

Dos and Don'ts of Making a Poster Presentation (Part 3)

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Post Url

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In Parts 1 and 2, we focused on the planning and designing of the poster. Here we discuss the most important aspect of an effective poster presentation—the presentation.

Presenting the Poster

Effective presentation skills play an equally important role in poster presentation as a good poster. Making a good presentation is an art that involves attention to the needs of your audience, careful planning, and attention to delivery. Here we explain some of the basics of effective presentation.

Where to stand?

?? Allow the viewers to take a look at your poster. Arrive early at the display site and stand next to the poster.

? Don't stand directly in front of poster but don't completely disappear either!

Explanations

?? Be concise when explaining a point to the viewer. You should be able to give an overview of your work in 3–5 min. Practice your presentation ahead of time, and time yourself!

? Don't read your poster when explaining, instead, use it as a visual aid.

Studies show an audience can remember only three or four things you present in a talk.

Tip 1!

- **Make eye contact**
- **Avoid jargon and acronyms**
- **Speak clearly and slowly**

- Don't overload on detail

Getting the Message Through

?? Decide what the purpose of your talk really is. What is the “take-home” message you want to give to your audience? Organize your talk accordingly, explaining the main focus of your poster. Summarize your [conclusions](#) and their importance.

? Don't distract from your message by including peripheral topics or excessive arcane detail.

Technical Terminology

?? Clearly define any terms that may not be familiar to your audience. Remember, they're may not all be from the same specialty as you!

? Don't assume that people are experts in your field when they approach you.

Inappropriate Words/Phrases

?? Speak clearly. Express your ideas clearly and use appropriate language, pronunciation, and enunciation.

? Don't use qualifiers—maybe, perhaps, or start sentences with “So,” end sentences with “right?” or “OK?”

Example

Starting with “Just real quick” or “Briefly” tells your audience is that “this isn't really important or relevant, but I'm going to inflict it on you anyway.”

Answering Questions

?? Anticipate questions, rehearse answers.

Example

One of the most common question is “*How does this work differ from the other research in this field?*”

? Don't fumble when answering.

Listen carefully. Wait for them to finish the question!

Confusing the Audience

?? Remember that “I don't know” is a perfectly good answer. If you're working on answering the question, just say that.

? Don't make up stuff or go into a 5-minute explanation of *why* you don't know the answer.

Take-Away Information

?? Consider having handouts.

Examples

- miniatures of the poster
- additional details not included in the poster

? Don't forget that you want people to remember you and your work!

Practice!

?? Practice beforehand.

Tip 2!

Submit your poster to the “two-minute test” with friends unfamiliar with your project. Ask them if they can, after a two-minute review, grasp the basics of your project and accurately summarize your core message.

? Don't wait till the actual presentation.

In brief, smile, be and appear friendly and glad to be there. Dress appropriately. Speak loudly. Articulate clearly.

Other Tips

Remember the following additional points for effective poster presentation:

Check Your Spelling

- Spelling mistakes on public display are embarrassing, especially if they are on the title page, and give the impression that you have not put in the effort and are not worthy of high assessment scores.

Maintain a Consistent Style

- Inconsistent styles give the impression of disharmony and can interrupt the [fluency](#) and [flow](#) of your messages.

Review, Review, and Review

- Make draft versions of your poster sections and check them for mistakes, legibility, and inconsistency in style
- Try different layout arrangements
- Ask your partner, friends, colleagues or supervisor for their opinions

Use Poster-Making Services

You can opt for professional poster-making services.

Reference: Steven M. Block, *Biophysical Journal*, 1996;71:3527–9.

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