

## Preparing Effective Presentations

- **Clear Purpose.** An effective image should have a main point and not be just a collection of available data. If the central theme of the image cannot be identified readily, the paper probably would be improved by revising or deleting the image.
- **Readily Understood.** The main point should catch the attention of the audience immediately and should be understood soon thereafter. While trying to figure out what the image has to say, the audience is not paying full attention to what the speaker is saying, and this obviously should be minimized.
- **Simple Format.** With a simple, uncluttered format, the image is relatively easy to design and directs the attention of the audience to the main point.
- **Free of Nonessential Information.** Information not directly supporting the main point of the image and not important enough to be mentioned specifically in the verbal text probably would be better held in reserve for questions rather than included in the image.
- **Digestible.** There is a practical limit to how many bits of new information one can reasonably expect the audience to assimilate each minute, and investigators risk confusing and alienating the audience when they exceed this limit. With an average of seven images in a 10-minute paper, there is only slightly more than 1 minute available per image. The above risk is minimized if the information presented in an image is restricted to that which can be explained extemporaneously to the uninitiated in the allowed length of time. Fast reading of a prepared text is not an adequate substitute for judicious editing.
- **Unified.** An image is most effective when all information is organized around a single central theme so that the image tells a unified story.
- **Graphic Format.** In graphs, qualitative relationships are emphasized at the expense of precise numerical values, while in tables the reverse is true. Hence, if a qualitative statement, such as "Flow rate increased markedly immediately after stimulation," can be considered the main point of the image, the purpose is better served using a graphic format. A good place for detailed, tabular data is in an image or two held in reserve in case of questions.
- **Designed for the Current Oral Paper.** Particularly to be avoided is the comprehensive data table designed for another purpose and containing many columns and rows of information not directly relevant to the current paper. The audience is not interested in how much work was done, only in evidence and conclusions relating directly to the subject of the paper.
- **Experimental.** There is no time in a 10-minute paper to teach standard technology. Unless the purpose of the paper is to examine this technology, it is best mentioned to the minimum extent necessary to maintain an unbroken, logical development of the theme of the paper.
- **Visual Contrast.** Legibility will be increased if there are contrasts in brightness and tone between illustrations and backgrounds. Color combinations that increase

visibility include white letters on medium blue or black on yellow. Never use black letters on a dark background. Avoid using red and green next to each other since many people are red/green color blind.

- **Integrated with Verbal Text.** Images should support the verbal text and not merely display numbers generated in the study. Conversely, the verbal text should lay a proper foundation for each image. As each image is shown, it is useful to give the audience a brief opportunity to become oriented before proceeding. Duplicate images if you will refer to the same image several times during your presentation.
- **Clear Train of Thought.** Ideas developed in the paper and supported by the images should flow smoothly in a logical sequence, without wandering to irrelevant asides or bogging down in detail. Everything presented verbally or visually should have a clear role in support of the central thesis of the paper.
- **Rights to Use Material.** Before using any text, image, or other material, check to make sure that you have the rights to use it. There are complex laws and social rules about how much of someone's work you can reproduce in a presentation. However, ignorance is no defense. Check that you are not infringing on copyright or other laws or on the customs of academic discourse when using material.

## Computer Projection Presentation Tips

- When creating your presentation, stick with the RPI Template fonts unless you have good reason not to (Helvetica and New Times Roman). Basic fonts will be provided on the computers, but if an unusual font is used, it may not translate.
- For tables, note that PowerPoint's default settings allow only 9 rows and columns, set at 32-point type. Avoid overriding these defaults by adding rows or columns or decreasing the font size.
- One data/video projector, one PC computer with Windows-readable USB flash drive and CD-ROM drive will be provided in each session room. Macintosh users note that Macs can write a PC-formatted readable USB flash drive disk or CD-ROM. Software that will be available in each session room will be PowerPoint 2003 and Adobe Acrobat (pdf file-based). One screen and two projectionists/operators will also be provided in each session room.
- Authors using computer projection are urged to bring their media on a Windows-readable USB flash drive or a CD-ROM to avoid setup delays between presentations. Authors wishing to use their own laptops may do so, but should be aware that the additional setup time will decrease their allotted presentation time.
- If you use your own laptop, keep the following in mind:
  - a. You MUST have a VGA 15 pin HD female VGA output. Note: some mini laptop computers have a special interface cable that attaches to their video output to hook up to external monitors or data/video projectors. If this cable is not with the laptop computer being used, there is no way to connect it to the session room data/video projector.
  - b. Ensure that you know how to get the image to the external port of the laptop.

Instructions are in each laptop operator's manual. (If the external port is not always "on," it is usually a Function Key, or combination of Shift plus a Function Key, that may turn on the external port, or possible cycle through laptop screen, external port, or both.)

- c. If possible, set the maximum output resolution to XGA (1024 x 768). The data projectors in each session room have a native input resolution of 1024 x 768. The use of a higher resolution (i.e., 1280 x 1024) will force the data projector into a compression mode, and information could be lost, and higher resolutions may not show.
- d. Presenters must bring a copy of all external files contained within their PowerPoint presentations, such as movie or sound files (wav, avi, mpeg, etc.). Presenters who must use their own laptops should be certain to have the most recent version/update of drivers installed.

