Seminar 3

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Adrian Wallwork

English for Writing Research Papers

Second Edition

◇ Springer

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Adrian Wallwork

**English** for Presentations at International Conferences

◇ Springer

Avoiding Redundancy

Conferences

Communication Skills

Imagine you ask an academic the question:

"What time is it?"

A typical academic will say:

"On the basis of the consideration that the sun would appear to be at its highest peak in the sky, it would be reasonable, given such circumstances, to hypothesize - *ceteris paribus* - that the time, with respect to Greenwich, is midday."

A non-academic would say:

"12 o'clock"
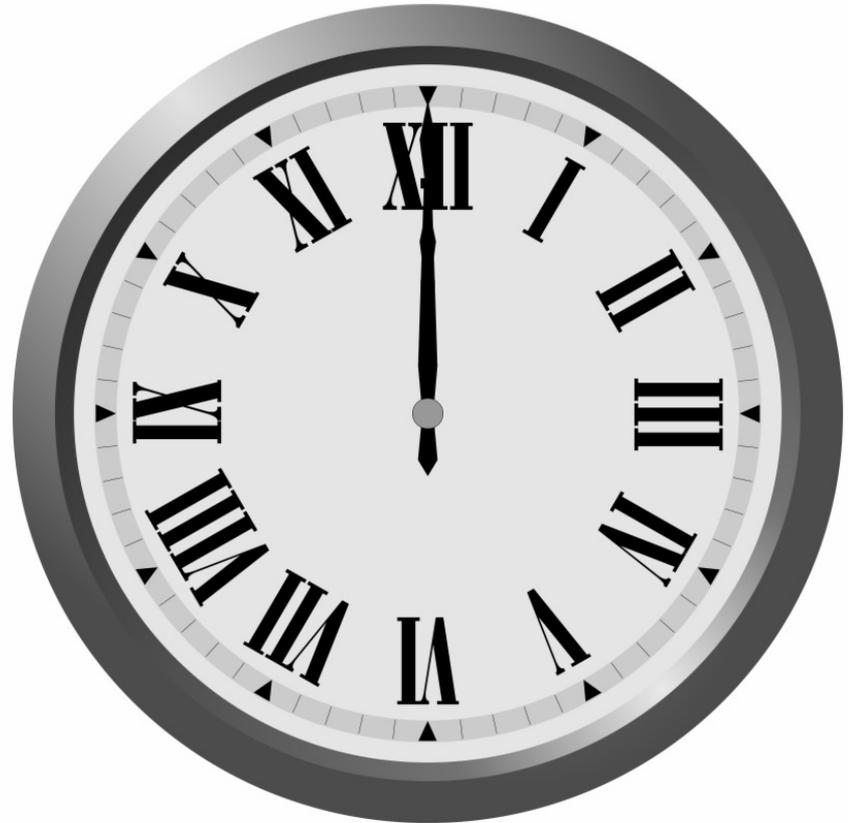
Which style of writing is easier to understand and more enjoyable to READ?

a) "12 o'clock"

b) "On the basis of the consideration that the sun would appear to be at its highest peak in the sky …"

Which style of writing **do YOU use**? Why?

a) "12 o'clock"

b) "On the basis of the consideration that the sun would appear to be at its highest peak in the sky ..."

Learning to WRITE effectively means thinking clearly and not thinking that you must sound like an academic.

In a survey at Stanford University, 86.4% of students admitted they used **complicated language** in their papers to make themselves **sound smarter** (i.e. more intelligent).

Learning to WRITE effectively also involves learning how to

READ

with a critical eye

Everything (papers, emails, newspapers) you read from now on – think about:

- Does it add **value** for me the reader? Or is the writer just sounding 'smart'?
- Is it expressed in the **clearest** possible way?
- How much of it is **redundant**?
- What, if anything, will I **remember**?

Learning to COMMUNICATE effectively is not just about EMPATHY but also

KNOWING

your audience and giving them what they want

Esame universitario

CULTURA

"Come fregare i professori universitari agli esami"

Remove the fog: cut redundant words

It was yellow in colour and round in shape.

