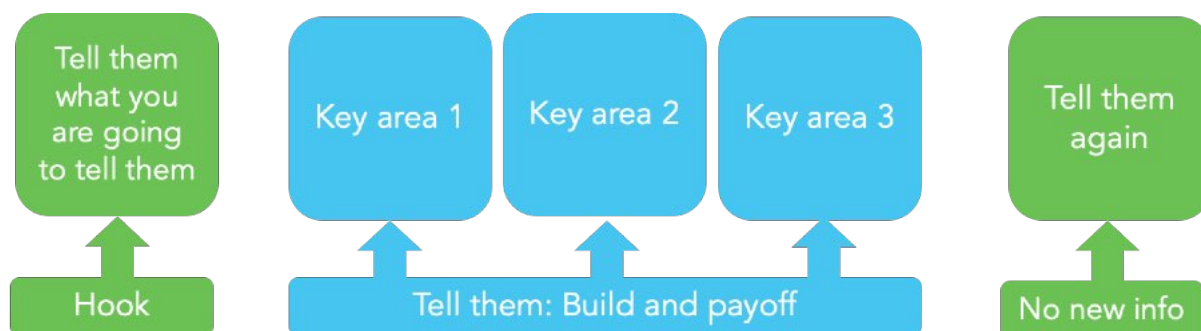
Tell them what you are going to tell them	Give an overview of the main things you are going to cover – your mega-themes. This is NOT the introduction to the work, it is just a signpost, a structural overview.	5%
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Tell them	This is the bulk of your presentation. Signpost as you work through each of the sections you mentioned at the start.	90%
Tell them again	This is not the conclusion of your work, but it is the end of your presentation. Signpost that you are at the end. Reiterate and reinforce the key points under your mega-themes. Do not introduce any new information.	5%

The power of three

There is some power in the number three. The structure above is divided into three, but you can go further and divide the bulk of your presentation into three as well.

Then your structure will look like this:



Note that the PAYOFF (conclusion) is part of the main presentation, not in the “tell them again” section.

EXERCISE

What are the three key “mega-themes” from a presentation you might give about your research? These themes should outline a story and include the BUILD and PAYOFF.

Give them a title and then list the three key points you want to make under that mega-theme.

Mega-theme	Description
1.	▪ ▪ ▪
2.	▪ ▪ ▪
3.	▪ ▪ ▪

Find a partner and tell them this story!

Making it look good

First things first... avoid the five horsemen of the presentation apocalypse:

How to make a Good First Impression 

Making a first good impression can be vital when looking for a new job. Whether we like it or not, people do judge a book by their cover. The first few seconds with someone can be critical to your career.

- Be on time. The person you are just meeting is probably not interested in your excuses, even if it is the first time you are late in your whole life. All they are going to know is that you are not keeping up with a previous agreement. The image you are leaving behind is of someone that is not reliable. Make an extra effort and make sure to arrive on time. Too early is always better than too late.
- Be prepared. Before going to your interview you should have done your research about the company, the position you're applying for, and so on. Think about what kind of questions you could be asked, and how you would answer them. In one word, practice!
- Take care of your clothes and your overall grooming. It has been said that 55% can be determined by the person's appearance. So be careful when choosing how to present yourself in an interview. Dress to impress, maintaining in mind the job you are applying to, and when in doubt, choose the most conservative choice.
- Take into consideration non-verbal communication. You might be feeling nervous, but studies have shown that people who present themselves in a more friendly, confident manner usually have better results. Something as simple as a smile can make a difference.

Too much text

5 Great Productivity Apps



Todoist
Ultimate "to-do" list app

Slack
communication app for collaboration

Todo
Time tracker app

Evernote
Organizing and Idea Thoughts app

Trello
Kanban Project Management App

Inaccessible colours

What is Inbound Marketing?

- Client based marketing strategy
 - Focused on pain/gains
 - Builds trust

1. Attract the right public
Blog posts, social media content, Ads
2. Engage potential customers
Email marketing, conversational bots.
3. Delight your clients
Smart content, marketing automation.

