HOW TO PRESENT AT AN ACADEMIC CONFERENCE

A Professional Development Workshop
2017 Graduate Student Research Expo

• Congratulations!
• Website
• Agenda and schedule
• Attend both days if you can. Support your grad student colleagues! Create your audience by inviting your circle of friends/supporters (all are welcome for the presentations)
• Specific guidelines
  • Panels—send your PowerPoint to jawaggoner@utep.edu subj: “EXPO PPT”; **deadline: Nov. 1**
  • Posters—size= 32”x40” (landscape); print at Library (3rd floor)-$20 or UTEP Print Shop at Hertzog Bldg. -$45
• Lunch: **Sorry, lunch is just for presenters, judges, volunteers, and mentors.** You will need to present your lunch ticket to have lunch.
General Best Practices for Attending a Conference

• Dress for Success
• Preparing
• The Talk
• Posters (libguide)
• Practice!
• Networking
Conferences Are Professional Events

- Because conferences are considered professional events, you want to reflect your best professional self.

What to wear?
Looking Professional

Dress to Impress

T-shirts, no matter how "nice" you think they are, are not appropriate for an interview or most jobs.

Avoid jeans full of holes, actually... just avoid jeans altogether.

Hats aren't going to win you any points. Comb your hair and leave the cap at home.

A button-down shirt and a tie for the gentlemen and an appropriately fitting shirt for the girls will keep employers impressed. Add a suit jacket for an even classier look.

Get rid of the scruffy attitude and greet your interviewer with enthusiasm and a firm handshake. Remember to make eye contact!

Dress to impress from head to toe... no flip-flops, sneakers or funny boots.

Don't forget the basics: take a shower and take care of basic hygiene issues so you don't scare your interviewer away.

Detail adds interest but doesn't distract.

For business casual:
- Blouse: color, collar style go well with the suit
- Minimal jewelry
- Sweater and pants fit well
- Casual, yet polished

For business professional:
- Blouse: color, collar style go well with the suit
- Minimal jewelry
- Sweater and pants fit well
- Casual, yet polished
- Dress shoes

This interview look would be appropriate for these industries: IT, startups, teaching, entry-level government positions, environmental engineering, aerospace (non-management), architecture, healthcare/life sciences research, social media, advertising/PR and retail.

This more formal interview look works for these industries: healthcare management and sales, hospital administration, biotechnology, banking, personal financial services, academic administration, hospitality, pharmaceutical sales and aerospace management.
Preparation

• Carefully review all of the instructions on your acceptance letter/email

  ✓ Know deadlines: do you need to confirm your attendance? register for the conference? when is your presentation due?
  ✓ What are the check-in guidelines? What do you have to do and where?
  ✓ If you’re presenting a poster: what is the accepted size of the poster? When is your time to set up? Where?
Preparation (con.)

- Elevator Speech
- Business Cards
- Small talk
  - Starting a conversation
  - Ending a conversation (and ways to follow up)
  - Handshake & eye contact
- Prep for VIPs and potential collaborators
  - Review schedule
  - (Professionally) stalk people online
- Reflect: How else can you take full advantage of the opportunity?
Speaking well at a conference

• Principles of Effective Talks

1) Communicate your arguments and evidence
2) Persuade your audience
3) Engage and entertain

Source: “How to Give an Academic Talk”
Paul N. Edwards, University of Michigan
Speaking well at a conference

Rules of Thumb
• Talk (rather than read)
• Stand and move
• Vary the pitch of your voice
• Speak loudly & clearly (not speeding), facing the audience
• Make eye contact (avoid siding)
• Focus on main points
• Use visuals: outlines, images, charts
• Finish within your time limit
• Rehearse & get feedback
• Summarize main points at the beginning & at the end
• Notice your audience & respond to its needs
• Emulate excellent speakers
Speaking well at a conference

Preparing Your Talk

- Hack it down to size
- 100 words per minutes; for a 13 minute talk, that’s 1300 words. Plan what you want to say very carefully.
- Make an outline

Vocal Technique

- Speak from gut, not from throat
- Speak at the bottom of your vocal range
- Adequate volume—most people don’t realize how quietly they speak
- Silent moments: pause briefly at ends of sentences/between slides (drink water if necessary)
Posters…

• Let’s review this libguide to learn about how to put together a great poster:

• http://libguides.utep.edu/posters

Thank you Les Arms, UTEP reference librarian!
Time Management

Panel Session

- Respect time
- 10-13 minutes + questions
- Be interested in other speakers
- Practice, Practice, Practice

Poster session

- Respect time
- 2-4 minute presentation + questions
- Include your listeners
- Practice, Practice, Practice
Activity

• Can you explain your project in 2 minutes?
  • Essential components
    • Why?
    • What did you do/find?
    • Why is that important?

• Let’s Practice!
Responding to Questions

• Be respectful

• Be thoughtful
  • Take a second
  • Listen to the question before speaking
  • Ask for clarification

• What do you say when you don’t know how to answer?

• Remember: You know your topic/data more than anyone else who will ask you questions!
Conferences Are Opportunities for Networking

- End your PowerPoint with your conclusions and your contact information

- 1-page summary of main points and your contact information (make this a professional-looking document)

- Business cards; it’s okay to create your own

- Keep all documents professional!
Questions?

J. Aaron Waggoner
Assistant Director, The Graduate School
jawaggoner@utep.edu
(915) 747-5777

www.utep.edu/graduate/pd/expo