Cut redundant words

1. This will be done in **the month of** December.

2. During **the** maturation **process**, the plant grows to ten times its original size.

3. We did x. This **choice** meant that …

4. **As can be seen,** Figure 1 highlights that x = y.

5. **The activity aimed at** the extrapolation of X is not trivial.

6. **The summary statements presented above represent the authors' current perceptions in relation to the results. Since the work is ongoing, these statements should only be viewed as conclusions to the extent that it is the author's intention and aim to embellish them in the light of subsequent events.**

Choose simplicity over elegance

If you are particularly **pleased** with something you have written, because it sounds very **eloquent** or shows the **high level** of your English, then

DELETE IT!

The same is true for what you think is a particularly clever or funny slide.

Why is eliminating redundant words useful?

It was yellow in colour and round in *shape / form*.

We did X. This *choice / choose* meant that …

The activity aimed *at / to* the extrapolation of X is not trivial.

Why is eliminating redundant words useful?

It was yellow in colour and round in *shape* / *form*.

We did X. This *choice* / *choose* meant that …

The activity aimed *at* / *to* the extrapolation of X is not trivial.

What kind of words are the words you deleted: concrete or not concrete? Do they add value for the reader?

1) suitable 2) typical *or* characteristics 3) located 4) present 5) obtained

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Why cut redundant words?

It was yellow in colour and round in *shape / form*.
We did X. This *choice / choose* meant that …
The activity aimed *at / to* the extrapolation of X is not trivial.

- If you cut redundant words it is **impossible to make mistakes** with them!
- They add **no value for the reader**.
- They are **not concrete**.

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57 non key words

Even though GC/MS and GC-C-IRMS are the main techniques reported in the literature for the study of organic residues, recently, we have seen an increasing in the applications of high-resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS) mainly coupled with liquid chromatography. It provides the opportunity of performing accurate mass measurements, has shown its enormous capability to distinguish isobaric compounds thanks to the determination of exact molecular mass and elemental composition. In addition, when the instrumental asset makes it possible, the interpretation of tandem mass spectra allows the elucidation of chemical structures, even in the case of isomers, to be obtained.

26 non key words, but the same key words

GC/MS and GC-C-IRMS are the key techniques for studying organic residues. However, high-resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS) coupled with liquid chromatography is becoming more common. Through accurate mass measurements, HRMS differentiates between isobaric compounds by determining the exact molecular mass and elemental composition. In addition, tandem mass spectra can potentially reveal the underlying chemical structures, even for isomers.

What value to the reader do the parts in blue add?

The datasets acquired with this heterogeneous set of instruments were exploited at different levels. Primarily, they were used to meet specific conservation needs, but they also served to explore accessory possibilities. For this reason, this project probed the data publishing scenario, introducing two different actions able to reuse, with different purposes, the outcomes of the performed investigations. This last, but not least, contribution, resulted in an innovative web platform, designed to enable specialized access to data, and in a museum kiosk, used as a solid and stimulating base for exhibiting the project results to a wider audience.

What do these phrases mean?

The datasets acquired with this heterogeneous set of instruments were exploited at different levels. Primarily, they were used to meet specific investigation needs, but they also served to explore accessible possibilities. For this reason, this project probed the data publishing scenario, introducing two different actions able to reuse, with different purposes, the outcomes of the performed investigations. This last, but not least, contribution, resulted in an innovative web platform, designed to enable specialized access to data, and in a museum kiosk, used as a solid and stimulating base for exhibiting the project results to a wider audience.

WTF?

Reduce the number of non-key words

- Quicker for reader to read.
- Your key words and your key points will stand out much more.
- You will be cited more in other papers.

When you have written something, see how much you can delete.

SEARCH AND DESTROY

The more you 'destroy' the better

living room before

living room after

OFFICE BEFORE


ORGANIZEDHAVENS.COM

OFFICE AFTER

Search and destroy

Your papers (and emails) will be read by more people. Guaranteed.

If you learn nothing else from this course, at least learn **the art of destruction**.

