

## Presenting Your Work Orally

Tips provided by faculty members Corey Peacock and Suzanne Ferriss

| <i>General differences between a paper and a talk</i> |   |  |
|---|---|--|
|   | <b>Paper</b>  | <b>Talk</b>                                      |
| Presentation style                                    | formal, APA format  | conversational                                   |
| Introduction  | give a thorough understanding of the way things stand now                 | give the basics of previous research             |
| Methods   | present everything that person would need to know to replicate your study | make the audience your participant               |
| Results   | present everything - almost no detail is too small                        | focus on your big findings                       |
| Discussion  | present your work in a larger context in detail                           | present your work in a larger context in general |
| Goal  | Fit your work into the larger body of knowledge                           | go for the big picture stuff - relevance         |

### Some general tips:

1. Pretend you are telling a story – everyone likes a story.
2. Consider your audience (are they students, professors, novices, scientists in other fields)?
3. Leave out the nitty gritty details and go for the big picture – why should these people listen to you?
4. Presenting RESULTS
  - a. Go slow.
  - b. Be visual.
  - c. Be sure to explain in detail what exactly your dependent measure is, how you arrived at the number, and what it means (i.e. higher numbers mean what?)
  - d. Be sure to mention what your axes are when introducing your figures.
  - e. Might mention what it would look like if you got a significant/nonsignificant result before you present the actual data.
  - f. Think of a 1-2 sentence summary of what the graph shows.
5. Write about 2-3 conclusions at the end of your presentation – what is the take-home message here?
6. Always clue your audience that you are done by saying either “thank you”, “thanks”, “thanks for your attention”, “and that concludes my presentation”, “I’d be happy to answer any questions”, etc.
7. Be prepared for follow-up questions. It is expected that you know most of your field in regards to your research topic. But if you don’t know the answer, don’t BS – just be honest and say it’s something you are going to have to investigate further (for example).
8. General PowerPoint tips
  - a. Make sure the font is big enough – and use the same font throughout.
  - b. Keep white space to a maximum.
  - c. Be careful with your color scheme (red/green) – use high contrast layouts and avoid the flashy ones.
  - d. With transitions, keep it simple.

## Advice for Presenting Papers

- The professional practice in the humanities is generally to deliver a lecture (i.e., to read your entire paper in the time allotted)
- At some professional meetings or conferences, papers are circulated in advance and presenters offer a condensed version of their papers

You have two initial choices:

1. If you have sufficient time, you can read your paper in its entirety to your audience. Assume it takes two minutes to read each page (e.g., 5 pages = 10 minutes, 10 pages = 20 minutes).
2. If you have insufficient time, condense your work to focus on the logical outline of your argument (i.e., your thesis and key points). You may either read a shortened version of the paper or work from notecards or an outline.

### Using PowerPoint/Keynote presentations:

In either case, you may decide to accompany your work with a PowerPoint presentation. If so, here are some tips:

1. Keep it simple. The format and font should be large and easily readable.
2. Do not put too much text on a slide. Text should accompany, not substitute for, your words.
3. If you are analyzing specific passages in detail, consider putting quotations on individual slides. Use more than one if the passage is long and the font will be reduced to accommodate the text.
4. Use images, if appropriate, to illustrate your text. But don't be cute. This is a formal presentation of your work.

### General advice:

1. Remember your audience. Consider whether you will need to provide introductory or background material for those who are not experts in your field to establish context, but assume you are addressing an audience familiar with your field.
2. Engage your audience by reading at a comfortable pace and establishing eye contact—naturally.
3. Prepare yourself for questions. Anticipate possible questions and comments but be open to ideas you may not have considered. Take a moment to reflect and answer to the best of your ability. Don't be defensive: acknowledge the limits of your knowledge.
4. Remember that you are presenting your work for a purpose: you are part of an academic community and have been given the opportunity to engage your fellow students and faculty members in an intellectual conversation. Enjoy the experience!