

Guidelines for Preparation of Effective Oral Presentations

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; and (5) consider the broader implications of the findings. It is not possible to cite all previous work, provide detailed descriptions of methods, or include all the data obtained in a 10-minute talk. A good presenter seeks to make a single point, and to make it simply, clearly, and concisely. Oral presentations are greatly enhanced by the use of good visual material. 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. To maximize the effectiveness of your oral presentation, please consider the following guidelines.

Specific Suggestions:

- 1. 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.
- 2. Freedom from non-essential information:** Unless the purpose of the talk is to present research methods or techniques, omit all but the key methodological details. Save non-essential information for responding to questions during the discussion period.
- 3. Graphs, diagrams, and tables:** 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. Simplify your presentation so that you do not have to 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.
- 4. 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).
- 5. Projection of presentations:** IBM-compatible laptops will be available at the podium for projection of PowerPoint, OpenOffice or Adobe Acrobat presentations. Do *not* bring a personal laptop to the podium! Please bring your presentation on a “hotplug” USB device or CD-R. If you use a CD be sure to “close it” for distribution to a variety of computers. Macintosh users must add the “.ppt” extension to the end of the filename. Use common fonts such as Times Roman, Arial, and Helvetica. Under Page Setup, the presentation should be set to “On-screen show.” If you use the “Pack and Go” feature of PowerPoint, have the original .ppt file available on CD or USB device just in case. Please virus check your entire CD or USB device. A final word to the wise: *Always* check your presentation on an IBM-compatible computer other than the one on which you prepared the presentation. This is the easiest way to detect compatibility “issues” *before* heading to the airport/podium.
- 6. Audio-visual equipment:** We will provide equipment for computer projection. Given the very low demand for overhead and traditional slide projectors at the most recent AAPA meetings it is no longer cost-effective for the association to provide these media services.

*****Simplicity and Legibility are Keys to Effective Oral Presentations*****