Intelligence test:
Take a screenshot

You have to retrieve a ping pong ball that is inside the bottom of a very thick unbendable (non piegabile) vertical steel pipe protruding about 10 cm from the floor. It is embedded in concrete – so it CANNOT be removed. The circumference of the tube is about 1mm bigger than the circumference of the ball.

```
    | |
    | |
    | |
    | |
____|o|_____<--ping pong ball
```

You only have these available
Take a screenshot

magnet

paper clip

coat hanger

spanner

matches

string

corn flakes

**58**

magnet

spanner

hanger

matches

string

corn flakes

Breakout

Breakout Rooms

The host is inviting you to join Breakout Room:
Breakout Room 1

Join   Later
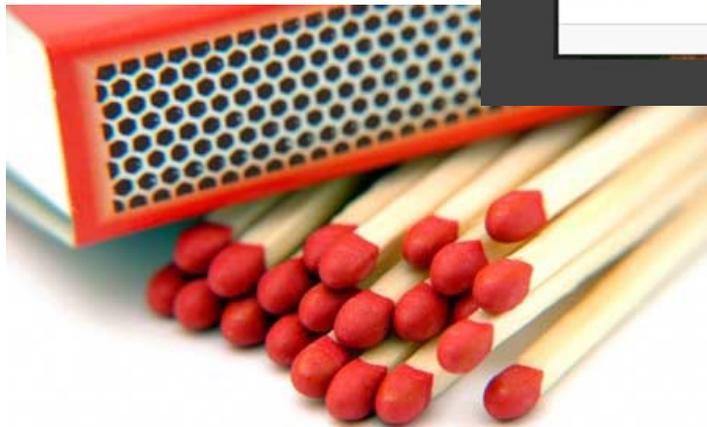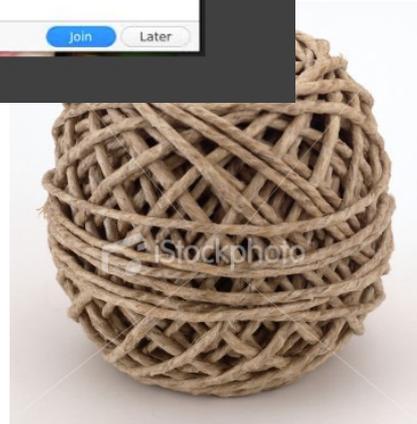
Why do many people fail to solve the ping pong ball problem?

They have fixed mental patterns.

+ They fail to see redundancy.

+ They fail to look outside the problem and find alternatives.

Which is correct?

We **found useful** to consider …
We **found it useful** to consider ...

It is worth **to note** that x = y.

It is worth **noting** that x = y.

Are you 100% sure???!!!

Are the sentences in blue correct?

NO! We **found useful** to consider …

We **found it useful** to consider √
We considered ...

NO! It is worth **to note** that x = y.

It is worth **noting** that x = y. √
Note that x = y.

If you are not 100% sure that what you have written is correct …

Delete it.

or

Find an alternative construction that you know is correct.

Eliminating words

Reduces number of choices you have to make, thus reduces time you have to spend thinking.

Reduces chances of you making mistakes, thus reduces correction time.

