

Tips for Successful Conference Presentations

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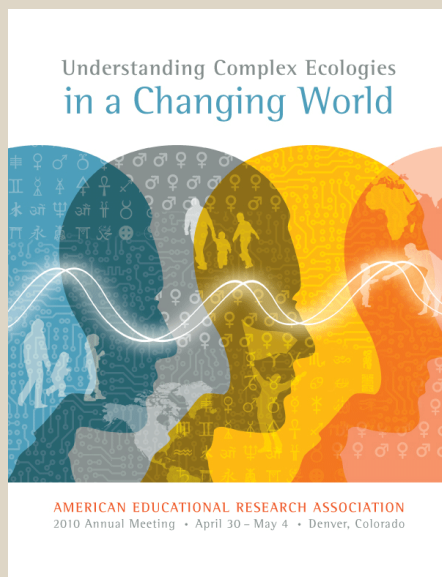


Today's Topics

- Understanding common conference formats
- Writing a conference proposal
- Preparation for an academic presentation
- Basic presentation considerations
- Using PowerPoint effectively
- Oral presentation skills
- Handling questions



Conference Formats



Common Conference Formats

- Concurrent Paper Presentation
 - Presentation with time limit; grouped with others
- Symposium
 - Thematic presentation as part of group/panel
- Roundtable
 - Interactive discussion of paper in small group
- Poster Session
 - Individualized discussion with graphic display



Conference Format Info

- Concurrent Paper Presentation
 - Used for any kind of research; Most coveted
- Symposium
 - Good for multiple researchers on common theme
- Roundtable
 - Good for qualitative work; Allows deep discussion
- Poster Session
 - Used for any kind of research; Often entry level



Plan for Your Format

- Concurrent paper presentations and symposia typically are well-structured and have fixed (often short) time frames. You can use a PowerPoint to support your talk.
- Roundtables and posters are more open formats usually with liberal time allowances, but even in these formats you should be prepared to give short talks to summarize your work and foster dialogue.



Writing a Conference Proposal



Proposal Preparation

- Follow all guidelines carefully
 - Your proposal may be disqualified if you don't
- Relate your topic to key issues/theme(s)
 - Avoid a narrow topic; Make it relevant
- State your main points up front
 - Don't wait to get to the point
- Key your content to the audience
 - Address research for research conferences



Proposal Preparation

- Create a good title
 - A catchy or interesting title will grab attention
- Write a clear description/abstract
 - Descriptions often go in the program
- Make sure your proposal is error-free
 - Proofread for grammar and spelling
- Meet the deadline
 - Avoid submitting at the last minute



Preparation for a Conference Presentation



Conference Preparation

- Distill your paper into a talk
 - Remember: oral communication is *not* the same as written communication
- Prepare supplemental materials
 - Prepare poster or PowerPoint (use a template)
 - Develop handout (e.g., paper or slides summary)
- Plan
 - Prepare your talk to fit the allotted time



Basic Presentation Considerations



Define Your Message

- Focus on your presentation goals
 - What do you want the audience to know about your work?
 - Plan to summarize your key points.
- Don't get lost in the details
 - Emphasize the important issues or “big picture” significance of your work.
 - Downplay specifics, like details of the literature or the significance value of a statistic.



Know Your Audience

- Not all audiences are the same
 - Specialized conferences (e.g., NCTM for math ed, AECT for ed tech) attract experts in the field.
 - More general conferences (e.g., AERA) have people from various sub-disciplines.
- Aim for a typical to somewhat advanced person in your audience
 - Avoid basic content with experts, but provide background for a more general audience.

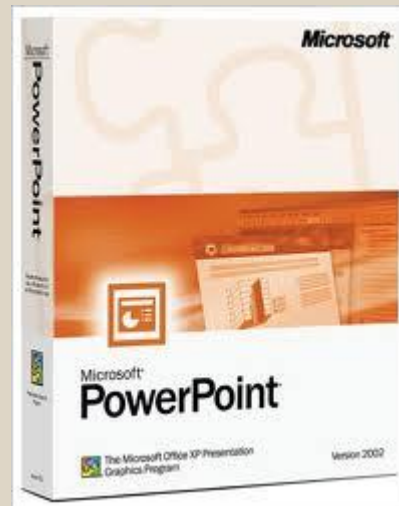


Prepare

- Rehearse your talk to fit slightly under the allotted time.
- If there are multiple presenters, plan in advance who will discuss which components of the talk and how transitions will be handled.
- If possible, do a complete “dress rehearsal” in front of a public audience.



