You are allotted 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by a short question and answer period. A faculty moderator keeps track of your presentation time and will also facilitate the discussion.

Preparing an Effective Presentation

An effective presentation is more than just standing up and giving information. A presenter must consider how best to communicate their information to the audience. Use these tips to create a presentation that is both informative and interesting.

Be simple. Clearly establish a single focus for your presentation and eliminate anything that doesn’t directly support that focus.

Organize your thoughts. Start with an outline and develop good transitions between sections. Emphasize the real-world significance of your research.

Have a strong opening. Why should the audience listen to you? One good way to get their attention is to start with a question, whether or not you expect an answer.

Define terms early. If you are using terms that may be new to the audience, introduce them early in your presentation. Once an audience gets lost in unfamiliar terminology, it is difficult to get them back on track.

Finish with a bang. Find one or two sentences that sum up the importance of your research. How is the world better from what you have done, and what impact has it had on you?

Design slides to introduce important information. Consider doing a presentation without slides. Then consider which points you cannot make without them. Create only those that are necessary to improve your communication with the audience.

Consider questions you might be asked. Show your materials to friends, co-researchers, and people who are not familiar with your topic. See what questions they have and prepare short answers for them.

Time yourself. Do not wait until the last minute to time your presentation. You only have 10 minutes to speak, so plan your presentation to be less than that so that you leave time for Q&A before the next presentation begins.

Create effective notes for yourself. Have notes that you can read without breaking your connection with your listeners. Use an outline or other brief reminders of what you want to say.

Practice, practice, practice. The more you practice your presentation, the more comfortable you will be in front of an audience. Practice in front of other people and ask for feedback. Record yourself and watch and listen to it critically. Make it better and do it again.

PowerPoint Tips

Use minimal text. Use bullet points, not complete sentences. The text on your slide provides an outline of what you are saying. A common standard is the 6/7 rule: no more than six bulleted items per slide and no more than seven words per item.

Use a large font. As a general rule, avoid text smaller than 24 point.

Use a clean typeface. Sans serif typefaces, such as Arial or Calibri, are generally easier to read on a screen than serifed typefaces, such as Times New Roman.

Use contrasting colors. Use dark text on a light background or light text on a dark background. Avoid red/green combinations, as this is the most common form of color blindness.

Use special effects sparingly. Using animations, cool transition effects, sounds and other special effects is an effective way to make sure the audience notices your slides, but use them only when necessary to make a point.
**Presenting Effectively**

Use these tips to help keep the audience interested throughout your presentation.

**Be excited.** If you remember to be excited, your audience will feel it and automatically become more interested.

**Speak with confidence.** You are the authority on your topic, but do not pretend to know everything. If you do not know the answer to a question, admit it. Consider deferring the question to your mentor or offering to look into the matter further.

**Make eye contact with the audience.** Your purpose is to communicate with your audience, and people listen more if they feel you are talking directly to them. As you speak, let your eyes settle on one person for several seconds before moving on to somebody else. You do not have to make eye contact with everybody, but make sure you connect with all areas of the audience equally.

**Avoid reading from the screen.** First, if you are reading from the screen, you are not making eye contact with your audience. Second, if you put it on your slide, it is because you wanted them to read it, not you.

**Blank the screen when a slide is unnecessary.** A slide that is not related to what you are speaking about can distract the audience. Pressing the letter B or the period key displays a black screen, letting the audience concentrate solely on your words. Press the same key to restore the display.

**Use a pointer only when necessary.** If you are using a laser pointer, remember to keep it off unless you need to highlight something on the screen.

**Engage your audience.** Consider how to consistently maintain your audience’s interest. For example, asking occasional rhetorical questions engages their minds in considering their possible answers to the questions.

**Avoid reading from the screen.** If you are reading from the screen, you are not connecting with your audience.

**Explain your equations and graphs.** When you display equations, explain them fully, but briefly. Point out all constants and dependent and independent variables. With graphs, tell how they support your point. Explain the x- and y-axes and show how the graph progresses from left to right.

**Pause.** Pauses add audible structure to your presentation. They emphasize important information, make transitions obvious, and give the audience time to catch up between points and read new slides. Practice counting silently to three (slowly) between points.

**Avoid filler words.** Um, like, you know, and many others. To an audience, these are indications that you do not know what to say; you sound uncomfortable. Speak slowly enough that you can collect your thoughts before moving ahead.

**Relax.** It is hard to relax when you are nervous, but your audience will be much more comfortable if you are too.

**Breathe.** It is fine to be nervous. To keep your nerves in check, practice your presentation many times, and remember to breathe deeply throughout your presentation.

**Acknowledge the people who supported your research.** Be sure to thank the people who made your research possible, including your mentor, research team, collaborators, and other sources of funding and support.

**Keep your answers short and to the point.** Time will go by quickly, so you want to be able to deal with as many questions as possible within that time. If you don’t know the answer to a question, admit it. Consider asking for contact information for the questioner. Then you can investigate the answer and provide it to them after the event.

**Presentation Resources**

These Guidelines offer an overview of how to create an excellent oral presentation and present it effectively to your audience. There are many resources with more detailed information. Here are several good ones available on the Web.

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnIPpUiTcRc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnIPpUiTcRc)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-w66TglPRbc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-w66TglPRbc)