Saves reader time and reduces possible boredom.
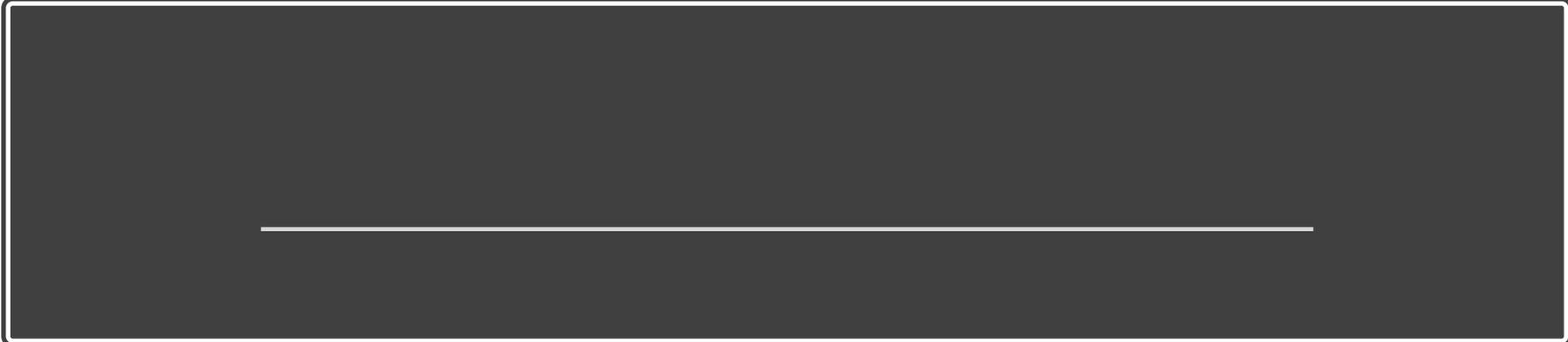
Prefer <u>verbs</u> to <u>nouns</u>

*X was used **in the calculation of** Y.*

X was used **to calculate** Y.

All sentences in red are examples of BAD English

Prefer a <u>verb</u> to a <u>verb + noun</u> construction

*This allows **the analysis of X to be performed.***

This allows you to analyse X.

This allows X to be analysed.

*A **comparison was made** between X and Y.*

X and Y **were compared**.

*X **showed a** better **performance** than Y.*

X **performed** better than Y.

Why is using verbs a good idea?

A comparison was **made / done / effected / carried out** between X and Y.

X and Y **were compared**.

Exercises 13 + 14

Noun vs verb
Which is easier to read?

In Figure 2 the curve **exhibits a downward trend** (portion A-B); then it **undergoes a rapid rise** (part B-C), it then **assumes a leveled state** (zone C-D). It **possesses a peak** at point E before **displaying a slow decline** … On the other hand, the curve in Fig. 3 **is characterized by a different behavior**.

In Figure 2 the curve initially **falls** (segment A-B) and then **rises rapidly** (B-C). It then **levels off** (C-D). Finally it **peaks** at point E before **falling slowly** … On the other hand, the curve in Fig. 3 **behaves** differently.

Noun vs verb
Which is **more elegant**?

In Figure 2 the curve ***exhibits a downward trend*** (portion A-B); then it ***undergoes a rapid rise*** (part B-C), it then ***assumes a leveled state*** (zone C-D). It ***possesses a peak*** at point E before ***displaying a slow decline*** … On the other hand, the curve in Fig. 3 ***is characterized by a different behavior***.

In Figure 2 the curve initially ***falls*** (segment A-B) and then ***rises rapidly*** (B-C). It then ***levels off*** (C-D). Finally it ***peaks*** at point E before ***falling slowly*** … On the other hand, the curve in Fig. 3 ***behaves*** differently.

Noun vs verb
Which contains more information?

In Figure 2 the curve *exhibits a downward trend* (portion A-B); then it *undergoes a rapid rise* (part B-C), it then *assumes a leveled state* (zone C-D). It *possesses a peak* at point E before *displaying a slow decline* … On the other hand, the curve in Fig. 3 *is characterized by a different behavior*.

In Figure 2 the curve initially *falls* (segment A-B) and then *rises rapidly* (B-C). It then *levels off* (C-D). Finally it *peaks* at point E before *falling slowly* … On the other hand, the curve in Fig. 3 *behaves* differently.

ALWAYS present info in the CLEAREST / MOST INTELLIGIBLE way possible for the reader. Use concrete WORDS and lots of EXAMPLES.

Be EMPATHETIC.

Don't be obsessed with grammar.

Being concise: Summary

Remove redundant words
(and even whole sentences, paragraphs, sections)
For **a period of** six months
For six months

Reduce number of words
This **gives us the possibility** to do ..
This allows us to do x

Use verbs instead of nouns
We **made an analysis of** x
We analysed x

Why be concise?

