Tips for Presenting Your Research at Conferences

Marlina Davidson, M.A.
School of Communication
Overview – Academic Presentations

- Type of Talk
- Organization
- Preparing Slides
- Presentation Tips
- Taking Questions
Type of Talk

- Usually 10-20 minutes
- Audience is usually students and academics
- Talks are categorized by topic (remember not everyone will know about your topic)
- Objective is to get people interested in your work
- Don’t have time to present every detail – Presentation is a “bumper sticker”
Organization

- Similar to a good paper
- Each slide takes 1-2 minutes depending on speaking style
Outline of Conference Presentation

- Title/author/affiliation/e-mail address (1 slide).
- Motivation (2-3 slides). Similar to first few paragraphs of paper's introduction. For applied talk describe data and scientific objectives. For theoretical talk describe problem and limitations of current approaches.
- Outline (0-1 slide).
- Background information (1-2 slide).
- New Methods (4-5 slides). This is main body of talk. Don’t just present numbers, but motivate them and interpret them to give insights.
Outline of Conference Presentation

- Results (3-4 slides). Present key results of study or data analysis. Don’t superficially cover all results; cover key results well.
- Summary (1 slide).
- Future work (0-1 slides). Optionally give problems this research opens up.
- Total of 10-15 slides depending on time.
Preparing Slides

- Although organization is similar to paper, presentation style is very different.
- Slides should convey ideas, not details.
- Attending a seminar is not a replacement for reading a paper.
- Goal is to present material in a visually appealing way so main points are obvious.
Tips for Preparing Slides

- Organize slides to emphasize big picture
- Use short, clear bullet points
- Don’t use complete sentences
- Fill in details verbally or refer to your paper
Tips for Delivery

- Practice, practice, practice
- Don’t rush through paper
- Stay within the time limit
- Dress appropriately
- Make eye contact with audience
- Make sure your presentation makes sense
- Don’t apologize for being nervous or unprepared
- Check room before hand to become familiar with the environment
- Speak enthusiastically about your research
Tips for Delivery

- Talk to someone who has presented or attended a similar event
- Remember all of the bad presentations you've seen – Don’t do those things
- Present a polished version of yourself
  - Energetic but not over-bearing
  - Confident but not cocky
  - Natural but professional, not like a news anchor
- Dress the part
Don’t Be Afraid to Surprise Us
Handling Questions

- Always repeat each question so everyone knows what was asked
- Always be respectful
- Avoid long one-on-one discussions
- Finish by asking person who asked that question if you answered it sufficiently for them
- If you can’t answer questions that’s alright. “That’s a very good question. I hadn’t thought of that before…”
  - Offer to research answer, then get back to the questioner later
  - Suggest resources which would help address question
  - Ask for suggestions from audience
Resources