

## Helpful Tips for Oral Presentations and Poster Presentations

### Oral Presentations

#### *Content*

1. Effective slides should have a single, readily identifiable principal concept.
2. Avoid information not directly supporting the principal concept.
3. Avoid text-only slides with more than 6-7 words per line as they tend to be difficult to read.

#### *Color*

- Slides with dark backgrounds (black, blue or other color) can excessively darken the room and often present problems displaying readable text.
- If you cannot avoid using a dark background, do not use **red, dark blue** or similar colored text on a dark background.
- If you choose to use a dark background, use **white, yellow** or other light-colored lettering.
- Do not use complex backgrounds. They distract the audience.
- White or light pastel backgrounds are preferred with dark lettering.

#### *Fonts*

- San Serif Fonts such as Arial, Helvetica and Comic Sans are more easily readable than serif fonts such as Times Roman and Courier.

#### *Space*

- Keep slides simple with sufficient open space.
- An uncluttered appearance is essential for rapid comprehension of content at a glance.
- Keep sufficient space between lines of text to allow a clear division of the lines.
- Limit messages to 7 words per line and 7 lines or less per slide (7x7).
- Graphs or charts should be simple with large lettering and should have widely spaced axis marks.
- Tables should be simple, typically no more than 3-4 columns and 5-6 rows.
- If you can read the information on the computer at arm's length (~1 yard or meter), it is likely readable when projected. A font size of at least 18 for the smallest important text is recommended.

#### *Quantity*

- Try not to present more than one slide per minute (unless projecting several histopathologically or methodologically similar slides).

#### *Presentation*

- The verbal content and the visual material should support and complement each other.
- Give the audience a moment to become oriented with each slide before continuing.
- Duplicate your slide if you refer to the same slide more than once instead of paging back to a prior slide.

### *Audience*

- Everyone enjoys an audience, especially if the audience is responsive and asks questions.
- Give your audience an opportunity to interact with you.
- Read the abstracts of other presenters and engage in their presentations.

## **Poster Presentations**

### *General*

- Posters should be readable by viewers 5 feet away.
- The message should be clear and understandable without oral explanation.

### *Initial Sketch*

- Plan your poster early and focus your attention on a few key points.
- Try various styles of data presentation to achieve clarity and simplicity.
- The use of color may help significantly.
- Consider carefully what needs to be expressed in words vs. graphics.
- Utilize headlines and text topics to attract attention.

### *Rough Layout*

- Enlarge your best initial sketch, keeping the dimensions in proportion to the final poster.
- Ideally, the rough layout should be full size; a blackboard or dry eraser board is a convenient place to work.
- Print the title and headlines. Indicate text by horizontal lines.
- Draw rough graphs and tables.
- This will give you a good idea of proportions and balance. If you are working with an artist, show the poster layout. Ask colleagues for comments. This is still an experimental stage.

### *Final Layout*

The artwork is complete. The text and tables are typed but not necessarily enlarged to full size.

Ask yourself the following.

- Is the message clear?
- Do the important points stand out?
- Is there a balance between words and illustrations?
- Is there spatial balance?
- Is the pathway through the poster clear (left to right)?

### *Balance*

- The figures and tables should cover slightly more than 50% of the poster area.
- If you have only a few illustrations, make them large.
- Do not omit the text, but keep it brief.
- The poster should be understandable without oral explanation.

### *Topography*

- Avoid abbreviations, acronyms and jargon
- Use a consistent font throughout. An 8<sup>1/2</sup>"x11" sheet of paper photostatically enlarged 50% makes the text readable from five feet.

### *Eye Movement*

- The movement (pathway) of the eye over the poster should be natural - down the columns or along the rows.
- Size attracts attention.
- Arrows, pointing hands, numbers and letters can help clarify the sequence.

### *Simplicity*

- Resist the temptation to overload the poster.
- More material may mean less communication.

### **Both Poster and Oral Presentations**

Whichever format, oral presentation or poster presentation, planning and experience will make your presentation clear, effective, and rewarding. Practice by yourself and with an audience using your final PowerPoint presentation or prepared poster.

### *Reminders*

- Proofread extensively.
- Introduce yourself first during the presentation.
- Acknowledge those who have helped you with your research.