

## REQUIREMENTS FOR A PLATFORM PRESENTATION

A platform presentation is a 10-15 minute oral presentation of an original research project or paper followed by 5 minutes of question time, moderated by a chair or group leader.

Platforms are an excellent opportunity to present your ideas to a large audience and to highlight key elements of your research that are unique, novel or contribute new knowledge to the field.

As is true with any presentation, preparation for a platform is extremely important. Below are tips and questions to consider to help plan and prepare for your presentation.

### PREPARING YOUR PRESENTATION

#### **1. What are your aims?**

To inform, persuade, demonstrate, inspire, or prove one or several points? Your aims should align with your choice of presentation style.

#### **2. Who is your audience?**

Will you be presenting to trainees, seasoned faculty, expert researchers in your field, hospitalists, clinical educators? How familiar will they be with the content of your presentation, the background literature, and your methodology? Consider these factors as you prepare to determine what content is most essential and relevant to include (and what may need further explanation).

#### **3. Tell a clear story.**

Your platform presentation should follow the format of a traditional scientific abstract and include the following sections:

- Background
- Objectives/Aims
- Methods
- Results
- Limitations
- Conclusions/Implications

Do not try to fit everything from your research into your presentation. Before you begin drafting your slides, spend time thinking about **3-5 key messages** you want to convey. Build your description of your research around these messages to be sure you are telling a logical and organized story –with clear connections between each section.

#### **4. Be the first to acknowledge your limitations!**

Always include a statement of the limitations of your research. Audiences will always point these out, so it's best to beat them to it. You will earn the respect of many if you present your limitations clearly and openly.

#### **5. Don't forget Disclosures, IRB approvals and Acknowledgments**

Begin your presentation with a statement of any conflicts of interest or disclosures. In most cases, it is best to present this after your title slide. If you have no conflicts of interest, you may include the following statement, "*The authors have documented that they have no financial relationships to disclose or Conflicts of Interest to resolve.*"

Include a statement that your project was approved by the IRB and include the protocol ID associated with this. This can be included on your Methods slide.

End your presentation with an Acknowledgments slide to recognize the contributions of the people who helped you with your research. Include any funding organizations that supported your work.

#### **6. Include your name and contact information**

Remember to provide information about how you can be contacted. Your first name and a full list of your co-authors can go on your title slide. Your contact information (email, phone) can be included on a final slide with your Acknowledgements.

### **PREPARING YOUR VISUAL AIDS**

Your PowerPoint should be an adjunct to your verbal presentation, not a replacement. You should outline your presentation before you put text to slides to ensure that you are telling the story you intend to.

#### **1. Text**

- The title should reflect the title of your abstract accepted for publication (or your paper).
- Aim for 10 slides total for a 10-minute presentation (a general rule of thumb is one slide per minute)
- Keep slides simple but interesting. Include no more than 4-5 points per slide.
- Limit the amount of information on any one slide. Use keywords and phrases, not whole sentences.
- Make sure you have empty space on your slides – it keeps slides easy to read and keeps the audiences' attention on you
- Text, tables and graphs should be integrated and have similar formatting
- Place all text in the top 2/3 of the slide so the audience in the back can see the text
- Use different size fonts for main and secondary points

- 38+ pt font for Headings
- 24+ for text
- Use sans-serif fonts that are easy to read from a distance, such as Arial
- Make sure text is left-justified

## 2. Colors

- Use Stanford School of Medicine and Lucile Packard Children's Hospital PowerPoint templates. Templates can be accessed here:  
<https://intranet.lpch.org/departments/newsComm/powerpoint-templates.html>
- When in doubt, select colors with high visibility and contrast. Light or white backgrounds with dark text is best.
- Keep a common theme throughout the presentation. Limit color use to 2-4 colors at most.

## 3. Images, graphs, and charts

- Use graphs, charts and images that closely follow or complement the findings/concepts expressed in each slide.
- Diagrams, graphs and charts are a good visual aid; they also tend to hold interest better than text. Don't overcrowd your slides, and label images fully.
- Graphics should tend toward the horizontal, greater in width than height, ideally 50 percent wider than tall.
- Use color to distinguish different data groups in graphs and avoid using patterns or open bars in histograms.
- Labels should be placed on the graphics itself (e.g., treatment groups, participant data, percentages, etc.)
- Focus on principle results.
- Illustrate your point by verbally discussing the graph or chart.

## 4. Animations

- Keep animations and transitions to an absolute minimum. These can be distracting and often take up time that would otherwise be used for presenting your work.

## **DELIVERY**

1. Public speaking is difficult, even for the most experienced public speaker. The more you prepare and practice your presentation in advance, the more comfortable you'll feel on the day of.
2. Practice in front of the mirror, record yourself on your iPhone, or ask a friend or roommate to listen to your presentation. Practice while standing up too, since our body language is different when standing. You will likely find your presentation takes longer than you expected, so be sure to time yourself and revise your slides as necessary to ensure you meet time restrictions.

3. Be mindful of the language you use, your pace, tone of voice and non-verbal communication, and how these add to or detract from your presentation. Try to keep your hands visible, out of your pockets, but away from your face. Maintain eye contact with the entire room and remember to stand up straight.
4. It's easy to rely on verbal fillers such as "uh," "um," "you know," and "etc," especially because we use these so frequently in our daily lives. Try to be aware of these and avoid them if possible. You will sound more confident and prepared if you don't use them.

### **TAKING QUESTIONS**

There will be 5 minutes of questions following your presentation. No matter how prepared we are, we tend to think only of the questions that we know the answers to, so it's best to ask a friend, colleague or mentor react to a practice run and ask you to answer questions. The goal is to lessen the likelihood of being surprised by questions and to practice maintaining composure under stress.

- Listen actively to the question; it helps to look directly at the questioner and, if necessary, ask for the question to be repeated or clarified. Often the second time the question is asked is more concise and clear.
- Repeating the question in your own words gives you the opportunity to establish that you have heard and understood the question as intended as well as giving yourself time to think of the reply.
- Pause before you respond, even if you know the answer. A thoughtful pause, especially if you feel under pressure, reminds you to slow down and collect yourself and your thoughts.
- Give yourself some time to come up with an answer by saying, "great question," or "excellent point," and stating that you are happy to answer it.
- If you don't know the answer to a question (e.g., someone asks you how your research relates to a published article you've never heard of), be honest. Tell the questioner you are not aware of the article, that you appreciate his/her question and will look into it. Additionally, if someone makes a (good) point you haven't considered, tell them it's a great idea and that you will consider it for the next stage in your research.
- Good question asking is a skill, too. If someone asks a poor question, be courteous and say, "I hadn't thought about it in that way" or "That's an interesting perspective." Follow up by saying you will think about their point more and that you appreciate their comments.

## **FINAL CHECK**

Here are some questions to help you check the final presentation.

- Have you followed the instructions for platform presentations outlined by the conference?
- Is the key message clear? Can your audience state the main points or take away messages?
- Is the sequence of your talk clear? Does it follow a logical order? (Background, Objectives/Aims, Methods, Results, Limitations, Conclusions/Implications)
- Is there a good balance between verbal presentation and visual aids?
- Is the visual material visible and easily accessible to the audience?
- Have you included in your presentation your Disclosure statement, Acknowledgements, and IRB approvals?
- Have you included in your presentation your contact information and the names of your co-authors?
- Have you practiced your presentation more than twice? Is it 10 minutes? Have you asked for feedback from peers, mentors, and friends?
- Have you saved your presentation on a flash drive or emailed it to yourself as a backup? Don't forget to do this!