Preparing a Presentation
Giving Presentations

Overview: Presenting your research at a conference for the first time may be a daunting task. This short guide should help you to plan, prepare, practice and deliver your presentation.

Resources Required: MS PowerPoint, Mac Keypoint

1. Planning

What? Why? Where?
First of all, answer the following questions?
• Who is your audience?
• Why are they there?
• How long will it be?
• Where will it take place?

Simplicity
Simplicity is the key to a good presentation. Here are a few tips:
• Focus on the most important points
• Have one key message around which you base your presentation
• Write down 3 things that you want the audience to take away with them

Develop an outline
• Don't open PowerPoint
• Work in a form (e.g. pen & paper) that allows you be creative
• Establish the key points that you will focus on
• Work out your key message
• Develop the logical flow of your presentation

Structure
Good presentations have an engaging beginning, a more detailed middle and a final summary ending.

Intro: This includes a thesis statement or overview. Try to get the attention of the audience with an interesting fact, a question, something humorous or an eye-catching visual aid. The first few minutes are critical!

Middle: This part of your talk covers the main points (remember the Kiss principle, “Keep It Simple Stupid”). This is where you develop your position. Try to link your ideas coherently so the presentation flows and makes sense.

End: This is where you briefly sum up your talk by restating the main points and presenting your conclusions. Make sure to thank people and ask for comments/questions.
More?
Always check the conference guidelines for specific details re. time, resources available etc.

2. Preparing

Preparing your presentation is straightforward if you've planned your talk well and have a logical well-developed outline and structure. Nowadays, PowerPoint dominates presentations. Remember it is only a small element of your presentation. The following tips should help you in your preparation.

3 friends

- Prepare 3 documents for your presentation:
  - 1) Your notes which no else sees
  - 2) Handouts with more detailed information & references
  - 3) Visual aids (usually PowerPoint) that support your talk and help engage the audience.

PowerPoint Tips

Keep text to a minimum - avoid full sentences, keep level of bullets to a minimum. Use colour to focus people on the most important details. Use images to support your content.

Accessibility

Prepare a presentation that welcomes everyone. Below are some guidelines:

- Minimum font size of 18 (ideally 30)
- Easily read fonts (sans serif) like Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma.
- Limit the amount of onscreen information
- Avoid blocks of text
- Use ‘bold’ to highlight points rather than underlining
- Use both uppercase and lowercase letters (avoid ALL UPPERCASE)
- Keep backgrounds simple, avoid patterns
- Dark text on light background for bright rooms
- Light text on dark background for dark rooms.

More?

- Images for your Presentation: http://sxc.hu/ (free)
  www.istockphoto.com (commercial)
- PowerPoint Themes: http://www.presentationmagazine.com/free_powerpoint_template.htm (free)
  http://www.presentationload.com (commercial)
3. Practicing

Most people never practice delivering their presentation. It is essential. It gives you a chance to correct things you don’t like and it gives you confidence.

Preparation and practice are the best medicine for nerves:

1. Become familiar with the venue - practice there if possible.
2. Try imagining the room and giving the presentation in a successful way.
3. Anticipate what might go wrong and prepare ahead, i.e. a glass of water in case your mouth goes dry.
4. Take a deep breath, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through your mouth to relieve tension – no one can see you do it!
5. If you need to use a script, make sure that it’s written in casual spoken language. Even the best speakers often write down the wording of key phrases.
6. Work out what you are going to do with your body: are you going to stand behind the podium? If so, how can you ensure you connect with the audience? If you are going to stand in front of the audience, what are you going to do with your hands?
7. Have a bottle of water – it will help you pause naturally, stop your voice from going dry and it also helps to relax you.
8. Before your talk, build up your confidence and warm up your voice by asking questions in previous presentations or by talking to audience members as they come into the room.
9. Finally, make sure you have some time before your talk to relax and take your mind off your presentation. If you’ve prepared your material and practiced your presentation, you’ll be fine!

Rehearse
- In a place as similar to the real venue that you can find
- Build up to your performance.
- Only practice doing it right.

Cardinal sins
- If you are presenting a conference paper DO NOT READ IT – have a hard copy as a handout
- Do not turn your back on the audience
- Do not read from your slides

More?
Try to get a friend to listen to your practice and ask them for honest feedback

More tips on practicing your speech:
4. Presenting on the Day

If you’ve followed the previous steps, then on the day you can focus on delivering your presentation in the most engaging way.

If possible check out the room to ensure everything works and you have an idea of the layout.

- Try not to “read” your talk. Use cue cards to prompt your memory.
- Use a conversational tone. Make sure you are speaking loud enough to be heard.
- Try to be enthusiastic.
- Make sure to pause between points, indicating to the audience a change and helps to slow down your pace.

**Body Language**

Body language has a significant impact on an audience’s impression.

- maintain eye contact
- face the audience
- try smiling occasionally!

**Relaxation Techniques**

Breathing – Positive Thinking – Bottle of water

**Final Check**

- Check room, time, equipment – get grounded
- Check sound levels
- Practice your timing
- Check that your presentation works

Be enthusiastic and enjoy your presentation. If you don’t, no one else will.

**More?**

- more delivery tips see here: [http://www.garrreynolds.com/Presentation/delivery.html](http://www.garrreynolds.com/Presentation/delivery.html)
**Box 1: Nerves**
Preparation and rehearsal
- Be over-prepared
- Rehearse/practice
- Plan for all eventualities
- Avoid stressors
- Become familiar with the venue
- Use positive thoughts
- Use relaxation technique

**Box 2: Charts**
Graphical Examples of good bad powerpoint

**Box 3: Presentations vs. Journals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Presentations</th>
<th>Journal Papers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>■ 40%</td>
<td>■ 5-10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong></td>
<td>■ Ideas 1 per 5 mins.</td>
<td>■ No limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repetition</strong></td>
<td>■ Repetition desirable</td>
<td>■ Undesirable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td>■ Length - available time</td>
<td>■ Depends on journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visuals</strong></td>
<td>■ A lot of Visual material</td>
<td>■ Only where relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
<td>■ 1st and 2nd person</td>
<td>■ 1st sometimes, 2nd never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tone</strong></td>
<td>■ Conversational</td>
<td>■ Formal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>