POSTER AND ORAL PRESENTATION CONSIDERATIONS AND TIPS

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Whether you are presenting a poster or doing an oral presentation, you are practicing a critically important skill in research: effectively communicating your findings/conclusions to an audience.

While there may be some differences in things to consider when making a poster or putting together powerpoint slides for an oral presentation, the following considerations and tips for the presentation aspect can apply to either poster or oral presentations:

Resource adapted from:

* www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1876493/
* www.scientifica.uk.com/neurowire/tips-for-presenting-your-scientific-poster-at-a-conference

General Tips for Presentations:

Define Your Purpose

Before you start, ask yourself what you want to accomplish with your presentation. If you are trying to introduce your audience to a lesser-known topic, make sure to provide sufficient background information. It also helps to provide information about the significance of your study; why should the audience care about this topic? If the purpose of the presentation is to share your findings, provide enough context so that the audience is able to fully grasp the importance of your study.

Tell a Story Through Your Presentation

A key component of any good presentation is ensuring that there is a logical flow throughout the presentation. One of the ways to establish this flow is by structuring the presentation in the form of a story. This will increase the likelihood that they will remember what you have to say, rather than if your presentation was very text and information heavy.

Your introduction should provide sufficient background/context and establish the significance of your work. What problem or question are you working to solve? Your methodology (what you did to answer the research question) comes next. Follow with your results (if applicable) and explain the implications of your research. How do your results contribute to the existing pool of knowledge in that field?

Content is Important, But Keep It Concise

Everything you include in your presentation should help convey the message. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words! If you find that you have too much text on your slides or poster, try to replace it with a graphical schematic and make sure to cite the source of these images. This is often preferred to chunky blocks of text.

Dealing with Feedback

It is important to welcome feedback, be prepared for discussion and not to be too defensive in the face of criticism. Don't take things personally!

Delivery

Make sure you are speaking clearly and at a volume where everyone can hear you. Also to speak in a calm and steady pace.

Practice!!!

This may seem like a very obvious tip, but is something that many people mistakenly skip over or think they can do without! Practice to the point where you are comfortable and confident with your material. It helps immensely to practice presenting your work to someone who is not familiar with it. Remember, MURC has a generalist audience, so you need to make sure you are able to explain the content of your presentation someone who is not familiar with your topic and can follow along with ease.

Be Well Versed in Everything You've Done

Don't include anything in your presentation that you are not comfortable with explaining. Make sure you understand the methodology and the reasoning for why you chose to approach the research question the way you did. The best way to prepare for questions is to critically assess your presentation and think about the type of questions you may get. After thinking of questions, prepare answers to address them.

Poster Presentation

Everything you include in your presentation should help convey the message. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words! If you find that you have too much text on your slides or poster, try to replace it with a graphical schematic and make sure to cite the source of these images. This is often preferred to chunky blocks of text.

The Title is Important

The title is your equivalent of a newspaper headline. You want to try to make it short, sharp, and compelling. It might be the only thing a conference attendee sees before they reach your poster. The title might pose a decisive question, define the scope of the study, or hint at a new finding. Above all, it should be short, descriptive and comprehensible to a broad audience.

Layout and Format are Critical

Guide the reader with arrows, numbering, or whatever else makes sense in getting them to move from one logical step to another. Try to do this in an eye-catching way. Look for appropriate layouts in the posters of others and adopt some of their approaches. Never use less than a size 24 point font (unless it is for axis or figure captions; they can go as small as size 14 point font). Make sure the main points can be read at eye level. This will ensure that the audience can read your research easily.

Posters should be 3 ft by 4 ft (36 inches by 48 inches), and one of the most accessible ways to make your poster is through powerpoint. To do this click on Design → Slide Size → Page Setup... → set the width at 121.92cm and the height at 91.44cm.

Avoid Blocks of Text

Although unavoidable in some cases, if you can explain a concept with a diagram or schematic, this is preferred to a block of text. Point form is also acceptable. The reader should be able to piece together your poster without you, but you are meant to walk your reader through the poster.

Oral Presentation

The following are some tips specific to oral presentations:

Slide Headings and Layout

- Summarize the main point of your slide in a short and concise slide heading.
- Make sure your slides are readable and have a good font size (Size 24).
- Make sure your slides are engaging. Use simple text animations (such as the animation feature "appear") so that the audience does not read ahead. This way you have more control as you guide them through your presentation.
- Do not use excessive text and slide animations. This can be distracting for the audience and may take away from the content of your presentation.
- Ensure your slides are not too text heavy. Where appropriate, make use of images, schematics, or diagrams. Make sure to cite your sources of these images!

Delivery

- Don't just read off your slides, make sure to actually engage with your audience, as the focus of your presentation should be you and not solely your slides. Your slides should supplement your presentation.

If you have any further questions feel free to reach out and email us at murc.researchpresentations@ubc.ca.