Source: HubSpot Marketing Academy

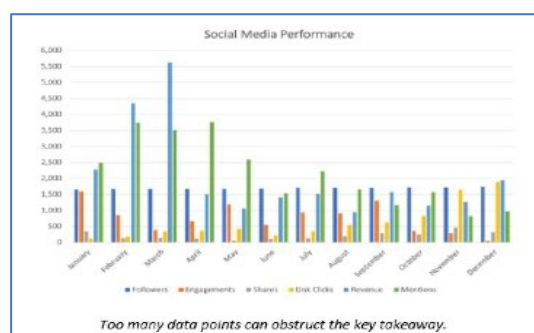
Lazy and boring

What is IoT?
(Internet of Things)



Emerging Technology

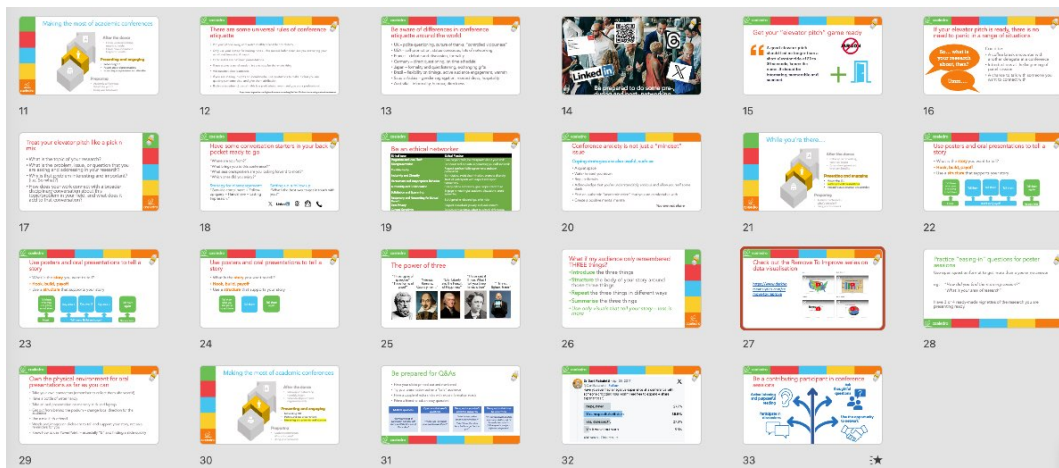
Picture overload



Unreadable tables and graphs

Some key principles can help you here.

1. **Vary layouts** – use some bullet points but make the next slide a picture or table. Draw the eye from the left to the right on subsequent slides. Use slide sorter view on PowerPoint to check variation.



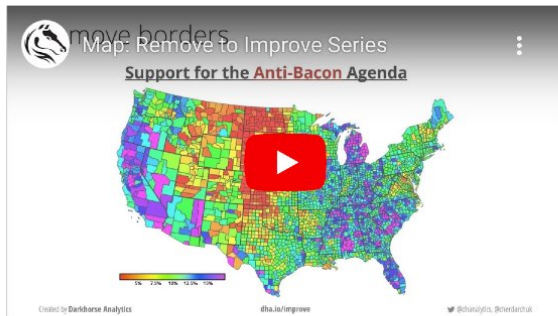
2. **Use colour** – to enhance the visual spectacle, but not to distinguish between important items, eg. red and green, as not everyone can distinguish those colours.
3. **Use pictures and photographs** – high quality, and only where they tell your story.
4. **Large text** – minimum 20pt, san serif font, max 6 bullet points, max 6 words per point.
5. **Use animation sparingly** – only where it adds real value.
6. **Use Reduce to Improve** – to improve your data tables and graphs.
7. **Less is more** – keep slides to a minimum, no more than 1 slides per minute. Words and images on slides are to tell and support your story, not as a reminder for you.
8. **Use signpost slides** – to clarify where you are in a presentation as you move through your three key themes.

