

# Oral Presentations

Every presentation - even informal presentations to the lab - represent a precious opportunity to share your progress and get valuable feedback. Take the time to create a presentation that will get you the constructive feedback that you need! If you have to spend most of the question time clarifying your hypotheses, data, methods, or plots, you will have less time (and patience on the part of observers) to get input.

The following information is based on the American Association of Physical Anthropologists guidelines for effective oral presentations, updated by Charlie:

## A good oral presentation should:

- (1) define the problem or state the central question being addressed
- (2) indicate its importance
- (3) tell what was done
- (4) state what was found
- (5) consider the broader implications of the findings.

## Keep the following in mind:

**Clear purpose:** Effective visuals and talks make a single main point and tell a unified, coherent story. Organize your talk around a central theme. Develop a clear train of thought that does not get bogged down in detail. Provide a conclusion that summarizes the main points, and raises the important issues posed by the material you presented.

**Organization:** Even for an informal talk, structure your presentation around the standard sections of a research paper: **Introduce** the topic; present essential **Methods**; present main **Results**; and provide some **Discussion**, which includes summary interpretation, and also any questions you have of the audience.

**Reduce non-essential information:** Keep your goals in mind, and for each slide ask yourself, does the audience need to know this? If not, cut it! You will regret having a non-essential slide that derails the conversation due to questions or confusion, or that simply dilutes your purpose.

**Graphs, diagrams, and tables:** Good visuals convey the essential material of the talk, including key points and research results. They allow the listener to both see and hear; this enhances understanding. Study results are best presented in graphic form. Diagrams can be used to present research design or study hypotheses. Avoid tables, especially those with more than a few rows and columns. **You should never have tell your audience "I know you can't read the table in this slide but ..."** Keep graphs and diagrams simple. Avoid gratuitous three-dimensional graphs that provide no more information than their two-dimensional equivalents. [See also this section](#) of the lab handbook.

**Word slides:** If you use bullet or word slides – keep them simple and short. Do not use full sentences. Do not include more than 5-7 lines per slide (acknowledgements excepted). Use common fonts such as Times Roman, Arial, and Helvetica.

**Course of knowledge:** You know the material better than anyone! Think about how well you would understand the background, hypotheses, data and results if you were listening to the talk one year ago. Don't dumb it down, but make it accessible. Think about the discussions, papers, and resources that helped you make progress, and draw on those same approaches to lead your audience into the material.

**Projection of presentations:** Have your presentation ready on a USB device (and please virus check your USB device). Be sure you or the organizers have the necessary cables for presenting the work.

**Citations:** It is not possible to cite all previous work, provide detailed descriptions of methods, or include all the data obtained in a talk. A good presenter seeks to make a point simply, clearly, and concisely.

For a more in-depth resource, see this [guide](#) from the American Society of Primatologists