

Presentation guidelines - Personal presentations

Research Report

General information

Each RR presentation will be allotted a total time of 40 minutes: 20 minutes for the oral presentation and 20 minutes for questions and comments. A chair will be assigned to your session. He or she will introduce you, and moderate the discussion after the presentation.

Come to your session in good time, so you can 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.

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 20 minutes, so as to give opportunity to the audience to react. Given the limited time, it is worth reflecting beforehand on what you really want to tell in your presentation, and what can be left for the audience to discover in your research report or elsewhere.

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! 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 long 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 should not exceed one or two short sentences.

Here are some rules of thumb that could be helpful in composing your slides, and stick to the timing:

- The first slide should introduce the title of your talk, who you are and where you are from.
- The second slide can prime the audience by introducing the main question, or a task or finding that is central in your study.
- A slide could be included to outline the flow of the talk and provide a sense of structure.
- Background can be covered in two or three slides asserting the problem statement, reason why you are interested in the question, and prior work. You should be very selective, and include background literature only that is essential to comprehend the study you conducted. All other literature that you relied on can be found in your paper in the proceedings.
- Methods can be covered briefly in two or three slides (additional information can be provided later if requested).
- The great majority of your talk should be focused on the results. If you run out of time when you are presenting the results you will feel disappointed (and people in the audience too).
- Finally, one or two slides can be dedicated to discussing future work or limitations.

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 3-5 "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 the 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

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.

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 keeps a broad focus.

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.

If you are asked a question that your research did not address, do not be afraid to say so.

The Q & A time is in principle not meant as a chance for you to start presenting more data. Your responses should thus be rather brief. It is advisable, though, to have some extra slides available, which show information (such as test items or figures and tables containing further analyses) that you were unable to present, but that may be helpful in answering questions.