Oral Presentation Guidelines

What is an Oral Presentation?

An oral presentation is a method of presenting that involves presenting your work to a live audience. For the oral presentation, you may choose between two methods of presentation: 1) TED-style talk or 2) traditional paper oral presentation. All oral presentations must address a research question and your findings and conclusion.

The TED-style talk is a 5–7-minute conversational monologue. The TED-style talk uses image-based visual aids, is more personable than the traditional paper oral presentation, and incorporates storytelling and personality into public speaking.

The traditional paper oral presentation is a formal 7-10-minute-long presentation that involves using a slideshow or visual aid to present a paper you've written. These presentations are followed by a Q&A.

TED-Style Talk Guidelines

- Must be 5-7 minutes long
- Must incorporate image-based visual aids; words should be minimal
- Must address a research question and your findings and conclusion in an accessible and engaging manner
- Must be accessible and understandable to a general audience with no expertise in the subject area
- Must be conversational and personable

Resources

- TEDx Speaker Guide - TED
- How to Sound Conversational as a Speaker – Institute of Public Speaking
- Develop a Conversational Public Speaking Style – Lighthouse Communications
- 10 Tips for Improving Your Public Speaking Skills – Harvard Division of Continuing Education

Examples

- Less stuff, more happiness | Graham Hill | TED
- Grit: The power of passion and perseverance | Angela Lee Duckworth | TED
- A Mysterious Design That Appears Across Millennia | Terry Moore | TED

- [The Outlaws of the Ocean – and How We're Reeling Them In | Tony Long | TED](#)

Traditional Paper Oral Presentation Guidelines

Tips provided by faculty members Corey Peacock, Suzanne Ferriss, Jaime Tartar, and James Munoz

By the time you submit an abstract, you should have made progress on the text of your project presentation. Coordinate your exact timeline with your faculty sponsor. It's a good idea to keep updating your faculty sponsor with your progress and any questions you have. Give yourself plenty of time, as revising can be a lengthy process.

General differences between a paper and a talk		
	Paper	**Talk**
Presentation Style	formal, APA format	conversational
Introduction	Give a thorough understanding of the way things stand now	Give the basics of previous research
Methods	Present everything that person would need to know to replicate your study	Make the audience your participant
Results	Present everything – almost no detail is too small	Focus on your big findings
Discussion	Present your work in a larger context in detail	Present your work in a larger context in general
Goal	Fit your work into the larger body of knowledge	Go for the big picture stuff – relevance

General Advice

1. Pretend you're telling a story – everyone likes a story.
2. Consider your audience. Are they students, professors, novices, or scientists in other fields? Consider whether you'll need to provide introductory or background material for those who aren't experts in your field to establish context but assume you're addressing an audience familiar with your field.
3. Leave out the nitty gritty details and go for the big picture – why should these people listen to you? Choose a focused message for your presentation. An effective presentation is organized and follows a clear sequence.
4. Introduce yourself and your affiliation/institution.

5. Engage your audience by reading at a comfortable pace and establishing eye contact.
6. Presenting RESULTS
   a. Go slow.
   b. Be visual.
   c. Be sure to explain in detail what exactly your dependent measure is, how you arrived at the number, and what it means (i.e., higher numbers mean what?)
   d. Be sure to mention what your axes are when introducing your figures.
   e. You might mention what it would look like if you got a significant/nonsignificant result before you present the actual data.
   f. Think of a 1-2 sentence summary of what the graph shows.
7. Write about 2-3 conclusions at the end of your presentation – what is the take-home message here?
8. Always clue your audience that you're done by saying either "thank you," "thanks," "thanks for your attention," "and that concludes my presentation," "I'd be happy to answer any questions," etc.
9. Be prepared for follow-up questions. Anticipate possible questions and comments but be open to ideas you may not have considered. Take a moment to reflect and answer to the best of your ability. Don't be defensive: acknowledge the limits of your knowledge.
10. Remember that you're presenting your work for a purpose: you're part of an academic community and have been given the opportunity to engage your fellow students and faculty members in an intellectual conversation. Enjoy the experience!

Advice for Presenting Papers

- The professional practice in the humanities is generally to deliver a lecture (i.e., to read your entire paper in the time allotted)
- At some professional meetings or conferences, papers are circulated in advance, and presenters offer a condensed version of their papers

You have two initial choices:

1. If you have sufficient time, you can read your paper in its entirety to your audience. Assume it takes two minutes to read each page (e.g., 5 pages = 10 minutes, 10 pages = 20 minutes).
2. If you have insufficient time, condense your work to focus on the logical outline of your argument (i.e., your thesis and key points). You may either read a shortened version of the paper or work from notecards or an outline.

Using PowerPoint/Keynote presentations

In either case, you may decide to accompany your work with a PowerPoint presentation. If so, here are some tips:

1. Keep it simple. The format and font should be large and easily readable. Use the same font throughout.
2. Do not put too much text on a slide. Text should accompany, not substitute, your words.
3. Be careful with your color scheme – use high-contrast layouts and avoid flashy ones. Simple backgrounds are best. Avoid distractions.
4. Don't use someone else's images without their permission. This is a copyright infraction. Proprietary images often have watermarks, but not always. Always provide credit/citation for images/information used.
5. Don't use low-resolution images. They may look great on a computer screen but become pixelated and blocky when enlarged and projected. Always select the highest quality images you can. Avoid *jpg* or *jpeg* files, especially if they are <3-4 MB in size.
6. Keep transitions simple.
7. Do not stand in front of your slideshow or read from your slides. Speak loudly and clearly towards your audience, not the projection screen.
8. If you are analyzing specific passages in detail, consider putting quotations on individual slides. Use more than one if the passage is long and the font will be reduced to accommodate the text.
9. Use images, if appropriate, to illustrate your text. But don't be cute. This is a formal presentation of your work.
10. You should practice your talk and know what you're going to say without the slides.

Potential Slideshow Structure

- Title slide
- Outline of the talk
    - clearly state the topics to be covered
- Background info and specific aims
    - Short and sweet, but to the point
- Research methods
    - provide some details, leave room for questions
- Research findings
    - details, details, details
- Conclusion and future goals
    - Make sense of your data
- References and acknowledgements