

IAGA GUIDE FOR SPEAKERS

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Preamble

The aim of an oral presentation is to transfer ideas and/or information to the audience. Therefore it is important that what you say can be heard and understood, and that the 'slides' you show should be legible and easy to understand. There is also the question of showing professional courtesy to the chairman, your audience, and the speakers who follow you. We hope that this guide will help you to avoid the more common problems, and to present your results in the best manner.

AUDIO ASPECTS OF PRESENTATION

You need to be heard by the **whole** audience, so speak to people standing at the back, not just the Chairman on the front row. Keep your voice volume up, even at the end of sentences.

If you are using a lapel microphone, check that it is working. If the microphone is stationary, do not move away from it!

If you are not using a microphone, speak towards the audience, not the projection screen. If you are using viewgraphs on an overhead projector, face the audience and use a small pointer on the viewgraph, not a large pointer on the screen. If you are using slides or a video projector, and have to turn to use a pointer on the screen, return to face your audience as soon as possible.

English may be a second or third language for many in your audience. Speak slowly and clearly using short words, active verbs, and simple sentences. Avoid jargon, unfamiliar abbreviations, and acronyms.

Before you give your talk, write down the few simple messages that you wish your audience to take away with them. Tell them these messages at least twice.

Rehearse your presentation. If it is too long, shorten it, do not speed up! You will have time to highlight only a few major points. Some detail may come out during the discussion period, but most will have to wait for informal discussion after the session.

VISUAL ASPECTS OF PRESENTATION

This is an amalgamation of advice from various society web sites, themselves based on extensive trials to determine the factors that allow quick and easy understanding of the material on projected 'slides'. These factors can be quite different from those used for reading at leisure from printed text or a computer screen.

Orientation

Use Landscape rather than Portrait orientation when possible, particularly if the ceiling of the lecture theatre is low.

Choice of Font

Use *sans serif* fonts, such as Arial or Helvetica; for viewing projected material these are much better than fonts with serifs. (These notes are in Times New Roman - a font with serifs - which is good for reading from print or from a computer screen.)

Use lower-case lettering, with CAPITALS only for Initial Letters. This is better than using ALL CAPITALS, except perhaps for a TITLE.

Use Flush Left, Ragged Right justification (except for TITLES, which look better centred).

Give emphasis by using **bold** or *italic* or **colour**, not underline.

Do not use more than two or three different font styles, and/or different font sizes.

Size of Font

With good projection facilities, the width of the projected image is about one-ninth of the distance to the back of audience. Then, for most of the audience to be able to read the text quickly, the height of the lettering must be at least 1/20 that of the slide. For an A4 (or letter) size transparency, this corresponds to using **at least** 24-point font, and preferably 28, 30, or 32-point for the main text with 36-point for headings. If it is known that the facilities will be poor, then even larger lettering will be needed.

The space between lines should be **at least** the height of a CAPITAL LETTER. For Landscape orientation this means that there should not be more than about 8 lines of text per slide, with not more than about 8 words per line.

Amount of Information per Slide

Edit the TITLE to one line, with no more than about six words.

Keep the slide simple, with plenty of open space.

Introduce only one new idea per slide; use more slides if necessary.

Have not more than about six items of information per slide.

Use short bulleted points, rather than a long paragraph.

Use only one sub-level of listing.

If using a PowerPoint-style presentation, have a corporate logo only on the first slide (unless forced to by company policy). Do not waste valuable space and irritate the reader with an annoying background used throughout.

Colour

Use colour only for a purpose, not for decoration.

Use no more than three or four colours. Keep colour coding consistent from slide to slide.

A significant proportion of your audience may be colour-blind or have other defects of vision. Do not use **both red and green** to distinguish between points/properties - these colours look the same to many colour-blind people.

For a projected slide (physically 2 inches or 35 mm), white or yellow lettering on a blue background is the most visible, particularly for people with vision defects such as cataracts. For video projection and transparencies, some people argue that black lettering on a pale background is better, particularly if the room black-out is not very good. What matters is that there must be sufficient **contrast** in brightness between lettering and background **when projected**. Do not assume that the colours and contrasts that you see on the screen of your computer will be reproduced by the projector. When projected, yellow and pale green are often indistinguishable from white.

Graphs

Graphs prepared for publication are unlikely to be suitable for projection. You will need to use larger symbols and a larger font size than you would for publication.

Keep the title simple.

Keep axis labels simple. Avoid using vertical lettering for labelling the ordinate axis.

Keep tick-mark numbering simple by incorporating powers of 10 into the axis label.

Use a duller colour (e.g., grey) for axes, tick marks, and grid to avoid distracting from the data.

Make data lines sufficiently thick and label each line directly, rather than by using a legend.

Do not assume that the default colour scheme of a graphics package is suitable. Check the visibility when projected, as this can be quite different from the appearance on a computer screen.

For a Pie Chart there should be ≤ 6 slices, each of which should be $\geq 10\%$. Use colour rather than hatching to differentiate the slices.

Tables

Tables are generally much less effective than graphs or bar charts.

Use not more than four columns and six rows.

Keep row/column headings brief.

Round the data numbers.

COURTESY & MISCELLANEOUS

Before the session at which you are speaking, tell the Convenor or Chairman that you have arrived.

Do not demand complete blackout; there should be sufficient background lighting for the audience to be able to read abstracts and take notes.

Keep to your appointed time! If you over-run into your discussion time, you and the audience will miss out on possibly important feed-back. If you exceed your total time you are penalizing later speakers and inconveniencing people in the audience who may wish to get to specific talks at different sessions.

The acoustics of the room might make it difficult for the audience to hear questions from the floor. If possible, summarize a question before answering it. Do not spend too long answering, as other people may have equally important questions.

Make sure that you fulfill any technical requirements specified by the meeting organizers, for example regarding software requirements, hardware compatibility, and interface leads.

If you are using a PowerPoint-type presentation with a computer supplied by the organizers, you should use the 'pack and go' facility, particularly if you have unusual characters or fonts, or animations. For example, in PowerPoint, store the presentation as a PowerPoint Show. Remember that if the host computer is slower than yours, an animation may run slower.

Frank Lowes, 4/6/04