

Guidelines for Oral Presentations

Guidelines for Speakers in Symposium and General Sessions

Presentations are scheduled in 20-minute blocks. Three things must happen during this block: 1) speaker introduction, 2) your presentation, and 3) question and answer period. Out of courtesy to the audience and other speakers, it is important that speakers stay on time. The moderator will notify you when your presentation reaches 12 minutes. Please adhere to these guidelines.

Rehearse your talk before the meeting to be sure you do not exceed the allotted time. Have peers evaluate your talk.

Podium lighting and microphones are not always dependable. Be prepared.

A general outline for talks should be: introduction, objectives, methods, results, and conclusions/implications.

Objectives should be clearly stated. Conclusions should relate back to objectives.

Avoid unnecessary detail in methods unless the methodology is the central topic of your talk. Primarily discuss the results and conclusions.

An excellent article for speakers is "Strategy and checklist of effective scientific talks" (Ecol. Soc. Am. Bull. 72: 8-12, 1991).

Guidelines for Visual Aids

Computer presentation is the only acceptable format for oral presentations. Please save your presentation on a CD or flash (USB) drive.

Large files require ample memory to run and may stall during presentation. Animation and other such tools that increase file size are discouraged.

Keep visuals simple; limit one idea per visual. Text and data visuals should be prepared specifically for your presentation, not copied from a manuscript or paper. Figures and tables for publications usually do not make good visuals for talks because they contain too much detail.

When working with words, think brevity. Use a maximum of 6 words across and 5 or 6 lines deep. Use only key phrases to emphasize important points.

Tables should be simple with a maximum of 3 columns and 5 rows or vice versa. Illustrate complex ideas with a series of separate visuals.

Experiment with different graph and chart options for presenting data, but keep graphic slides simple. Explain the structure of graphs as well as their content.

Visuals look best if you use 2 to 4 different colors. Any more and the visuals look too confusing. White and yellow on blue, green or black backgrounds work well. Avoid color combinations of blue, green, and red.

Use an easily read font in a large size, 18 bold or larger.