

SPEAKING FOR SUCCESS

paul-casella@uiowa.edu

OUTLINE

1. How adults learn
2. Delivery skills
3. Structure of a presentation
4. Submitting an abstract
5. Preparation
6. Visual aids

HOW ADULTS LEARN

Different adults learn in different ways. For each main point, try to address as many ways as possible: **vary your approach**. Here's a list of adult learning styles and how to address them.

1. Sequential learners—be organized
2. Practical learners—tell the importance, relevance, and significance of the information, suggest what the audience will do with the information
3. Intuitive Learners—ask questions, take surveys, do exercises
4. Story-telling learners—tell stories, give examples

DELIVERY SKILLS

To engage the audience or small group, you have to emphasize your inflection and boost your energy. Use this checklist to review your delivery skills. Do you

1. have an arresting opening?
2. tell the audience the purpose and agenda of the talk?
3. make eye contact?
4. use hand gestures?
5. use appropriate body position and movement?
6. inflect your voice?
7. maintain the audience's interest?
8. pause for emphasis?
9. speak in manageable sentences?
10. repeat important points?
11. use concrete and specific examples?
12. give at least one example for each main point?
13. convey enthusiasm?
14. interact with the audience when appropriate?
15. have a strong organization?
16. tell the significance of points?
17. summarize the talk?
18. tell the audience what they should do with the information?

STRUCTURING A PRESENTATION

A presentation should be structured based on the purpose of the presentation or event. The purpose of most scientific meetings is to share original research. In a teaching situation, be sure to plan case examples and use problem-based learning. When reviewing a program or an activity, again use plenty details in the form of images and stories. In all cases be sure to present an agenda slide at the start of the talk detailing the organization of your presentation.

Structure of a presentation of original research

- **Background:** Provide a brief review of the problem or situation that needs to be addressed. Describe your role in addressing the problem: how you are involved in it or first became interested in it. State the effect of the problem.
- **Objective:** A clear, direct statement of the objective of the study. Include a hypothesis statement, if possible.
- **Methods:** These may differ based on the design of the study, but in general they should be ordered as follows: 1) the study design, 2) setting and participants, 3) interventions, 4) main outcome measures. In the talk you might also review a certain procedure used or present a flow chart of a protocol.
- **Results:** Start with main result first. Be sure to include the results that lead to the conclusion. For an abstract submitted to a meeting, a results table is often acceptable.
- **Discussion:** This would include a restatement of the problem, a brief review of the literature, acknowledgement of the limitations of the study, considerations of the counterevidence and your response to it, a case for how this work adds to the literature, any questions that remain unanswered, and any other related issues
- **Conclusion:** Be sure that the conclusion answers the study question reported in the objective.
- **Recommendations or Impact Statement:** Tell how this conclusion might affect the current understanding of the issue or how clinicians practice. Address how your conclusions will guide future work in the area.

SUBMITTING AN ABSTRACT

- Develop a timeline so that you and your coauthors stay on track; account for the following activities
- Follow instructions exactly
- Use subheadings (follow the meeting's guidelines for abstract submission; if none are provided, use Introduction and Objective, Methods, Results, Conclusion, Recommendations or Impact Statement)
- If the instructions allow, consider conveying important results in a table
- Consider how your information addresses the mission of the society or the general understanding of the problem; make a case in the impact statement of how your information advances that mission or that understanding and facilitates future research
- Solicit feedback on the abstract from both a knowledgeable colleague or mentor *and* an "intelligent non-expert"
- Revise the abstract

PREPARATION

The audience

1. How many people will be in the audience?
2. What is the audience's purpose for attending?
3. How familiar is the audience with the subject?
4. Does the audience have any biases toward this topic? If so, what are they?
5. What do I want the audience *to do* with the information?
6. What materials do I want to leave with the audience?
7. What reasonable questions might the audience ask? How will I respond?
8. What *unreasonable* questions might the audience ask? How will I respond?

The topic

1. What is my subject?
 1. Why am I giving this talk?
 2. How does my purpose differ from the audience's purpose?
 2. How will I state the purpose at the start of my talk?
 3. What is the length of time for the talk?
 4. What is the length of time for the question and answer session?
 5. What information is absolutely crucial to convey?
 6. What information is less important to convey?
 7. What stories and examples can I use?
 8. What is my overall take-home message?
 9. If there is only one thing the group will remember about the talk, what would it be?

For each main point:

1. What is the most simple, straightforward way to state it?
2. What examples do I have to support it?
3. What stories can I convey to help the audience remember it?
4. What is the significance of this point?
5. What do I want them to do with this information?
6. How will they change their practice after knowing this information?
7. How does this information fit into the overall scheme of medical knowledge?
8. Knowing this, what will future researchers or practitioners be able to find out next?

Nervousness

The following exercises will make you less nervous for a talk

1. Do relaxation exercises such as positive mental imaging, progressive relaxation, and deep breathing
2. Exercise a good 2 hours before the talk. Your body will be relaxed and your mind will be energized.
3. Practice, practice, practice
4. Give the talk a few times for other groups in advance of the main session

Sample outline the 5–10 minute presentation of original research at a meeting

1. After being introduced, say, “Thank you, _____. I am honored to present our work on (title of presentation).” If the chair hasn’t read it already, say the title exactly as it is written on your title slide. Do not paraphrase the title as this causes confusion for the audience.
2. “(the other authors) and I first became interested in this issue when . . .” Here you acknowledge the other authors and give a little personal background to the issue. You associate the issue with the authors and have a chance to give a few details that set up the story of what you did.
3. Transition to the objectives: “So we set out to answer the following questions: Number 1, . . . Number 2, . . .” State your objectives in a clear, direct way, numbering them for precision.
4. Transition to the methods: “To answer these questions, we designed these methods: . . .”
5. Transition to the results: “What did we find? Well, . . .” By using a question to introduce a new section, you engage the listener and tell the information as a story.
6. Transition to discussion: “Only a few authors have looked into this issue in the past X years. . . If you plan to review the literature on the issue, be sure to be brief. I like tables of authors who have addressed an issue and their results and say, “You can see the studies that have looked into this problem. . .” and who mention those that are most relevant to the presentation.
7. Transition to limitations “As far as the limitations to our work, we are obligated to mention. . . .” Acknowledge the limitations, and then offer your responses.
8. Transition to conclusions: “In conclusion, then, we find that . . .” Or, “So, given these results, we can conclude that . . .” Be sure to use the word “conclusion” or “conclude” to alert the audience to this important section.
9. Transition to recommendations: “Given these conclusions, we recommend that . . .” Or, “What does this mean for your practice (or for our understanding of the problem)? This means that. . . .”

VISUAL AIDS

What deserves a visual aid?

1. Information that is **better understood** graphically than you can say with words
2. Information that is **important enough** to reinforce with visual aids
3. Information that is designed for the **audience’s understanding**, not to cue the speaker

Ideal slide design

1. Graphical and not textual. A presentation should have more graphical slides than text slides.
2. Limit content to main point
3. For text slides, the 7 x 7 rule: a maximum of 7 lines of text and no more than 7 words per line.
4. **Use charts, graphics, and images** (search on google.com, others)