MURC | MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

What Makes a Great Poster and Oral Presentation?

Whether you are presenting a poster or doing an oral presentation, you are practicing a critically important skill in research: **effectively communicating your findings to an audience**. While there may be some differences to consider when preparing an oral vs. a poster presentation, the following considerations apply to research communication in general:

General Presentation Tips

Define your purpose

Before you start, ask yourself what you want to accomplish with your presentation. If you are trying to introduce your audience to a lesser-known topic, make sure to provide enough background information. It also helps to provide information about the significance of your study; why should the audience care about this topic? If the purpose of the presentation is to share your findings, provide enough context so that the audience can fully grasp the importance of your study.

Tell a story through your presentation

A key component of any good presentation is ensuring that there is a logical flow throughout. One of the ways to establish this flow is by structuring the presentation in the form of a story. This will increase the likelihood that the audience will remember what you have to say, compared to if your presentation was very text and information heavy. Your introduction should provide sufficient background/context and establish the significance of your work. Consider the problem or question you are working to solve. Think about the methodology next, and what you did to answer the research question. Follow with your results (if applicable) and explain the implications of your research. You should be able to show how your results contribute to the existing pool of knowledge in the related field, and you should have convinced the audience of the importance of your research by the end of your presentation.

Content is important, but keep It concise

Everything you include in your presentation should help convey the message. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words! If you find that you have too much text on your slides or poster, try to replace it with a graphical schematic and make sure to cite the source of these images. This is often preferred to chunky blocks of text.

Dealing with feedback

It is important to welcome feedback, be prepared for discussion and not to be too defensive in the face of criticism. Don't take things personally!

Delivery

Make sure you are speaking clearly and at a volume where everyone can hear you. Also, try to speak at a calm and steady pace. Don't just read off your slides, make sure to engage with your audience, as the focus of your presentation should be you and not solely your slides. Your slides should supplement your presentation. This is relevant even within the online format. It is more engaging when the presenter's eyes are not wandering to one side of their screen even when direct "eye contact" may not be possible in the same way as in person.

Practice!!!

This may seem like an obvious tip but is something that many people mistakenly skip over or think they can do without! Practice to the point where you are comfortable and confident with your material. It helps immensely to practice presenting your work to someone who is not familiar with it. Remember, MURC has a generalist audience, so you need to make sure you can explain the content of your presentation to someone who is not familiar with your topic and can follow along with ease.

Be well versed in everything that you've done

Be comfortable with talking about everything you include in your presentation. Make sure you understand the methodology and the reasoning for why you chose to approach the research question the way you did. The best way to prepare for questions is to critically assess your presentation and think about the type of questions you may get. After thinking of questions, prepare answers to address them.

Poster Presentations

The Title Is Important

The title is your equivalent of a newspaper headline. You want to try to make it short, sharp, and compelling. It might be the only thing a conference attendee sees before they reach your poster. The title might pose a decisive question, define the scope of the study, or hint at a new finding. Above all, it should be short, descriptive and comprehensible to a broad audience.

Organization & Layout

Having an organized poster is key. Aim to have a flow and logical progression with your poster. Guide the reader with arrows, numbering, or whatever else makes sense in getting them to move from one logical step to another. Try to do this in an eye-catching manner, without being distracting. Look for appropriate layouts in the posters of others and adopt some of their approaches. Never use less than a size 24-point font (unless it is for axis, figure captions, or references; they can go as small as size 14 point font). Make sure the main points can be read at eye level. This will ensure that the audience can read your research easily.

This year, poster presentations will be virtual. One of the accessible ways to make your poster is through PowerPoint. You will be given in a unique format in which you can make a slide deck to "zoom into" various parts of your poster. While this can be used to make sections of your poster clearer, it important that the content on the slides remain the same as on your completed poster, with no add-ons.

You can utilize this feature to highlight important parts or information you want to touch on or emphasize. Make sure your slides do not include parts of other sections that you won't be mentioning at that slide. You may have to structure your poster so that each section can cleanly fit into one slide. You can also take advantage of this format to create a slide deck that features the different parts of your poster in the order that works well with how you want to present. Having speakers notes to support you as you talk can also be a way to make use of this format. As this is still a poster presentation, it is important not to get carried away adding transition animations.

<u>Avoid blocks of text</u>

Although unavoidable in some cases, if you can explain a concept with a diagram or schematic, this is preferred to a block of text. Point form is also acceptable. The reader should be able to piece together your poster without you, but you are meant to walk your reader through the poster and build upon and complement what is on your poster rather than just reading what it is on it.

Oral Presentations

<u>Slide headings and layout</u>

Summarize the main point of your slide in a short and concise slide heading. Make sure your slides are readable and have a good font size (Size 24).

Make sure your slides are engaging. Use simple text animations (such as the animation feature "appear") so that the audience does not read ahead. This way you have more control as you guide them through your presentation. Do not use excessive animations. This can be distracting for the audience and may take away from the content of your presentation. Ensure your slides are not too text heavy. Where appropriate, make use of images, schematics, or diagrams. Make sure to cite your sources of these images!

<u>Overview slide</u>

Having a slide with a table of contents or overview of your presentation after your title slide is a good way to give your audience an idea of the structure of your presentation. This can help the audience better follow your presentation, but make sure you don't take too much time away from the rest of your presentation!

Make sure you attend our Poster and Oral Presentation Workshops!

- Poster Workshop - Wednesday February 24th, 2021 5:30 – 6:30 PM

- Oral Workshop - Wednesday March 3rd, 2021 5:30 – 6:30 PM

You can also discuss other ways to improve your presentation in the MURC 2021 Canvas Page under the tips and discussion posts! Practice sessions and the opportunity to find a practice buddy will also be held on the canvas page for presenters to practice with each other!

Want to schedule a one on one review of your presentation? We will be having a by-appointment office hours service throughout January for those that would like feedback on what they have written!

If you have any further questions feel free to reach out and email us at murc.researchpresentations@ubc.ca.

Examples of posters:

UBC Research Poster Templates

Poster Examples #1

Poster Examples #2

Links for resources:

Poster Presentation Tips #1

Poster Presentation Tips #2

Humanities Poster Presentation Tips