How to give a professional talk

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Problems arise when presenters

- Have not practiced.
- Have not considered the needs of their audiences.
- Have not considered the affordances of the situation.
- Allow natural nervousness to knock them off course.
Today’s Topics

❖ Understanding your purpose
❖ Meeting your audience’s needs
❖ Maximizing your talk / poster
❖ Preparing yourself for the occasion.
Purpose
To present the most current information on your research in a short timespan by:

❖ Engaging your audience immediately.
❖ Making the information accessible to all.
❖ Supplementing visually (oral presentation).
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❖ Being the person MOST excited about your work (it’s contagious!).
Audience

ORAL PRESENTATION

❖ Varied knowledge & interest in your topic
❖ Is seated and focused
❖ Can hear the context to understand the research better
❖ Needs verbal cues to follow the presentation.
❖ Will ask questions (hopefully!)

POSTER PRESENTATION

❖ Varied knowledge & interest in your topic
❖ Passes by and stops (limited focus)
❖ Will engage visually more than auditorily
❖ Needs visual guidance to move from context to content
❖ Will ask questions (hopefully!)
Oral Presentation Content

❖ What is the problem and why is it a problem?
❖ What has been done about it before?
❖ What are you doing (or have done) about it?
❖ What additional value does your approach provide?
❖ Where do we go from here?

*Remember to collaborate on this with your faculty advisor!*

ENAR Effective Presentation Guidelines (2000)
Maximizing 10-12 minutes of airtime

- Get the audience hooked! Place them and/or you in the context.
- Think of the “narrative” or story of the work.
- Use connective and transitional devices as you speak to guide the audience.
- Keep concepts simple.
- Be aware of your breadth and depth: try to strike a balance.
- Think of your “takeaway” idea to end on.
- Don’t go over your allotted time!
Building a slide presentation

- Simplicity is best
- Color, font & size matter
- Avoid fancy transitions & animation
- Keep graphics high-quality
- Use graphs/charts
- Use the slide sorter to view the flow of your presentation
Practice, Practice, Practice

- Make eye contact.
- Do not read from your slides.
- Know your material inside and out.
- Don’t panic if you forget to cover a detail.
- Prepare for possible technological failures.
You as a public speaker

- **Know yourself under pressure:** Do you hold your breath? Do your shoulders go up? Does your mouth get dry?
- **Eliminate distractions:** pronunciation of key terms, spelling on slides, issues in the room (lighting, etc).
- **Dress comfortably yet professionally:** This helps your body language.
- **Be confident and don’t apologize:** The audience is a fan club!
Maximizing your poster

*First see the [URC poster guidelines](#) and work with your faculty advisor on the content!

- **Be Simple!** Emphasize results and conclusions. YOU are there for the details. Format text with bullets.
- **Think BIG.** Everything should be legible from 4 feet away.
- **Work with color for consistency and emphasis.**
- **Present data in graphics.** Avoid tables. Trend lines (through line and bar graphs) present in a memorable way.
- **Keep all headings and labels horizontal.**
Maximizing your poster presentation

❖ Prepare a two-minute talk that offers an overall summary of your research.
❖ Practice giving that talk with a friend.
❖ Practice in front of your poster.
❖ Point to relevant elements of the poster during your two-minute talk.
❖ Make eye contact.
Content of your two-minute talk

- Explain what you’re researching and why.
- Explain your findings (so far).
- Explain the significance of your findings.
Engage your viewer from the start.

❖ Stay close to your poster (but off to the side) to allow people to take in your ideas.
❖ Make eye contact and greet viewers as they approach your poster.
❖ Introduce yourself and offer to answer questions.
If a viewer stays for a while...

- Offer your two-minute talk.
- Ask the viewer questions:
  - Can you see what’s going on here? (If they’re looking at a particular image or figure).
  - Would you like more information/background on that?
  - Do you have any questions?
Don’t...

❖ Don’t hold your phone in your hand (no texting, etc. even when you don’t have a viewer at your poster).
❖ Don’t read directly from your poster.
❖ Don’t chat with a friend or another presenter while you have a viewer at your poster.

Remember, you are the link between the viewer and the poster.
Responding to questions

- Repeat the question back to the person to be sure you understand it well.
- Answer one piece at a time.
- Keep your answer short.
- Offer to correspond later if it seems appropriate.
Good luck!

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