

Speaking at APPAM: Best Practices



ASSOCIATION FOR
PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS
& MANAGEMENT

Best Practices for Presenting Academic Papers

- ▶ Presentation Style
- ▶ Visual Aids
- ▶ Content
- ▶ Timing
- ▶ Audience Engagement
- ▶ FAQs

Presentation Style:

How to Share Your Paper

- ▶ **DO: Map out your paper to reiterate key points, arguments, and findings**
 - ▶ Share your work in a format that is easy to follow.
- ▶ **DO: Summarize your work to make it obtainable for all audience members**
 - ▶ Simplify the more intricate details so that every audience member can understand your arguments and findings
- ▶ **DO: Utilize and reference visual aids**
 - ▶ Use visual aids such as PowerPoint slides to share the high-level points. This helps the audience follow along through your presentation
- ▶ **DO: Speak slowly, loudly, and clearly**
 - ▶ You want everyone to not only hear you, but understand you. Speak loud enough for people in the back of the room, and slowly/clearly enough for attendees who may speak English as a second (or third!) language.

Presentation Style:

How to Share Your Paper

▶ **DON'T: Read your paper word-for-word**

- ▶ This is a sure way to lose your audience's attention. Instead, summarize and reiterate the key points in an easily comprehensible way

▶ **DON'T: Rush through important points**

- ▶ Remember, you may know this information like the back of your hand but your audience doesn't. Give them a chance to learn from you

▶ **DON'T: Try to include every tiny detail**

- ▶ It's more important that your work is understood rather than just thrown at the audience. Cover only the most important details and give highlights of the others.

▶ **DON'T: Read straight off of PowerPoint Slides**

- ▶ Visual aids should be an aid, not a lifeline. Only include your key points so audience members can easily follow what you're saying.

Visual Aids

Map Out Your Work for the Audience

▶ **Background**

- ▶ Simple backgrounds that will provide visual interest without being distracting

▶ **Font Types**

- ▶ Stick with the classics: Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri
- ▶ Use the same font throughout the entire presentation

▶ **Font Colors**

- ▶ Ensure fonts contrast with the background and they are easy to read.

▶ **Font Sizes**

- ▶ Body text should be a *minimum* of 20-point for easy reading.

Visual Aids

Map Out Your Work for the Audience

▶ **Layout**

- ▶ Go easy on the amount of text. Less is more!
- ▶ Always use bullet points
- ▶ Avoid full paragraphs. Use key points then share the paragraphs orally

▶ **Keep it Simple**

- ▶ Use a new slide for each key point of the presentation (don't forget a title!)
- ▶ This keeps the audience engaged and prevents them from skipping ahead

▶ **Graphics**

- ▶ Use images/charts/tables on every page. Text should compliment the graphics, not the other way around

Content

What to Include in Your Presentation

▶ **Follow a basic formula for sharing your work:**

- ▶ Introduction/Background – this is your hook!
- ▶ Research Question/Framework
- ▶ Methodology
- ▶ Data & Results
- ▶ Analysis
- ▶ Conclusion/Questions

Content

What to Include in Your Presentation

▶ **Introduction/Background**

- ▶ What is the main point of the work?
- ▶ What is currently known in this area?

▶ **Research Question/Framework**

- ▶ What are you trying to accomplish?
- ▶ What is the core of your project?

▶ **Methodology**

- ▶ How did you collect and analyze your data?
- ▶ Is your description clear enough for others to understand and duplicate?

Content

What to Include in Your Presentation

▶ **Data/Research & Analysis**

- ▶ What did you find?
- ▶ Did you reiterate and answer your research question
- ▶ Be sure not to overwhelm the audience. Simplify this information using charts and graphics.

▶ **Conclusion**

- ▶ Are you satisfied with your findings?
- ▶ Do you have plans for future work?
- ▶ Acknowledge those that assisted in the research.

▶ **Questions**

- ▶ Always have a slide for questions!

Timing

The Clock Never Stops

▶ Time Limits

- ▶ 12-15 minutes to present, depending on the total number of speakers or papers
- ▶ Check with your session chair for exact timing
- ▶ Check out an example session format [here](#)

▶ Follow the Cues

- ▶ Session Chairs will show 5, 2, and 1 minute signs to indicate your remaining time

▶ Practice

- ▶ Good presentations take skill. Practice before you get in the session room
- ▶ Do a dry-run with a colleague for feedback on clarity, volume, and content

Audience Engagement

Keep Them Hooked!

▶ **Tell Them What to Learn**

- ▶ Keep your points clear so the audience knows exactly what they're going to hear

▶ **Use Animated Body Language**

- ▶ Move around during the presentation or use your arms to point out key graphs on your slides
- ▶ Don't forget to smile!

▶ **Use Silence to Your Benefit**

- ▶ Pause periodically, especially after in-depth explanations, to allow the information sink in

FAQs

Some Extra Tips & Tricks

▶ **What Should I Say?**

- ▶ Write out what you want to say during the presentation and use this to practice. For the actual presentation, use note cards with only the key points for reference
- ▶ For a 15-minute presentation, your script can be about 7 pages, double-spaced

▶ **What If I Don't Know the Answer to a Question?**

- ▶ Simply say, "I don't know the answer to that right now. Can I get your information after the session so I can get back to you?"
- ▶ Make sure you actually get back to them!

▶ **What if I'm nervous?**

- ▶ Everyone started somewhere. Less than 40% of submissions were accepted for this conference – use that to boost your confidence!
- ▶ Attend other presentations to watch others, arrive to your session room early, and take deep breaths. You'll do great!

See You in Chicago!

For any questions about your presentation or the conference, please contact:

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References

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