

The cover features a blue background with a large, bold, black number '1' on the right side. The word 'Unit' is written in a white serif font to the left of the '1'. Below the '1', the title 'Introducing Your Academic Self' is written in a white serif font. The bottom half of the cover is filled with a complex network of white lines and dots, resembling a molecular or digital structure. A thick blue curved line separates the top and bottom sections.

Unit

1

Introducing Your
Academic Self

Part I

Introducing the Unit

Introducing yourself to others has become a very common activity in daily life. You may have to do it when you meet new people or when you come to a new place. It is also quite necessary in academic settings. Students or novice researchers alike need to give a self-introduction when they attend a conference or when they sit at their own oral defense meeting. They can hardly avoid introducing themselves when they socialize with others in academic settings.

In this unit, we are going to present the basics about giving a self-introduction, including the basic structure, general principles and common variations at academic events. You will listen to some examples of self-introduction, analyze them, and then practice creating your own version.



Part II

Learning about the Activity

A self-introduction should cover the essential details that others need to know about you, for example, your name, university or affiliation, major or specialization, and other key facts that will help you make a positive impression on those you are speaking to. In a sense, a self-introduction can make or break the first impression.

➔ Structure

The basic structure of a self-introduction usually consists of a starter, a description of your academic self and a smooth transition to the next part.

① A starter (optional)

Instead of beginning your self-introduction right away with your name and title, you can opt for a starter. It can be a fact, a group of statistics, a recent experience, or a question to arouse the curiosity of your audience. Whatever your choice, it should relate to the theme of your presentation and meanwhile grab the attention of your audience.

② A description of your academic self

When describing yourself, you need to state your name clearly and emphatically. Then you can introduce your job title / experience, or your educational degree and certification level. When you give an overview of your background, your achievements or contributions, keep it in mind that your purpose is to communicate your expertise to the audience so as to gain trust and reliability. Therefore the information you include should be pertinent to the purpose.

③ A smooth transition to the next part

To avoid abruptness, you can add a smooth transition to the next part of your talk. For a presentation, you can conclude your self-introduction with a lead-in to what you plan to discuss. A self-introduction to a new acquaintance at a conference can end with a call for further correspondence.

→ Principles

When preparing your self-introduction, remember the following five principles, namely, brevity, relevancy, truthfulness, confidence and humor. They will help you in unexpected ways.

① Brevity

Keep your introduction short. A terse introduction is generally powerful. Go straight to the point. Focus on your most important achievements. Show your expertise. All these will make your introduction impressive and memorable.

② Relevancy

A good introduction must be tailored to your purpose. You need to include details most relevant to the person you're speaking to. If you are giving a conference presentation, offer information that supports your authority in the area you are speaking on. If you are at your oral defense or project report, mention the efforts you have exerted and the preparation you have made for your thesis or project.

Ensure that the information you include in your introduction is related to your speech. Don't go off course. The extra details can be left on a handout or PPT slide if you think they are truly interesting and relevant.

③ Truthfulness

Since you are introducing yourself, be as truthful as possible. You do not need to brag about your achievements or contributions to demonstrate your expertise, because honesty is the best policy.

④ Confidence

It is equally important for you to demonstrate the image of a confident Chinese research student or scholar. Your confidence lies in your rigorous research methods, your years of hard work, and a truthful way of reporting results. You have every reason to be confident in yourself. However, be aware not to overdo it so that you sound arrogant.

5 Humor

A touch of humor can create an instant connection between you and your audience. It can also help put both of you at ease. You can start by making fun of yourself or exaggerating your own experiences in a humorous way. But make sure that any jokes or ironies you use are natural and appropriate for the context in which you are speaking. You can start cultivating your sense of humor from now on, and do not force it into your self-introduction if you are not ready.

Apart from these general principles, a good self-introduction requires the speaker to know the audience, know their familiarity with the topic, their needs and their cultural background. The speaker also needs to pay attention to his/her own body language, including eye-contact with the audience, posture and other non-verbal communication skills. All these will help the speaker to achieve success in the presentation.



Part III

Learning Useful Expressions

➔ At a conference presentation

- Today, I'm going to share a story of how someone with zero marketing skills and training made it to the top through...in just 6 months.
- If you're passionate about..., this is for you. Stay tuned till the end for better insights.
- Hi, my name is...I've got...years' worth of experience in helping business owners boost their sales. I enjoy teaching people how to connect with the right audience at the right time. With my experience in this field, I've helped several entrepreneurs map out proven strategies in getting massive sales. I'm looking forward to working with you all.
- Today's gathering reminded me of a recent burning at...Many people blamed

the occupant for the incident. But my understanding of climate gives me another insight into the issue...My name is...I work with...

- Would you believe if I told you that you could reach 15k+ people on LinkedIn in just 30 days? No? Stick around for the next...minutes as I'm going to teach you all about it so you can get started as a rookie with zero connections.
- Hi everyone! I'm XYZ—a Linked Growth Hacker. I've been helping businesses grow and build a strong personal brand for five years now. If you're wondering how to generate leads on LinkedIn, take note of the pointers I'll be sharing with you today.

