



Presentation guidelines – Oral Communication (OC)

General information

Oral Communications will be presented in groups of three. As far as possible, OCs with something in common (methods, focus ...) are grouped together, but sometimes this cannot be achieved.

A chair will be assigned to your session. He or she will introduce you, and moderate the discussion of the presentations.

Each individual OC is allocated 10 minutes for the oral presentation. Normally, when all three presentations are completed, a 30 minutes period is devoted to discussion on all three presentations i.e. the timing is 3x10+30. However, the chair may decide that it would be better to have 10 minutes discussion of each paper immediately following the 10 minutes presentation i.e. 3x(10+10). He/she will tell you in advance which pattern is being followed.

Come to your session in good time, so you can upload and test your presentation, talk to your chair about how he or she may introduce you, and express any concerns you may have about your presentation (e.g. use of technical equipment, photographs and video recordings of the session). Be sure that you have a back-up copy of your presentation somewhere else, not only in your pen drive. Installing slides before the start of the session is crucial, as there will be very little time to switch between speakers.

Your presentation

The main point of attention in your presentation is to be very strict in the timing. Your chair should not allow you to speak for more than 10 minutes. Given the very limited time, it is worth reflecting beforehand on what you really want to tell in your presentation. If you have a more extensive version of a paper, or online materials, you can refer the audience towards it during your talk.

While you give your talk, the chair will help you keep track of the time, giving you an alert as to how much time you have remaining. Pay attention to these alerts.

Less is more! Be aware that you can tell very little in an Oral Communication, and only give the audience a general overview of your study and/or highlight specific findings. By being selective on what you will talk about, you make sure you don't have to rush through your slides, and are able to cover all aspects of your study (introduction, background, method, results, conclusions) before time is up. A good way to avoid timing issues is to aim at no more than one slide per minute.

Avoid preliminary meta-remarks - such as how pleased you are to be presenting your paper, how helpful the reviewers were, how you will try hard to stay within the time - that have no immediate bearing on your paper. These might help you relax but can take a substantial amount of the 10 minutes available for your talk.

Some hints to keep the attention of the audience can be as follows:

- Practice your presentation beforehand! This not only helps in sticking to timing. You will know much better what points to address for every slide, and bring out the "take away" points in clearer wording if you rehearsed beforehand. The more comfortable you feel during a talk, the clearer your message will be to the audience.
- It is highly preferred that during your presentation, you do not read out loud the content of the slides. If you feel uncertain about your mastery of English, it may be advisable to practice your talk extensively beforehand, using a literal script. If you want, you can also use the script during your presentation, but avoid projecting this script literally on the slides.
- Slides should not contain lengthy quotes (in text, audio, or video) in your theoretical background and your results. Your audience wants to hear your ideas and conclusions, not what you have gleaned from other researchers, nor to hear in great detail what participants in



your study have said or written. In qualitative studies, longer quotes may be useful, but again, more should be done than merely showing and reading them.

- Structure your talk around a few "take away" points you want the audience to remember, which can be repeated several times. This will help keep unnecessary details to a minimum and allow you to highlight your primary message more clearly.
- A picture (or graph) is worth a thousand words. Keep your slides light on text and heavy on figures, but avoid overly complicated figures that are hard to comprehend. The purpose of you giving your talk in person is to explain what the graph illustrates in an easy-to-understand manner.
- Try to use the suggestions that reviewers have made concerning your paper. They may have pointed out things that were not clear. If reviewers misunderstood some aspects of your paper, the audience may do so as well, unless you address these in your presentation.
- Remember using colors that have sufficient contrast between text and background!

Questions and answers

After the three presentations, the chair will open the discussion with the audience. The role of the chair is to moderate the discussion, to make sure it is not dominated by only a few members in the audience, and is focused on all three presentations. Preferably, the chair will also look for themes that are common to two or all three presentations.

Although you may feel nervous about answering questions, rest assured that PME participants are generally very supportive, and that no one is more of an expert on your study than you are. The questions and answers give you a chance to elaborate on something that was not clear, or cover a topic that everyone wants to know but you forgot to include. The discussion helps the audience feel that you are an approachable colleague.

A useful way to deal with questions you are not prepared for at that moment is to say you want to think about the insightful question and are willing to discuss it in more detail individually after the presentation. This approach is also advised if questions are highly specific to your paper and not at all related to the other papers in the session. After the session, you can talk further to members of the audience who want to see some materials in more details, such as items or figures and tables containing analyses. If you are asked a question that your research did not address, do not be afraid to say so.