Reduce to Improve

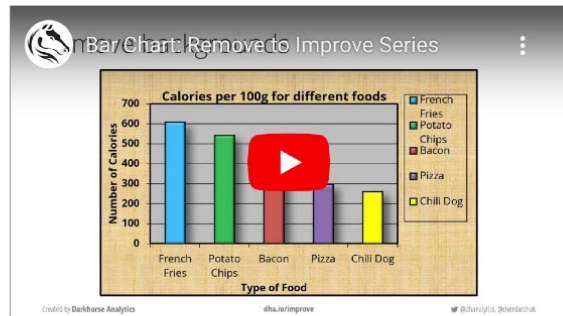
This is a fantastic resource that looks at ways to simplify data presentation to make the message you are trying to convey clearer and more convincing.

<https://www.darkhorseanalytics.com/remove-to-improve>

MAP



BAR CHART



TABLE



PIE CHART



Oral presentations

When you present, you own the stage space.

Stand where you want to stand, not where the previous person stood. Organise the space the way you want it. If possible, get out from behind the podium, especially if you are short – it changes the focal direction for the audience keeping them awake, and when we walk, we talk more naturally.

A few other things may help to alleviate nerves:

- Take your own connectors (but remember to collect them afterwards!).
- Take an oral presentation on memory stick and laptop as a failsafe.
- Use a mic if it's offered – saves you having to speak up in an uncomfortable way.
- Use the clicker if it's offered – but avoid the laser pointer tool (emphasises shaky hands!).
- Know how to use PowerPoint! – especially “B” and finding a slide quickly by typing in its number and Enter – keep a printed, numbered copy of your slides handy to do this easily.
- Have a bottle of water handy, with the lid unscrewed already (but screwed back on!).



Giving presentations can be nerve-wracking at first, but the only way anyone ever got any better was by trying it again and again.

So practice, practice, practice – in front of the mirror, friends, colleagues etc. The more comfortable you are with your material, the more relaxed you will feel. Best of all, try the whole presentation out on a small, safe audience who can give you feedback. Listen to the feedback and incorporate it where it makes sense.

Poster presentations

While this is essentially a conversation, it can still be a nervous situation, and one you can prepare for. Have some conversation starters ready, such as:

“How did you find the morning session?”

“What is your area of research”

And have 3 or 4 short stories ready to tell about different aspects of your research, that embellish the story you are already telling.

Be prepared for Q&As

Q&A sessions are a bit like Marmite – some nervous presenters prefer them as they can answer more naturally, other people hate them as they are by definition an unknown situation.

If you have a panel chair – great news, they will chose the questioners, and will manage the time.

If you are presenting alone – keep an eye on the time and manage expectations, eg. “there is just time for a couple of questions”, or “this will need to be the last question.”

Top tips:

- Have your slides printed out and numbered so you can navigate to them easily.
- Try your presentation out on a “safe” audience.
- Have a couple of extra slides with extra information ready at the end of your presentation. Separate them from the main presentation with a black slide.
- Plant a friend to ask an easy question first!

Types of questions to expect and how to deal with them

The courtesy question	Usually from a panel chair or moderator, usually a superficial question just to get the ball rolling!
The “whatever you like” question	So vague you can cover bits of your presentation you hadn’t had time for.
The personal conversation question	The question is really only relevant to the person who asked it – shut it down quickly and suggest you find each other at a break to talk further.
The question that isn’t a question	The audience member that likes the sound of their own voice and uses it to make a little speech of their own.

	"I'm not sure what your question was in there?"
The multiple question	"I think there were about three questions in there, I'll answer the last one" (which is probably the only one you and anyone else can remember)
The Display of Superior Knowledge	Rude and irritating and not usually from a place of superior knowledge. "Thank you for your insights. I'm confident with my data and interpretation, but I'd be really interested to follow up with you for a different perspective."
The one you don't know the answer to	"I don't know, unless anyone else here does?" "I don't have that data here, but I can get back to you."

PART 3: After the conference

It's very easy to just come back to the daily routine after a conference and lose the thread of all those amazing insights you'd had the previous day. Create a post-conference routine to make sure you squeeze the most out of the experience.

Conferences as learning experiences

In 1984, David Kolb suggested a model of experiential learning that is a great framework for thinking about how we use the new understanding we get from having some kind of experience.

