Poster Presentations

Prepare

- Practice 30-second, 90-second, and 3-5 minute versions of your poster presentation.

- Make sure you can sum up your poster’s key points and conclusions in 2-3 sentences. Practice starting your spiel from different sections of your poster.

- Review relevant literature

- Think about which parts of your poster will be the most challenging to explain.

- Anticipate people’s questions and plan your answers to them. You will be asked the same questions repeatedly, which can become monotonous for you, but remember that the person who asked the question is hearing your answer for the first time.

- Produce supplemental handouts or props (e.g., copies of poster on letter-sized paper, abstract, prototype, laptop to show videos).

- Wear a name tag.

Present

- Greet people with a smile and show your enthusiasm for your work. Give people a moment to take in your poster and then find out why they are interested in your work before you launch into your spiel so that you are able to address their needs and expectations.

- Do not stand in front of your poster where you might block people’s view. Stand up straight and face your audience.

- Maintain eye contact with people as you present your poster. Do not read directly from your poster or from a prepared script.

- Use hand gestures to illustrate and reinforce concepts and relationships. As you talk through your poster, use a pointer or your hands to refer to particular parts of the poster so that people can follow your talk more easily. Avoid pairing vague gestures with vague noun referents: “That plot shows . . .” (accompanied by sweeping gesture in the direction of two graphs). Do not place your hands in your pockets or behind your back.
• Adjust your volume and pacing to suit the situation. Speak loudly enough to be heard over the din of the crowd. Use your voice to emphasize important points.

• Spend extra time explaining the figures and tables on your poster if your audience appears interested in the details.

• Provide clear transitions as you move from explaining one section of the poster to the next. For example, “Now that I’ve outlined our objectives, I’m going to explain our approach to solving this problem.”

• Deliver a satisfying conclusion. Summarize your contribution and its significance at the end of your spiel, or state it earlier if you sense the viewer is ready to move on.

• If people approach your poster after you have begun your spiel, acknowledge them with a nod and identify where you are in the spiel so that they know where to focus their eyes on the poster. For example, (nod), “I’m in the middle of describing how we refined our search strings to generate more meaningful results.”

• Check your audience’s understanding of more complex concepts presented in your poster by paying attention to non-verbal cues or by asking: “Were any parts of my explanation hard to follow?”

• Maintain your professionalism. Thank people for their time and attention. Remember that the people attending the poster session may be your future colleagues.

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