

Some Do's & Don'ts for a Successful Podium Presentation

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If you are going to give a podium presentation at the GCMAS meeting (or any other professional meeting) you may want to look over this material. While most of the presentations at GCMAS conferences are excellent, many individuals ignore, or simply don't know the "rules of good presentations" when they prepare their slides for the conference. In an attempt to expose presenters to some of those "rules" I am drawing on similar advice given by several sources in regards to giving presentations at professional meetings: Richard Nelson (Sports Medicine Bulletin, 1990), Keith Williams (ASB Newsletter, 1990), Kit Vaughan (ASB Newsletter, 1993), Michael Whittle (ISB Newsletter, 1994) & ACSM Instructions for Presentations (1994).



Do's for Making Slides

- DO test slides in a room of similar size to the room you will be presenting. If you can't test in a similar room, follow the 10 times the width of the monitor rule. (i.e. If your computer monitor is 11 inches wide (not diagonal) then view the monitor from 110 inches back to see what it will look like when projected in a typical meeting room).
- DO check for spelling & other errors.
- DO use block fonts such as Helvetica or Arial and **bold for easier reading**.
- DO use a dark background color with a light color lettering.
- DO make sure all similar graphs have same scales when possible.
- DO avoid spurious accuracy, use same decimal places throughout presentation.
- DO plan ahead and leave time for remaking slides if needed.
- DO use several simple slides rather than a single complicated slide to make your point.
- DO make duplicate slides when you need to refer to something more than once, don't reverse, then forward the projector.

Don'ts for Making Slides

- DON'T use *script* or **fancy** type fonts, they may look nice on the computer, but the audience may have difficulty reading them.
- DON'T use shadowing, again, they may look nice on the computer, but the audience may have difficulty reading them.
- DON'T try to use all 16,000,000 available colors, a few wisely chosen colors are more effective. Also, remember that up to 10% of the audience will have some degree of color blindness.
- DON'T go overboard with fancy backgrounds. If you include the multiple colors and graphics you may find it difficult to find a contrasting color which allows your text to be easily read.
- DON'T use more than 7 words in width (42 character spaces) or more than 7 lines in height (14 single spaced lines). Follow the 10 times the width of the slide rule.
- DON'T use large tables of numeric information (recommended 6 lines X 5 columns is largest). Actually, several sources say not to use more than 2-3 rows/columns and others say to never use tables.
- DON'T try to put all graphs on single figure slide [recommended 3 graphs(lines) per figure is largest]. Also, don't let the computer design weird scales on your graphs like 10.19, 16.39, 21.57, etc.; override with 10, 15, 20, etc.
- DON'T use vertically aligned slides, they won't fit the screen correctly & it only waste time & makes you look like you don't know what you're doing when you ask the projectionist to "please adjust the projector".
- DON'T put something on a slide if you don't plan to refer to it.
- DON'T just copy a drawing or illustration from your manuscript, have it redone for the presentation. Typically it contains too much detail (is in a vertical alignment) and needs redone to be effective in a presentation.
- DON'T put adhesive labels on your slides as they will often curl & cause the slides to stick. Write on the slides with pencil.

Do's for Giving Presentations

- DO practice your presentation as many times as it takes you to become fluid & under the time limit. No one will ever complain if your presentation is under the time limit but it is common to hear complaints when you run over. Many say a good average is 1 slide per minute. I've had as many as 1.5 slides per minute, but that was pushing the limit. Some societies actually limit the number of slides you can have in a ten minute presentation to 6 slides.
- DO arrive at the room you will be presenting in early to introduce yourself to the moderator & to see how the AV equipment (projectors, mic, video/computer projection, pointer, etc.) works.
- DO contact the conference staff well in advance if you are using a laptop, video or any other nonstandard AV equipment to make sure it will be available.
- DO have someone else review your presentation before you give it at the meeting.
- DO look through your slides after loading them in the carousel to make sure they are right side up & facing correctly.
- DO look at each slide as it appears to make sure you are in synch with the slides. I can't tell you the number of times I've been in the audience when the speaker and slides were out of synch because the speaker was just going full speed ahead and the projector was stuck several slides prior.
- DO use the pointer to point out relevant items on the slides as this keeps the audience in touch with your presentation. This is difficult to do if you are reading a script.
- DO have a clear ending to your presentation (i.e. I thank you for your attention...).
- DO carry your slides as carry-on luggage. I watched an individual give their presentation via writing on overheads because their luggage was lost. Although I was impressed by their ability to do so, I can't tell you anything about the material presented.

Don'ts for Giving Presentations

- DON'T read your presentation & don't just read the slide. Use the slides as a guide to prompt you through your presentation. Additionally, many podiums don't have enough light to allow you to see any written material to read anyway...
- DON'T attempt dual slide presentations unless you are skilled in single slide presentations. The presentation is more complicated and the chances of something going wrong are at least doubled.
- DON'T go overboard with fancy transitions & effects when making computer presentations. Many times they are distracting and take away from the presentation.
- DON'T use figures with multiple graphs and only talk about a couple of graphs in the figure. If you don't talk about it, don't put it on a slide.
- DON'T use a table and only talk about a few numbers in the table.
- DON'T wander away from podium unless you have a wireless mic.
- DON'T apologize for the audience not being able to see your slides, (see Do's & Don'ts for making slides).
- DON'T let the light pointer wander around the walls or ceiling (Don't let the pointer zip around, this has been known to cause neck injury in the overly conscientious viewer & could open the Society up for a personal injury suit).
- DON'T use a stick pointer & walk over blocking part of the projection to point to items.
- DON'T combine slides from a previous presentation unless the color scheme, fonts, etc. are the same & figure/table numbers are correct.
- DON'T combine overheads & slides or slides & computer projection in the same presentation.
- DON'T have slides in the presentation if you don't plan to use them. It is very frustrating to listen to a presentation when the presenter clicks through several slides either because time is running out or they now decide they no longer need the information on the slide. Either way, the audience is left wondering if they missed something important and gives the impression that the presenter did not take the time to adequately prepare for the presentation.
- DON'T over do the humor. Sometimes a relevant cartoon can be the best way to get your point across, but irrelevant cartoons, pictures, etc. can distract or offend.
- DON'T assume that everyone else in the audience is an expert in your field. GCMAS is a diverse group and not all MDs, PTs, kinesiologists & engineers know everything about all disciplines. Make it clear so all can understand.
- DON'T talk to the screen or your notes, look up & out to the audience.

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