

How do I...

PRESENT MY RESEARCH AT CONFERENCES

When we do research, it is important that we not only do a great job conducting our research, but that we effectively communicate our research findings. There are two formal ways to communicate research findings: publishing in academic journals and presenting at academic conferences. This “How do I...” guide focuses on the latter.

PRESENTATION FORMATS

The two most common ways to present research at academic conferences are the **oral presentation** and the **poster presentation**. Oral presentations vary in length but are usually between 10-20 minutes and are followed by 5-10 minutes of questions. Most oral presentations are accompanied by a set of slides, and it is generally expected that the speaker will not read their presentation. Poster presentations involve preparing a poster (physical or digital) which will be displayed during the conference. In addition, there is usually an allotted time that you will be required to stand next to your poster and be available to explain and answer questions about your poster’s content.

AN EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION

Regardless of the presentation format, **an excellent and effective presentation consists of three key ingredients**: i) knowing the audience, ii) tailoring the content, and iii) being a passionate presenter (Alley, 2013).

You first need to make a judgement about **the audience’s knowledge** of your research area so you can pitch the content at an appropriate level. Too high and your audience will be unable to engage with your content; too low and you will miss the opportunity of expanding their knowledge.

Once you understand your audience, carefully consider your presentation content, remembering less is more. **Avoid presenting all your research**. Rather, identify your story and include only the strongest findings that support your story. Your audience will less likely be overwhelmed and confused by your findings.

When presenting your research, **show your enthusiasm for your research**. This is an area that does come more naturally to some, but with time you can improve your presentation style. When listening to others present, pay attention to effective and ineffective presentation styles and try to emulate those practices that you think will work with your own presentations. How presentations are received is subjective, so focus most on preparing a

presentation that contains suitable content for the intended audience.

PRESENTATION PREPARATION

Allow yourself time to prepare your conference presentation. Oral presentations have strict time limits, and it is critical to practise your presentation so your story fits within the allocated time. If you are preparing a poster, do not underestimate the time it can take to overcome the challenges of incorporating all the desired information and figures in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Likewise, designing effective slides can be very time consuming. You will also want to allow time to incorporate feedback from your peers before the conference.

Finally, keep in mind **“not everyone is an excellent presenter every single day”** (Alley, 2013). Be kind to yourself if your presentation doesn’t quite go to plan. Reflect on and jot down what you could have done differently and focus on this next time.

RELATED “HOW DO I...” GUIDES

- Make the most of conferences

Reference:

Alley, M. (2013). *The craft of scientific presentations critical steps to succeed and critical errors to avoid* (2nd ed.). New York: Springer Science.

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March 2022

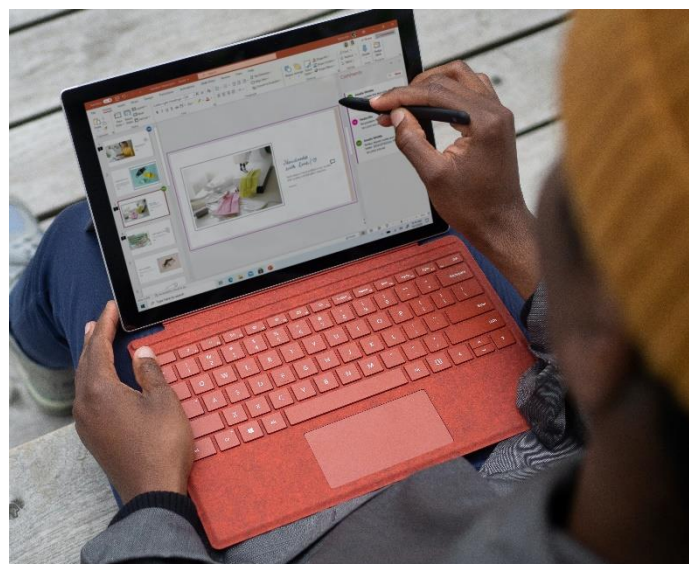


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