➔ At an oral defense

- Good morning, dear professors and my fellow classmates. I am...Thank you for attending my oral thesis defense!
- I've been teaching at...for...years. Throughout these years, I've always been puzzled by a problem: ...Now after years of research, I've finally found a solution. Please allow me to present it to you.
- I've been studying...for...years. During this time, I've developed an interest in...In the past...years, my supervisor has helped me to narrow it down to...Today I'm going to explain to you...
- I had...years of work experience before entering this graduate program. The topic I chose to focus on in my thesis combines my personal interest with the hottest topic in the field.
- The topic of my thesis has nothing to do with my past experience but everything to do with...

Part IV

Practicing Listening



Task 1

Watch an excerpt from the TED talk “The Single Biggest Reason Why Start-ups Succeed” by Bill Gross and complete the following exercises.

1. Watch the video ONCE and fill each blank with NO MORE THAN FOUR words.

I’m really excited to share with you some findings that really surprise me about what makes companies succeed the most, (1) _____ the most for start-up success.

I believe that the start-up organization is one of the greatest forms to make the world a better place. If you take a group of people with the right equity (2) _____ and organize them in a start-up, you can (3) _____ in a way never before possible. You get them to achieve unbelievable things.

But if the start-up organization is so great, why do so many fail? That’s what I wanted to find out. I wanted to find out (4) _____ most for start-up success.

And I wanted to try to be (5) _____ about it, avoid some of my (6) _____ and maybe (7) _____ I have from so many companies I’ve seen over the years.

I wanted to know this because (8) _____ since I was 12 years old when I sold candy at the bus stop in junior high school, to high school, when I made (9) _____, to college, when I made loudspeakers. And when I graduated from college, I started software companies. And 20 years ago, I started Idealab, and in the last 20 years, we started more than 100 companies, many successes, and many big failures. We learned a lot from those failures.

So I (10) _____ what factors accounted the most for company success and failure.

2. Watch again and answer the following questions.

1) What is the structure of this introduction?

2) How did the speaker connect his starter with his personal history?

3) Why did the speaker mention his years of experience in this field?

4) Can you guess what kind of position the speaker held in his field without checking the Internet? If you still don't know this person, check about the answer on the Internet. Now can you tell why he didn't give his self-introduction right at the beginning?



Task 2

Watch an excerpt from the mini-lecture "How to Use Humor in a Speech Opening" by Alex Lyon and complete the following exercises. Then compare the answers in pairs.

1. Watch the video **ONCE** and fill each blank with **NO MORE THAN THREE words**.

Other professional-level speakers say: You should start your presentation

(1) _____.

Alex acknowledges that attention-grabber is (2) _____.

He (3) _____ telling a set-up punchline style joke, the kind that a stand-up comic would tell.

He is 100% in favor of (4) _____ in a presentation.

He can give you a straight-ahead way to (5) _____ without the big risk of a punchline style joke.

2. Watch the video again and answer the following questions.

1) What is the structure of this introduction part of Alex's speech?

2) How many sentences did Alex use to describe himself? What is the purpose of these sentences?

3. Write down the expressions Alex used to transit his opening to the main talk.



Task 3

Watch the beginning part of the lecture "The Perfect Defense: The Oral Defense of a Dissertation" by Dr. Valerie Balester and choose the TWO right answers to each of the following questions.

1. Why did Dr. Balester mention her position and her experience of attending more than 60 defenses?

- A. To show her expertise on this topic.
- B. To illustrate her knowledge about dissertation defense.
- C. To demonstrate her familiarity about the structure of dissertation defense.

2. How did she make transition from her self-introduction to the essence of her lecture?

- A. By giving concrete details about what happens in a defense meeting.
- B. By asking the audience relevant questions.
- C. By answering the questions she raised to the audience.

Part V

Practicing Speaking

Task 1

Suppose you are going to give an oral defense of your thesis in a few days. Prepare a brief self-introduction for your oral defense meeting and present it to your classmates. Include your personal information and your reasons to choose the research topic.

Task 2

Suppose you have just finished writing a research article. Your supervisor asks you to present it at an upcoming international conference. Write a self-introduction for your presentation and present it to the whole class.



Task 3

Watch a self-introduction given by Snehal Awate, an Assistant Professor at the Indian School of Business, and figure out what you can learn from her self-introduction. Work in pairs and take turns to introduce yourself. Take some notes while listening and discuss with your partner how to improve your performance.

Task 4

Work in groups. Go to the Internet and find the beginning part of a presentation at a recent academic conference or an oral defense meeting. Make sure it contains the speaker's self-introduction. Use the following checklist to assess this introduction. Discuss with your group members and vote for the best example in your group.

Assessment Checklist

Aspects for you to consider	Yes	No
Does the speaker include a relevant and interesting starter?		
Does the speaker demonstrate his/her expertise in the field through the self-introduction?		
Does the speaker include a smooth transition to the next part?		
Is the self-introduction brief?		