Limits opportunities for error

Leads to shorter sentences. So forces you to have clear ideas about what you want to say

Readers / Email recipients more likely to READ rather than SKIM

Saves space on slides – gives you something to say

Keeps referees happy

Reduces times and costs (editing service, ink, paper, photocopies)

You will not write like a child!

Being concise does not mean that you cannot be expressive or cannot be eloquent. You can!

Are native English academics concise?

Most are not.

But the difference between them and you is that they don't make mistakes!

Learning to be concise is not an option, it is **essential**.

- Which one do you remember the most and why?
- Which had the 'nicest' slides?
- What problem did they want to solve?
- Why?
- How?
- Why were they personally interested in solving this problem?

Presenting

Breakout

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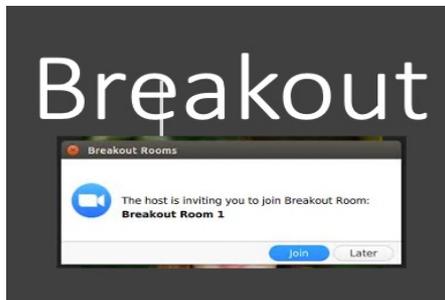
Just present your first THREE slides max, i.e. talk for NO MORE than 90-120 seconds.

The other people in the group then give feedback.

Good things

- English is not a problem
- Professional, credible
- Generally good structure

But … Some of your presentations are NOT presentations. They look like conference POSTERS

And some look like this slide i.e. not very aesthetically pleasin gand the result of no effort on the presenter's part (and with misteiks)

Things to improve

Make sure your head is in the middle of the screen → Headphones – don't wear them → Don't hold the microphone in your hand

Don't introduce yourself or your department → Don't read your title → Too much info – too much text

Too much happening in same slide → More slides does not equal more time but does equal more dynamic → Don't compete with your slides

Don't spend too long on same slide → Don't talk too much → Don't give too much info

Animations – sometimes good, sometimes too distracting → Some slides (like these two rows of boxes!) difficult to read because of colour combinations.

OK, let's move on to presentations.

CONFERENCES
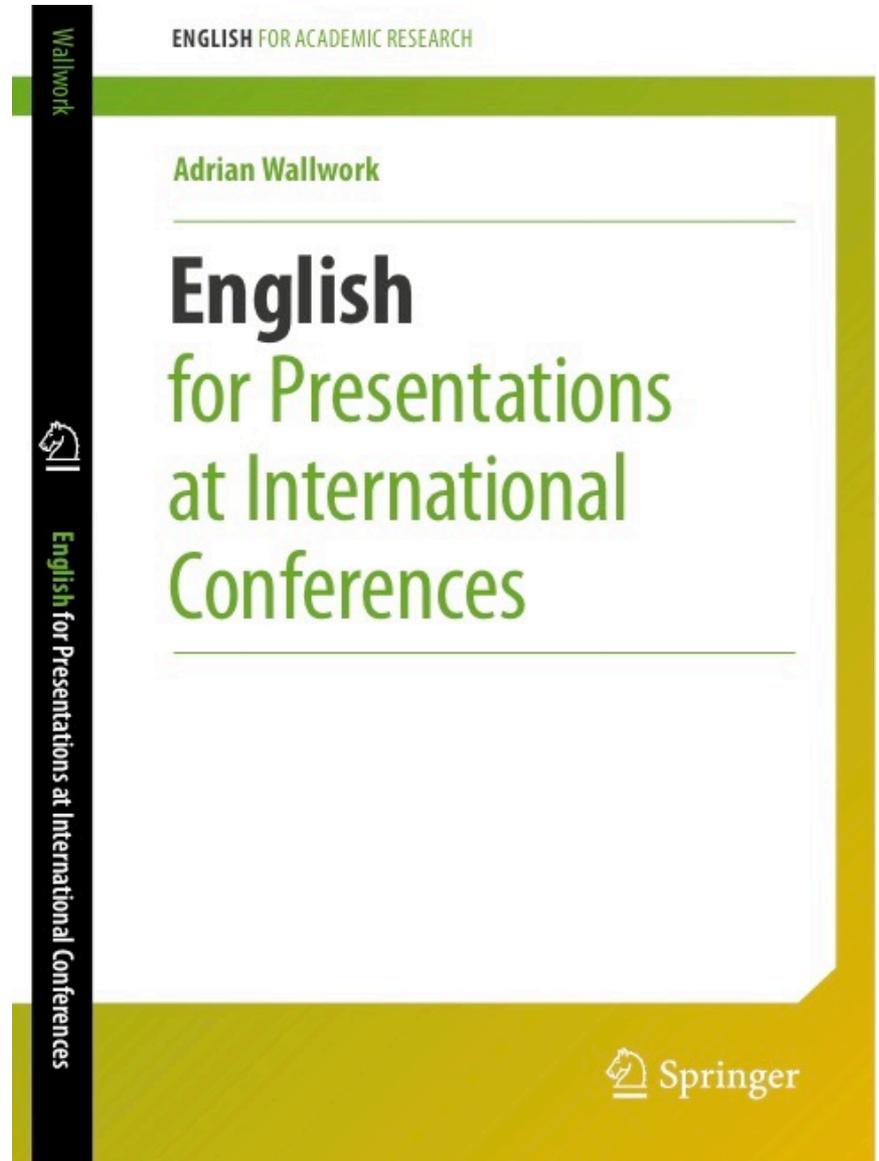
List THREE reasons why people attend conferences (in-person and online).