Experiencing

Kolb's theory describes that while we are doing something, we have an experience. Not rocket science, but a critical part of the process.

Reflecting

Critical to learning, suggests Kolb, is that we then reflect on that experience. This is not an analysis, merely a review of what happened in as much detail as we can remember, how we felt about it – basically, a fact-finding exercise. **This stage is often given little attention and we go straight to analysis, but with limited data.**

Thinking

Then we start our analysis. This is where we try to match what we experienced with what we already know. What did the experience reinforce for us, or what did it tell us that was new. How do we incorporate new knowledge into any conceptual frameworks we already have?

Acting

What do we do next? When can we put that reflection and analysis into practice in a similar situation? Where is what we have learned transferable to a related or even totally different situation and when we can try it out? This is where we set up the next experience we have, and the cycle continues.



EXERCISE

Practicing reflecting and thinking – considering today's learning.

Q1. What are your key takeaways from today's workshop? What have you learned?
How has the workshop been so far for you?

Q2. What has today's workshop reinforced for you? What has it given you that is new? And how does all that fit with what you already thought about what it was like to attend and participate in conferences?

Following up with new contacts

If you take public transport, on the way home from the conference, make a list of names, affiliation, what you can remember about them, contact information and type of follow up you want to make. Even better, do it as you go along at the conference. In any event, do it as soon as possible afterwards.

Example:

Name	Affiliation	What I remember	Contact info	Type of follow up
Jan Meisters	Utrecht Uni	Lecturer. Works on fish and human 'shoaling'. We talked about Finding Nemo!	Contact via Twitter @janmeisters	Specific on patterns in exit behaviour from large venues
Claudia Bolisaro	Sao Paulo Uni	Postdoc. Researching movement of children through public and private spaces. Talked about Sadie's schools and how different they've been.	Contact via email Cbol324@spuni.org	Potential postdoc opening in 2025
Sam Hitchins	Uni of Leicester	PhD. Looking at young people's changing attitudes to megastardom in 1980s-2010s. Talked about Taylor Swift and Donald Trump.	WhatsApp 07745 123123	Also going to Liminal Spaces conference in Sept – potential meet up?

EXERCISE

Networking isn't just for conferences! Find three people you've had an interesting conversation with today you'd like to pursue. Agree to follow up about whatever you've discussed.

Name	Affiliation	What I remember	Contact info	Type of follow up

A few pointers on following up after conferences:

- If you say you are going to follow up – do it quickly. Share anything you agreed to, like a paper or CV.
- See if you can arrange a 15 minute Teams/Zoom call to continue your conversation.
- Connect on LinkedIn and keep the contact 'live' by actively resharing, commenting etc.
- Email with updated information about you, congratulate them, eg. on a paper, or offer something of value – eg. I saw this paper and thought about you. Create calendar reminders to prompt you to do this.
- Connect them with someone useful.
- Seek them out at next year's conference or at events where you see them on the delegate list.

The contacts you make at conferences are an investment in the long term. They may lead to career-long connections, academic friendships, research collaboration.

Conferences on your CV

Including conference attendance on your academic CV is important for showcasing how you are engaging in your professional development in your area of research and beyond.

Five ways you can represent your attendance at conferences:

1. List your conference presentations

List conferences where you presented papers, posters, or talks. Include the title of your presentation, the name of the conference, date, and location. This emphasizes your active participation and contributions to the academic community.

Example: Presenter, "*Title of Your Presentation*," *Conference Name*, *Date*, *Location*.

2. List your conference attendances

If you attended conferences without presenting, you can still highlight this by listing the conferences you attended. Mentioning the names of well-known conferences can add prestige to your CV.

Example: *Attendee, Conference Name, Date, Location.*

3. Create a professional development section:

Create a dedicated section on your CV for professional development, where you can list conferences along with workshops, seminars, and training programs you've participated in.

Professional Development:

- Conference Name, Date, Location.
- Workshop on [Topic], Date, Location.

