

Tips for a Successful Electronic Presentation (for Electronic Posters and Oral Presentations)

1. **Prepare a basic presentation outline.** For example:
 - A. Presenter's name, topic, institutional affiliation, etc.
 - B. Background information (Place the talk in context of the literature.)
 - C. Objective(s) of the research (Why did you undertake this work?)
 - D. Materials/Methods
 - E. Results/Discussion of Results
 - F. Significance (and perhaps future work)
 - G. Acknowledgments

2. **Understand the medium.** Well-designed graphics can greatly enhance understanding and improve retention of information, but electronic presentations are not without potential pitfalls. Well-designed presentations *use a consistent format, wisely chosen colors and fonts, and instructive illustrations*. Poor choices communicate poorly and can distract from your message and you. Be aware that your presentation may interface with your computer and/or projector differently than it will with the electronic devices you will use for your presentation. To avoid problems, leave at least a 10% blank or "safe area" around your text and pictures, and test your presentation on more than one platform (computer operating system).

3. **Limit colors and control contrast.** Color can be a powerful visual tool; use it sparingly. Ensure adequate contrast between text color and background color. Use light letters, like white or pale yellow against a dark-colored background like blue or green. Use only a few color choice "templates" per presentation. Highly textured, multi-color fills and loud backgrounds can be distracting. Avoid white backgrounds, which can strain viewer's eyes in a darkened room. Avoid red text (except for emphasis) and backgrounds as these "vibrate" leaving a negative impression. Also be aware of the common red/green color blindness in your design choices <http://www.visibone.com/colorblind/>

4. **Select appropriate fonts and illustrations.** Fonts should enhance the presentation without being the focus. The most legible fonts are those that have strokes with the similar thickness at all points; Helvetica, Arial, and Verdana are good examples. Fancy or ornate type faces can be hard to read; use them sparingly for title slides and headings. Use normal, bold, or extra bold (black) versions of the some type face to visually separate elements. Limit typefaces, sizes and weights to 2 or 3 and retain these throughout the presentation. Some kinds of typeface are specifically designed for electronic presentation like Microsoft's Trebuchet MS (Truetype) and Verdana (Truetype).

Examples of typefaces that work well for electronic presentation

Arial, Bookman Old Style, Comic Sans, Helvetica, Optima, Palatino, Verdana. Monospaced (equally spaced letters and spaces) fonts should be restricted to Courier.

Font or Typeface Size

Plan the main body of your text to be about 32 pt but have nothing smaller than 20 pt for 4th or 5th level headings. Test your font sizes to make sure people in the back or sides of the room can easily read your text. Differentiate headings from the main body by using larger type, a different font, or different color. Use standard upper and lower case letters for best readability.

Illustrations

Whenever possible, substitute pictures, graphs, diagrams, tables, or charts for words to convey complicated information quickly and efficiently. Keep drawings simple and lines bold. Drawings with solid colors or text should be made into .gif files; photos should be .jpg files. Use image editing software such as Photoshop, GraphicConverter, etc. to edit your graphics and use the *Save for the web...* feature for smaller files. Use PowerPoint's *Insert picture from file* command to place (i.e., do *not* link but instead, imbed image into your presentation). To guarantee that PowerPoint does not change your graphs (particularly from SigmaPlot and even Excel) unexpectedly, make them into gif files and import them—do NOT copy and paste graphics from another application directly into PowerPoint but go through image editing software first. Label charts and diagrams with horizontal text (vertical y-axis text is OK) to avoid audience fatigue. Don't clutter graphs with needless text and footnotes. If necessary, reserve detailed data for handouts.

Scanned images

Optimal settings for digitized photos, slides* and printed materials is 72 dots per inch resolution and a color palette between 256 and 1000 colors. Anything greater is beyond the resolution of the projector or the web and will create huge presentation files. Use a "universal" color palette to ensure image colors remain consistent when transferred across computers. Scan images at 75% to 50% actual screen size. This will save disk space and leaves an area surrounding the image for headings, labels, etc. If you are unsure about copyright clearance get permission or find an alternative image.

*note that slides should often be scanned at a higher resolution than 72 dpi (ca. 550 dpi) because they must be scaled upward in presentation size (from <1 inch (2.2 cm)). By later multiplying the size of the image by 7X and reducing the dpi to 72 dpi, you will be able to resize your image for easier viewing without pixelization.

Movies

If your talk includes a movie attachment, please arrange beforehand with the organizers to ensure that the presentation will work as planned.

5. **Keep content concise.** *For oral presentations:* Use key words instead of complete sentences on slides that will be used in a talk. Text on each slide should reflect the main points of your presentation. Bulleted items can introduce or summarize key points. *For electronic poster presentations,* you will need to elaborate more fully because you will not be there to add content by addressing your audience in person. You are less limited by time in an electronic poster presentation and can allow the audience to more fully explore your concepts by providing additional hyperlinks.

6. **Don't squeeze too much onto one slide.** This is especially important in oral presentations when the size of the room may be large and audience members may need to read your slides from the back. Five to seven words per line and five to seven lines per slide is a good starting point. Twenty-five words per slide is a good guideline. Headings should be short. Spread your information over multiple "slides" rather than crowding words and graphics on a single slide. Again, in an electronic poster presentation, you have a bit more leeway because your audience will be in front of the computer projecting your slides.
7. **Keep transitions between slides smooth.** Be sure that the content of your presentation flows logically from slide to slide. Also, fancy electronic transitions may detract from your message, require more computer processing power than simple transitions, and thus may slow the pace of your presentation, and ultimately may be incompatible with the operating system or version of PowerPoint that is available at the time of projection, delivering unexpected results.
8. **Double check spelling, grammar, and data.** Avoid embarrassment!
9. **Preview your presentation.** This will ensure that your presentation is working according to your expectations.
10. **Save your presentation as a PowerPoint Show (.pps).** As a timesaver during the meeting and to limit handling time of your presentation, submit it as a PowerPoint Show. PowerPoint Shows have the extension .pps rather than .ppt.

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