

Guidelines for Preparation of Effective Oral Presentations

General Comments

A good oral presentation should: (1) define the problem or state the central question being addressed; (2) indicate its importance; (3) tell what was done; (4) state what was found; and (5) consider the broader implications of the findings. It is not possible to cite all previous work, provide detailed descriptions of methods, or include all the data obtained in a 10-minute talk. A good presenter seeks to make a single point, and to make it simply, clearly, and concisely. Oral presentations are greatly enhanced by the use of good visual material. Good visuals convey the essential material of the talk, including key points and research results. They allow the listener to both see and hear; this enhances understanding.

To maximize the effectiveness of your oral presentation, please consider the following guidelines.

Specific Suggestions

- 1. Clear purpose:** Effective visuals and talks make a single main point and tell a unified, coherent story. Organize your talk around a central theme. Develop a clear train of thought that does not get bogged down in detail. Provide a conclusion that summarizes the main points, and raises the important issues posed by the material you presented.
- 2. Freedom from non-essential information:** Unless the purpose of the talk is to present research methods or techniques, omit all but the key methodological details. Save non-essential information for responding to questions during the discussion period.
- 3. Graphs, diagrams, and tables:** Study results are best presented in graphic form. Diagrams can be used to present research design or study hypotheses. Avoid tables, especially those with more than a few rows and columns. Simplify your presentation so that you do not have to tell your audience “I know you can’t read the table in this slide but ...” Keep graphs and diagrams simple. Avoid gratuitous three-dimensional graphs that provide no more information than their two-dimensional equivalents.
- 4. Projection of presentations:** IBM-compatible laptops will be available at the podium for projection of PowerPoint or Adobe Acrobat presentations. Please bring your presentation on a “hotplug” USB device or CD-R. If you use a CD be sure to “close it” for distribution to a variety of computers. Macintosh users must add the “.ppt” extension to the end of the filename. Use common fonts such as Times Roman, Arial, and Helvetica. Under Page Setup, the presentation should be set to “On-screen show.” If you use the “Pack and Go” feature of PowerPoint, have the original .ppt file available on CD or USB device just in case. Please virus check your entire CD or USB device. A final word to the wise: *Always* check your presentation on an IBM-compatible computer other than the one on which you prepared the presentation. This is the easiest way to detect compatibility “issues” *before* heading to the airport/podium.
- 5. Audio-visual equipment:** We will provide equipment for computer projection. Given the very low demand for overhead and traditional slide projectors at the most recent AAPA meetings it is no longer cost-effective for the association to provide these media services. If you require an overhead or slide projector you will need to make arrangements with the local arrangement chair (Anne Grauer) prior to the meetings and bear the related costs. Computer projection will be available for PowerPoint and Adobe Acrobat presentations and require that you bring your presentation on a CD or “hotplug” USB device. Do *not* bring a laptop to the podium as there will already be a laptop there. Please contact Anne Grauer if you have any questions about projection equipment.

*****Simplicity and Legibility are Keys to Effective Oral Presentations*****

Guidelines for Preparation of Effective Poster Presentations

General Comments

provide more opportunities for discussion with interested viewers – several hours instead of the 5 minutes that are available for podium presentations. An oral presentation can be heard at one and only one time; a poster presentation is available for several hours, and thus its viewing can be tailored to fit the interested person's schedule. Therefore, the opportunities for reaching a large audience, receiving useful feedback, and discussing your research are at least as great for a poster as they are for an oral presentation. Typically, the number of podium and poster presentations are approximately equal at the annual meeting. Good oral and poster presentations entail equal effort.

Specific Suggestions

1. **Dimensions. The dimensions for posters have changed for the 2009 meetings. Please prepare your poster accordingly:** The maximum poster size is 3'10" or 116 centimeters (horizontal dimension) by 4' or 120 centimeters (vertical dimension). Thus, two presenters will share the usual 8' by 4' poster board. We changed the dimension requirements so that posters will be available for viewing for many more hours than before. Bring your own pushpins or thumbtacks.
2. **Single page posters:** Effective posters can be prepared using software such as PowerPoint and printed on a wide format printer. It is recommended that posters prepared in this manner be rolled with the text to the outside for transport. However, be careful to protect the ink from being scratched. If you prepare your poster with a graphics program, the background of the poster should be a solid color, not a pattern or a distracting photographic image.
3. **Organization:** Make an initial sketch of your poster presentation, allocating space for Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Summary and Conclusion. Focus attention on a few important points. Try different styles of presentation to achieve clarity and simplicity. Graphs and diagrams provide a clearer statement of your research results than tables. Use limited text to convey the essential information concerning the problem under investigation, methods, results and salient concluding points.
4. **Legibility:** The title should be legible 8 feet (2.44 meters) away; viewers should be able to easily read the remaining words from 5 feet (1.5 meters) away. Poster legibility suffers greatly when the type you use is too small. The letter size should be at least 18 point, with 20-24 even better. Smaller point size is strongly discouraged. Headings (e.g., Materials, Methods, Results) should be bold type. Heading letter size should be larger than the text (30-36 point). Use short, informative ("headline" style) titles to state the essential point of each figure. Avoid abbreviations, acronyms, and jargon. Use consistent type styles and letter sizes throughout. Some individuals have the misperception that posters are simply mounted papers (as though the author attaches a paper to a poster board). However, this is not the case. You will need to simplify the text of your paper to create an effective poster presentation. Avoid presenting lengthy bibliographies. These take up space and are distracting. The presenter might provide photocopies of figures and tables for distribution.
5. **Create a balance between figures, tables and text:** Figures and tables should occupy approximately half the viewing area. If you have only a few illustrations, make them large. *Try to limit the amount of text in your poster to 1500–2000 words so that it can be read in less than 10 minutes.* Studies have shown that most people can read technical text at a rate of 250 words per minute or less.
6. **Eye movement:** The pathway traveled by the eye should be natural, either top-to-bottom or left-to-right.

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