Using PowerPoint Effectively



Organize the Presentation

- Make an outline of the presentation
 - Use your outline as an introductory slide
 - Follow the outline to lay out the slides
- Mirror key parts of your paper
 - Address key parts of the paper but don't try to duplicate it
 - Use the presentation to encourage the audience to read the paper



Plan for the Allotted Time

- Prepare about 1 slide per minute of time.
- If you have too many slides, you'll be unable to get through them all. You will either run long, or you will have to skip some.
- If you have too few slides, your audience will get bored having to look at the same slide for an extended time.



Focus on Key Points

- Have one main idea per slide
- Bullet key points
- Generally, limit yourself to no more than about 4-5 major bullets per slide
 - Some designers use the 6 x 6 rule: no more than about 6 lines of text with 6 words per line
- Avoid blocks of text



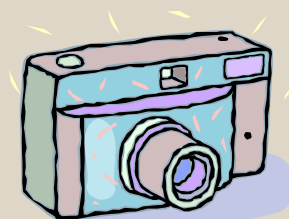
Make Text Legible and Accurate

- Use font sizes of at least 24 pt (maybe 18 pt in a pinch)
- Use sans-serif fonts
- Stick to high contrast colors
- Use design templates for consistency
- Use *highlighting* and **color** sparingly
- Limit use of animations / special effects
- Check spelling and grammar for accuracy

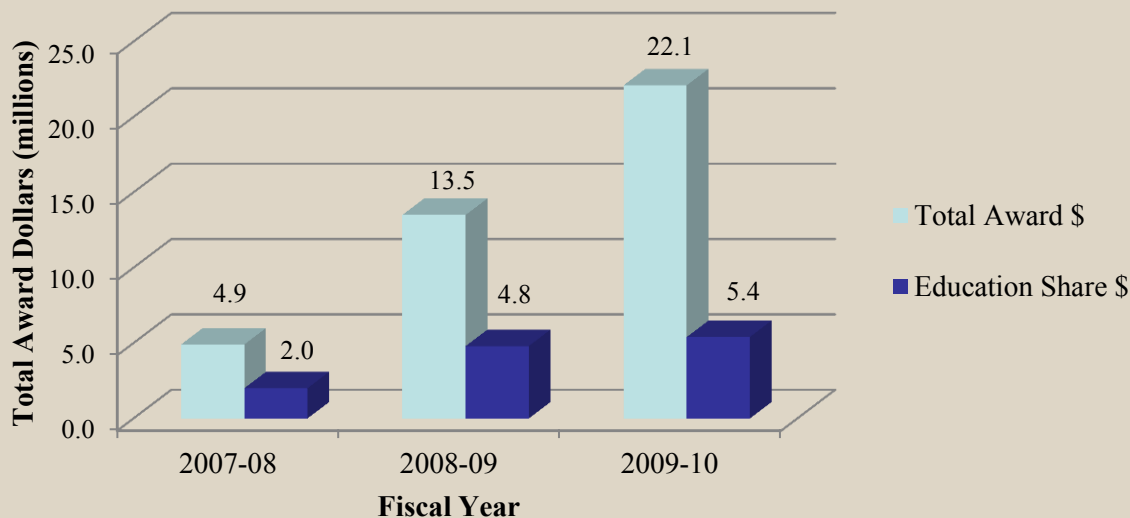


Use Visuals

- Images can add interest and support the content
- Graphs convey data better than tables



Total Award Amounts Involving Education



Oral Presentation Skills



Talk to the Audience

- Adopt a conversational tone
- Do not read slides
- Use notes sparingly
- Make eye contact with audience members
- Speak clearly and loud enough for all to hear



Be Professional

- Dress appropriately
- Try to stay calm and relaxed
- Avoid distracting behaviors
- Maintain awareness of the time
 - Use a watch or small clock if necessary
- Stay flexible and adjust as needed



Handling Questions



Q&A Sessions

- Use questions as an opportunity for further engagement with the audience.
- Generally, keep answers brief and on topic.
- Admit it if you don't know an answer.
- If you are challenged or attacked, acknowledge the point, answer the question as best you can, and move on.



Q&A Follow-up

- Take time after the session to meet with those who have more extensive questions.
- Have your business card or handouts available to provide to interested individuals.
- After the conference, respond to e-mail inquiries you may receive. Posting your paper and slides online can be helpful.



Tips for Successful Academic Presentations

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Questions?

