Ten Conference Presentation Do's and Don'ts
AP-LS Student Committee Webinar Series

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As a psychology student, chances are that at some point in your academic career, you will have to do a presentation. If you are going into academia, knowing how to give a good presentation is imperative.

1. Work to time
- Conference organizers are usually quite clear about how much time you will have for your presentation.

- Tailor your presentation to fit the time and then keep an eye on the time. Most conferences assign monitors to signal when you are approaching the last 5 or 10 minutes of your presentation.

- Do not try to cram too much material into your presentation by going too fast. Maintain a pace that allows adequate time to cover each point of your presentation.

- If you are running out of time, jump to the most important points and at the end, then offer to make your presentation available to anyone who may want to revisit it.

2. Make eye contact and use appropriate body language
- Nonverbal communication is just as important as verbal.

- Making eye contact gives your audience a sense of involvement and helps to convey your objectives on a personal level.

- If your audience is small, be sure to make eye contact with each individual at some point in your presentation.

- If your audience is large, regularly shift your focus around the room.

- Never look at the floor or ceiling.

3. Know what you are presenting
- "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." - Albert Einstein

- If you are a student presenter, most of your audience will probably be peers so use appropriate terminology but keep your words simple. Attempting to use advanced vocabulary or terminology may disengage your audience.

- Having a firm grasp of what you are talking about translates confidence. Ask yourself: Why is this important? Why do people need to know? What will knowing accomplish?

- Having simplified explanations will reach a broader audience.

4. Make your point clear in the beginning
- An ambiguous presentation will not be memorable. Making the purpose of your work clear in the beginnings allows your audience to become invested early in your presentation.

- Your audience will take away a strong understanding of what you presented.

- Ask yourself: Why is this important? Why do people need to know? What will knowing accomplish?

5. Don't overload your slides
- Less is more. Do not try to add everything you want to say verbatim in your slides.

- Bullets are your friends. Use slides to list what topics you want to present. These lists should cue you to talk about and elaborate on your topics.

- Be clear and concise. Complete sentences are not necessary.
  - Instead of:
    - ➢ Cognitive-behavioral and interpersonal therapies have proven to be the most effective types of psychotherapy.
  - use:
    - ➢ Effective Psychotherapy- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy

- Use a large enough font to allow comfortable reading. Avoid fancy fonts.

6. Add images
- Having all text in your presentation may make your presentation appear stale and boring. Visuals add interest.

- Each image should serve a purpose and not be there simply for decoration.

- Do not overload your presentation with images but try to find an appropriate balance between the text and pictures. Stream the texts on your slides and verbally present most of your information. This will leave room for graphs, charts, and the occasional picture.

7. Add personalized examples
- Make your presentation more relatable by occasionally adding an example or personal experience.

- Empirical presentations require support for your positions and personal beliefs or opinions are not generally acceptable but using stories during your presentation creates an air of familiarity and relatability that can get your audience more invested and add clarity to your point.

8. (Almost) Never point out mistakes
- If you find that you have an error in your presentation, do not highlight it by pointing it out. Saying things like, "I misspelled that" or "oops" makes your presentation less professional and implies that you were careless.

- Present the correct information and continue as if you don't see the mistake.

9. Leave time for questions
- Questions give you an opportunity to clarify anything that may be unclear or vague. They also give your audience a chance to participate and feel involved.

- A common mistake presenters tend to make is not leaving time for questions.

- It is most common to do your entire presentation first then open the floor to questions at the end.

- A good rule of thumb: if your presentation is less than 30 minutes, devote 5 minutes to questions. Anything longer, give 10 minutes.

- If you are giving a poster presentation, it is best to verbally summarize your information for your viewers and answer questions as they ask them.

10. Rehearse! Rehearse! Rehearse!

- Practice your presentation out load in front of a mirror, with a friend, cohort, or colleague.

- Hearing yourself helps you pinpoint what you may need to work on. It also helps you identify areas you may need to shorten or omit and it also helps you to keep with time limits.