HELPFUL HINTS FOR PREPARING AND GIVING ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Think about your audience

Some things to consider:

- Who are you speaking to?
- How much do they already know about the topic?
- What will they want to know about the topic?
- What do I want them to know by the end of my talk?

By basing the content and style of your presentation on your answers to these questions, you can make sure that you are in tune with your audience.

Communicating with your audience

Remember, this presentation is for your audience to SEE, not for you to read from. So, **you need to compose for the ear, not for the eye**: use simple words, simple sentences, repetition, images.

Listeners have one chance to hear your talk and can't "re-read" when they get confused. In many situations, they have or will hear several talks on the same day. Being clear is particularly important if the audience can't ask questions during the talk. Keep it simple and focus on getting the key points across. Repeating key points is also a good idea. Tell them what you're going to tell them (Introduction), tell them (Body), and tell them what you told them (Conclusion).

Structure

Most presentations will consist of an introduction, the body of the talk and a conclusion. The introduction prepares the audience for what you will say in the body of the talk and the conclusion reminds them of your key points.

Introduction

A good introduction does four things:

Attracts and focuses the attention of the audience

Puts the speaker and audience at ease

Explains the purpose of the talk and what the speaker would like to achieve

Gives an overview of the key points of the talk

Body

The body of a presentation must be presented in a logical order that is easy for the audience to follow and natural to your topic. Divide your content into sections and make sure that the audience knows where they are at any time during your talk.

Conclusion

A good conclusion does two things:

- Reminds the audience of your key points
- Reinforces your message

Your conclusion should end the presentation on a positive note and make the audience feel that have used their time well listening to you.

Questions

Many speakers worry about questions from the audience. However, questions show that the audience is interested in what you have to say. You should be more worried if there are no questions at all! One way of handling questions is to point to questions you would like to discuss as you are talking. Listen carefully to the questions you are asked, stay calm and take your time answering them.

Delivering your presentation

People vary in their ability to speak confidently in public, but everyone gets nervous and everyone can learn how to improve their presentation skills by applying a few simple techniques.

The main points to pay attention to in delivery are the quality of your voice, your rapport with the audience, use of notes and use of visual aids (covered separately below).

Voice quality involves attention to volume, speed and fluency, clarity and pronunciation. The quality of your voice in a presentation will improve dramatically if you are able to practice beforehand in a room similar to the one you will be presenting in. Don't be afraid of silence. Avoid fillers like "um"...

Rapport with the audience involves attention to eye contact, sensitivity to how the audience is responding to your talk and what you look like from the point of view of the audience. Try to avoid distracting behaviour such as playing with a pen and make sure that you do not block visual aids.

The key to good delivery is **practice, practice, practice!**

Use of visual aids

- Visual aids should enhance, not distract from your message. Some things to consider:
- Keep your words large enough---at least size 20.
- Limit the number of words you put on a page
  - Avoid paragraphs
  - Use bullet points
  - Use succinct phrases instead of sentences
  - Limit each slide to 6 bullet points
- Fancy is not always better! Stick with simple fonts!
  - Fonts "with feet" are easier to read (in sentences and dot points)
  - Fonts "without feet" make nice titles
- Choose color combinations that make your text easy to read.

- Limit your graphics to 1-3 per page. Too many graphics can be distracting.
- Slides are designed to supplement your presentation---not to BE your presentation. Keep it simple, and don't read your presentation word for word from your slides.
- Fill out a storyboard before you begin to put your presentation together. It will help you stay organized, and things will get done faster.
- Bells and whistles are fun to put in, but they tend to be distracting for the viewer. Make sure that special effects have a purpose.
- Proofread and spell check! Proofread and spell check! Proofread and spell check!

Announcement note:

Dear All,

the seminars are due on the 3rd of May (in time for the seminar series starting on the 4th of May). Submission links to upload your seminars will be provided beforehand (soon). Please, can even those students presenting online upload their seminars - having the same 'due date' is only fair.

The seminars are 8 minutes long - expect 2 minutes for questions

A few additional points:

You CAN base your presentation on the same paper that you used for your assignment 1 commentary; indeed it is wise to do so (but not mandatory). Overall, choose a paper that you find most interesting; You don't necessarily need to summarize the entire paper. If the research is complex and covers various facets, you may choose one compelling element of the paper to focus your presentation on; You should introduce the problem/hypothesis, state the aim of the paper, quickly explain the methods used and step through the statistical results; In your last couple of slides, critically review the paper's conclusions in relation to the broader literature in conservation genetics. This should not be your "personal thoughts" on the study, but a discussion of how the findings agree (or not) with other research on the topic. Point out any weaknesses or strengths of the analysis. Above all, make sure your presentation deals adequately with how genetics is used to focus on a conservation-based problem. The level of detail and understanding should match that canvassed in the unit thus far.

cheers,

Adam