If you served on a conference organising committee or played a role in the planning and execution of a conference, mention this in a separate section to highlight your organisational skills and leadership.

eg. *Organizing Committee Member, Conference Name, Date, Location.*

4. Highlight Key Conferences:

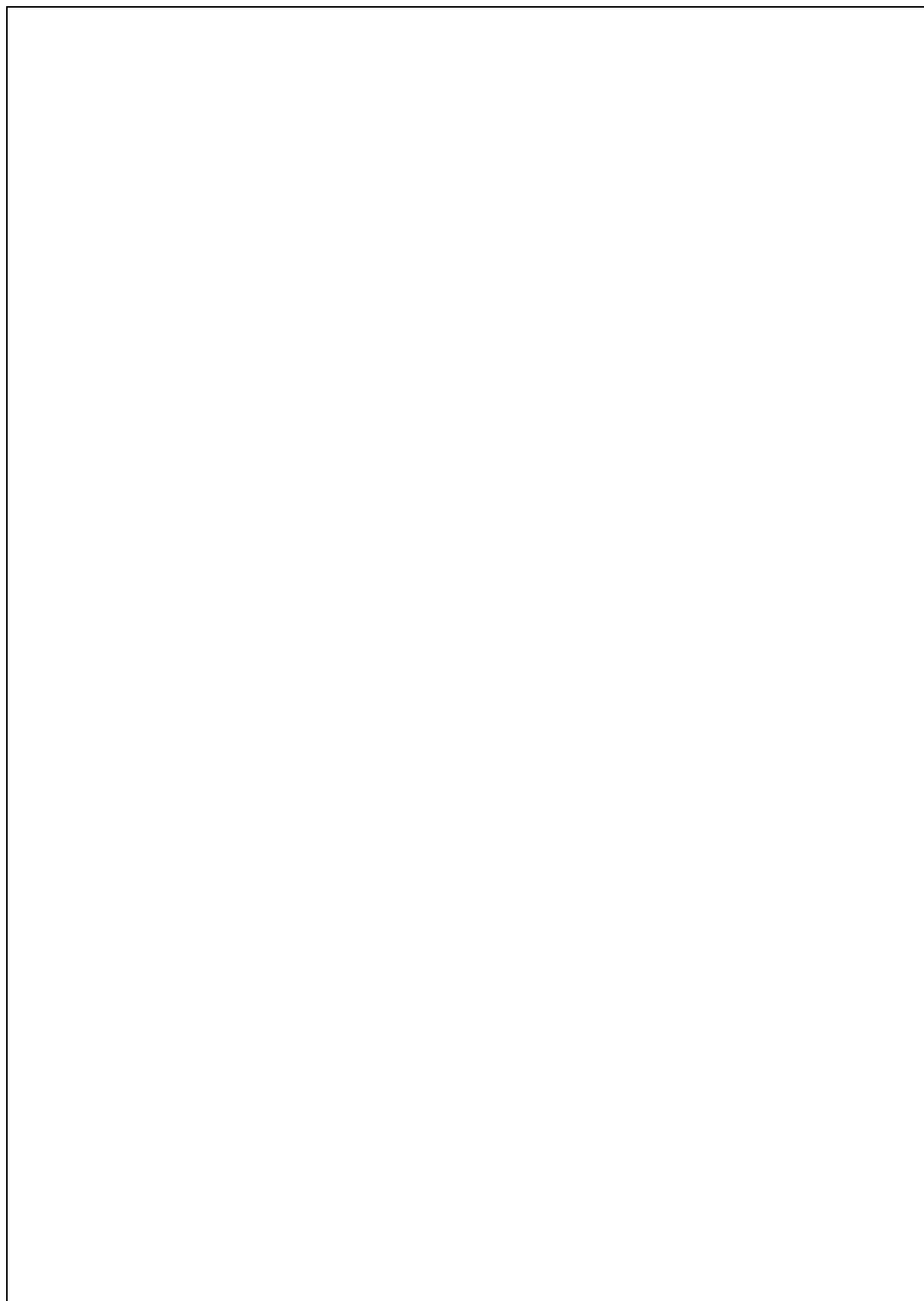
If you've attended prestigious or highly relevant conferences in your field, create a section specifically for "Key Conferences Attended" to draw attention to your involvement in significant events.