List three reasons why YOU should attend a conference.

At least ONE reason why YOU should do a presentation at a conference.

Do people attend conferences for this?
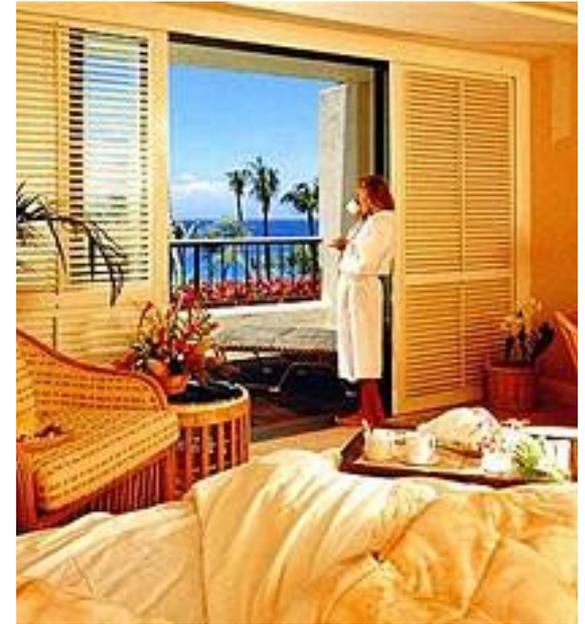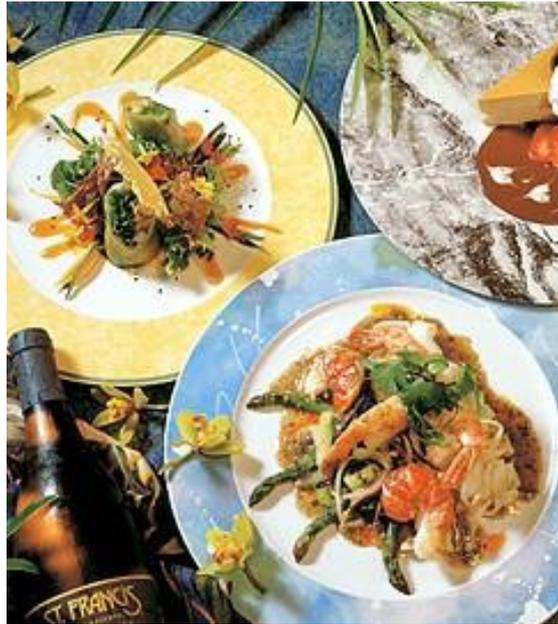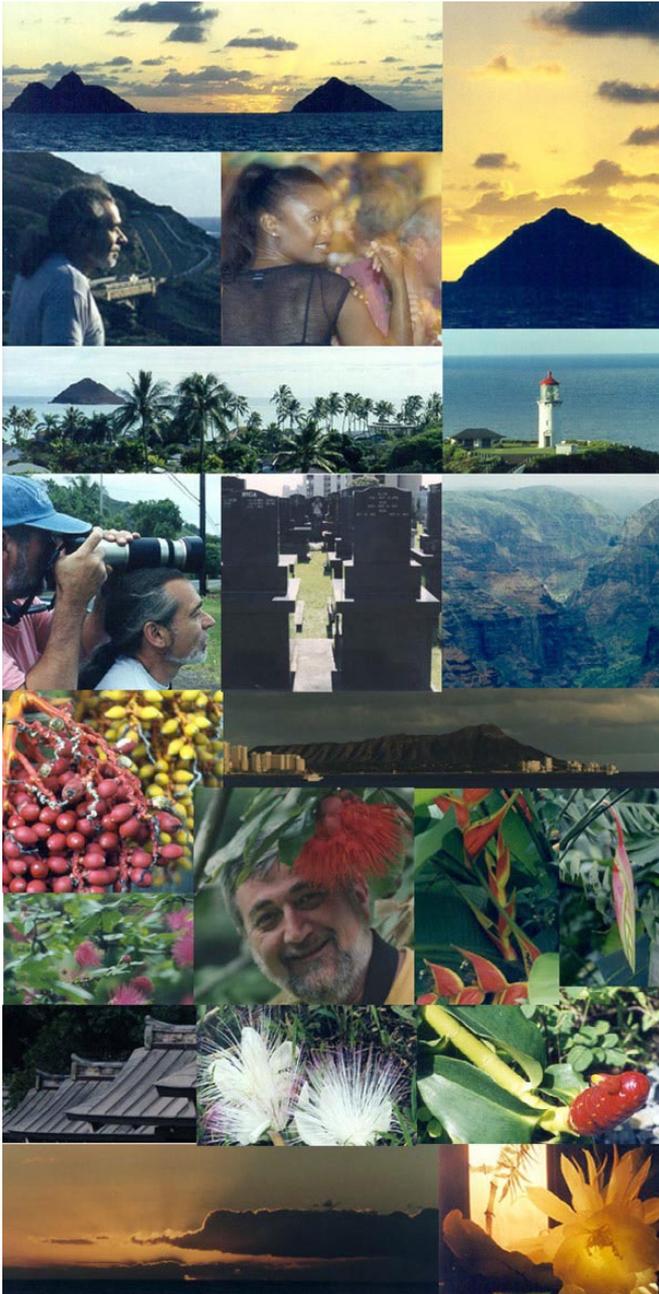
Or for this?

Let's be honest!

Why should people go to conferences?

EXPLOIT REVIEW PROCESS

PUBLISH RESULTS

GAIN FEEDBACK

MEET FELLOW RESEARCHERS

SET UP COLLABORATIONS

LEARN ABOUT STATE OF THE ART
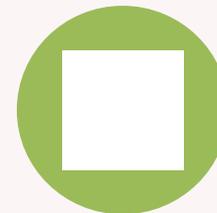
JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Why should YOU do presentations at conferences?

- Disseminate your research
- Make yourself known in your field
- Make contacts
- Other??

gain visibility

=

improve job possibilities + career

=

$+$+$+$+$ +$$+$+$

Why should YOU do presentations at conferences?

Be memorable

Be approachable

People will want to **read** you paper

People will want to **contact** you

= More **collaborations**

= Greater chance of getting **funds**

Remember the AIM of your presentation

Learning to communicate means knowing how to make what you say and what your write MEMORABLE to your audience / readers.

What do you remember about what you have read and heard? Why and how do you remember it?

How can you make your papers and presentations easy to remember?

→ ▦
Joining Breakout Rooms...
Breakout Room 1
It may take a few moments.

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Why / How do people remember stuff?

Motivated

Focus when reading / listening

Talk / Think about it afterwards

What three things from this course so far do you think you will remember - why?