## Powerpoint Presentations

- In Page Setup, size slides for On-Screen Show or 35 mm Slides, selecting horizontal (landscape) layout.
- Use standard fonts such as Times, Helvetica, or Arial and Symbol. Space is lost and the amount of information per slide reduced by repeating graphics, including logos, on each slide or by using the overly busy backgrounds, candy-cane colors, or decorative typefaces found on some templates.
- The legibility of text and diagrams will be enhanced by maintaining both color and intensity contrast. Use white or light yellow text and lines on black or dark blue backgrounds, and rich, saturated darker colors on white or clear backgrounds. LCD projectors used in session rooms have a limited range of colors; avoid red or dark green on blue, and yellow on white.
- Test your completed presentation on a separate PC-compatible computer to ensure that fonts are standard and components such as movies have been included rather than merely linked.

## Preparing Effective Posters

A poster should be self-contained and self-explanatory, allowing different viewers to proceed on their own while leaving the author free to discuss points raised in inquiry. The poster session offers a more intimate forum for discussion than the slide presentation, but discussion becomes difficult if the author is obliged to devote most of the time explaining the poster to a succession of viewers. Remember that the time spent at each poster figure is determined by the viewer, not the author, as in the case of slide presentations.

An effective poster is neither a page-by-page printout of a journal paper nor a slide show, but balances figures and text.

## Before the Meeting

## **Planning and Layout**

Poster boards are 5'8" (1.7 m) wide and 3'8" (1.1 m) high. For effective use of this space, consider organizing illustrations and text using a grid plan. Arrange materials in columns rather than rows. It is easier for viewers to scan a poster by moving systematically along it rather than by zig-zagging back and forth in front of it. Place your most significant findings at eye level immediately below the title bar and the supporting data and/or text in the lower panels.

For conventional multi-panel posters, five columns can be formed using poster elements printed on 11"-wide paper (or 29-30-cm wide A4 or B5 paper) with suitable spacing or borders. Materials may be mounted on colored poster board. You may want to group logically consistent sections or columns of the poster on backgrounds of the same color. Background colors should be muted; shades of gray are also effective.

The increasing availability of 36"- and 54"-wide inkjet printers and page-layout software permits economical production of effective and attractive posters on a single sheet that can be transported to the meeting either in a poster tube or carefully folded (accordion-style in the long dimension, then once in the short dimension) to fit in a carry-on suitcase. Use line borders to separate areas. Avoid reflective, plastic-coated paper.

## **Title**

Prepare a banner for the top of the poster indicating the abstract title, author(s), and affiliation(s), and the session number of the abstract. Lettering should be at least 1 inch high.

## **Illustrations**

Figures should be designed to be viewed from a distance and should use clear, visible graphics and large type. Color can be effective if used sparingly; use saturated dark colors on white or pale backgrounds and rich, light colors on dark backgrounds. Although each figure should illustrate no more than one or two major points, figures need not be simple. The main points should be clear without extended viewing, but detail can be included for the aficionado.

The sequence of illustrations should be indicated with numbers or letters at least 1 inch high. (Omit "Fig." or "Figure"; it is unnecessary and occupies too much space.)

## **Text**

Each figure or table should have a heading of one or two lines in very large type stating the "take-home" message. Additional essential information should be provided below in a legend set in 16 point or larger type.

Minimize narrative. Text that would normally appear in the body (Results and Discussion) of a manuscript can be integrated in figure legends. It should describe concisely not only the content of the figure but also the conclusions that are derived. Details of methodology should be brief and should be placed at the end of each legend.

Use large type in short, separated paragraphs with unjustified (ragged right) margins. Numbered or bulleted lists are effective ways to convey a series of points. Do not set entire paragraphs in uppercase (all capitals) or boldface type.

An introduction should be placed at the upper left and a conclusion at the lower right, both in large type. It is rarely necessary to post a copy of the abstract.

## At the Meeting

Fifteen minutes prior to the start of your session, post your materials on the board and leave them in place for the full session. Pushpins will be provided in the area.

Please do not write or paint on the poster boards. Blackboards or whiteboards will be available in the area for use during discussions. Note that projection equipment will NOT be provided in the poster session area.

The presenting author must be at the board during the assigned hour and may elect to be present for a longer period. Presenters are encouraged to post a message on their board if they must be absent for an extended period of time during their assigned poster session.

Materials must be removed promptly at the end of the session. Morning session posters should be completely removed by 12:15 p.m. to permit afternoon authors sufficient time to set up their posters. Materials in poster sessions ending at 5:00 p.m. must be removed promptly, as authors and audience must leave the hall by 5:15 p.m. If your poster is not removed by 12:15 p.m. for the morning session or by 5:15 p.m. for the afternoon session, it will be discarded.

## Sample Poster

[Click here for a sample poster.](#)