Key Conferences Attended:

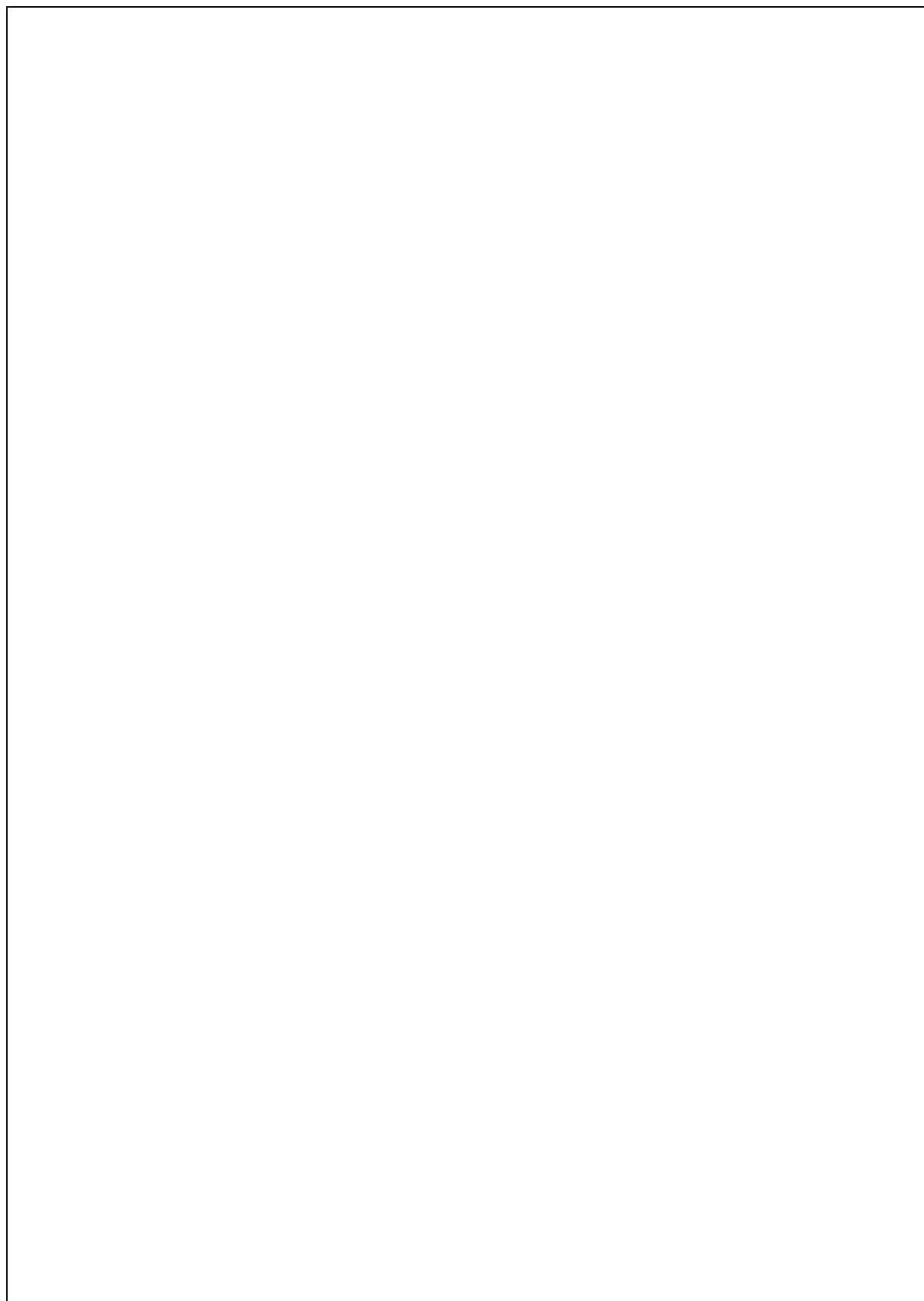
- Conference Name, Date, Location.
- Another Important Conference, Date, Location.

