

Guidelines for Presentations

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A good presentation is very rewarding and usually raises the presenter's profile. This document aims to provide guidelines on how to create good presentations.

Slides

Properly selected visual aids can add enormous impact and effect. However, improperly used they can ruin a presentation. For the purpose of these guidelines it is assumed that you will be using slides for your presentation.

Abuses

- Avoid having too many slides for the time allocated. 20 slides for a 20 minute presentation is too much (try a maximum of 12).
 - Overrunning your time and/or not leaving enough time for questions is rude to the audience and signs of poor presentation skills.
 - All slides should support your presentation and the points you are making. They should not just be designed to impress.
 - Avoid filling your slides to the bottom as the audience at the back might not be able to see everything.
 - Do NOT use long lists or text that you intend to read to the audience. They can read!
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Style

- Use a set font and colour scheme.
- Make sure the background does not clash with the colour scheme or is not distracting or annoying.
- Use a consistent layout.
- Use white spacing.

Colours

- There is nothing wrong with black and white.
 - Use a contrasting colour scheme to make information stand out. It is hard to distinguish between similar colours from the back.
 - 7-11% men are red/green colour blind so avoid using these too much.
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Font

- Use a sans serif font, e.g., Helvetica or Arial, as these are easier for the audience to read.
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Font Size

- If you have to ask the audience "Can you read this at the back?", the answer is **NO!** So use the right font size so you do not have to ask!
 - Use a minimum font size of 24 points.
 - You could use 44/40 points for Headings, 36/32 points for main bullet points and 28/24 points for sub-bullet points.
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CAPITALS and *Italics*

- CAPITAL letters ARE HARDER TO READ! Use them for EMPHASIS or acronyms.
- *Italics* can be used in "quotes" or to *highlight*. Note that they can be hard to differentiate from normal text at the back.
- Use capitals and italics consistently.

Bullet Points

- Do NOT crowd slides with text. Bullet points are more effective and easier to read.
 - Try to keep each bullet to one line perhaps two if you really have to.
 - Minimise the number of bullet points per slide and do not exceed 8 lines of text.
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Algebra

- Avoid algebra if you can. Even statisticians can find it hard to follow algebra in a presentation.
 - Use words to explain the main concepts/ideas.
 - If you absolutely have to use algebra then keep it to a minimum - do NOT flood your slides with formulae!
 - Try to use words and Greek letters together instead of X s and Y s. For example, "Hemoglobin = α + β .age + γ .treatment" rather than " $Y = \alpha + \beta_1.x_1 + \beta_2.x_2$ "
 - Respect the font and font size guidelines above. These do not change when presenting algebra!
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Graphs

- Do NOT use three-dimensional graphs (especially bar/pie charts!)
 - Design your graphs carefully.
 - Do NOT distort the image.
 - Include zero on vertical axis. If this is not feasible consider using a different axis (e.g., log scale axis).
 - Keep colour coding consistent across graphs.
 - Use high quality graphs.
 - Respect the font and font size guidelines above.
 - Make sure that lines are thick enough to be seen from the back.
 - Do NOT fill your slide with a graph as the audience at the back might not be able to see the bottom.
 - Ask yourself whether a table would be better?
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Tables

- Be clear about the aim of all tables.
 - Plan and structure tables carefully.
 - Do NOT put too much information in tables. Break them up or just emphasise the key points.
 - Round numbers as much as possible and be consistent with their presentation. Is 42 sufficient instead of 41.7? Is 8,600 as good as 8,579?
 - Do NOT clutter tables. Only use horizontal lines. Use spacing to enhance the visual appeal.
 - Make sure all tables are consistent. Do not invert rows and columns between tables.
 - Respect the font and font size guidelines above. These do not change for tables!
 - Ask yourself whether a graph would be better?
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Original

The latest original version of this document is available from www.sbtc.ltd.uk/freenotes.html.

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