Remember to tailor the format to fit your CV style and the specific requirements of your academic discipline. Additionally, be consistent in formatting and include relevant details such as dates and locations to provide a full overview of your conference participation.

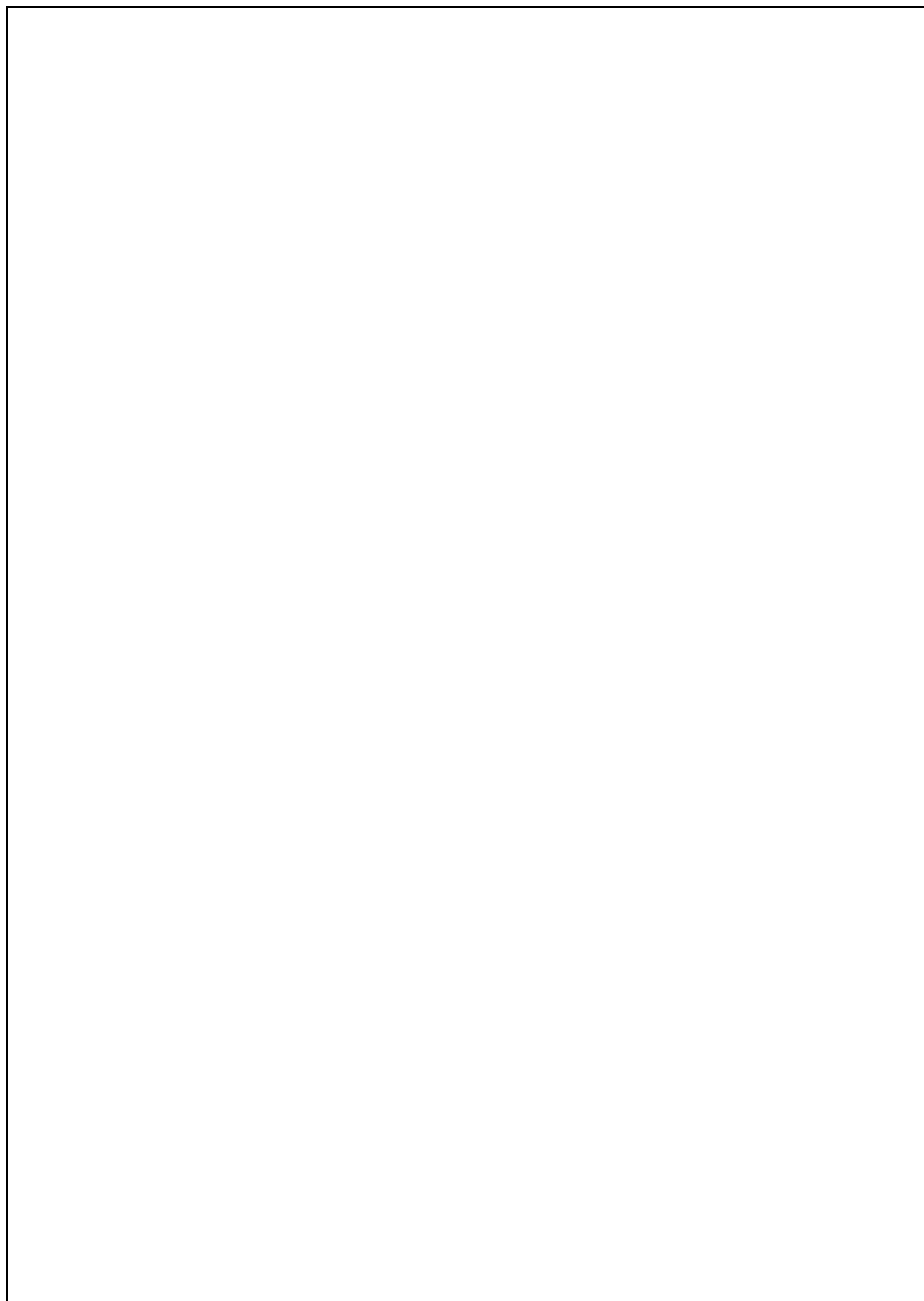
Notes:

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Notes:

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