MAKING GREAT ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS
Professor Angela Thody lectures on many aspects of research writing and presentation. This is one of many and has been delivered to groups of post graduate students in all disciplines. For more information about the author or to book her to lecture about writing and presenting research www.angelathody.com
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See also her book: Writing and Presenting Research,
London:Sage, 2006
Keywords: speeches; conference presentations; communication; speaking; audience; listeners; kearners; research; power point
There are no hiding places for your personality when you are making a presentation. Even if you do not consciously plan the impression you will make on the audience, they will subconsciously assess you from seemingly unimportant signals from your clothes, your body language, the confidence with which you handle your visual aids and notes, your tone of voice and whether or not you make eye contact with them. This assessment will largely precede anything you say and can influence how your research is rated (Thody, 2006:209)

What you are stands over you and thunders so I cannot hear what you say (Anon)
You’re in the lift (elevator) at a conference. Also in the lift, there’s another delegate whom you don’t know. You both have to travel ten floors to the conference lecture hall (about 30 seconds)

a) Find out who he/she is, her/his area of expertise and if you need to ‘know’ this person.
b) Make an impression – let the other person know who you are and why you’re at the conference.

i) Mentally rehearse what you’ll say

ii) Work in pairs standing side by side – to introduce yourselves. Move on to someone else after each 30 seconds is signalled
ORAL PRESENTATIONS ARE ALL ABOUT

PERSUADING...

...others to remember you and your research favourably
To persuade you to remember today’s learning:
a short version of the power points is on the virtual campus to
download until 12 February.

Post-course queries?: athody@lincoln.ac.uk

TAKE YOUR OWN NOTES TODAY ON ANYTHING YOU THINK THAT
YOU WILL NEED IN ADDITION TO THE SLIDES

Write now any questions about academic presentations that you want
answering today.
SO: list the names of everyone in this room and what you’ve learnt about them
Challenges facing presenters…

Time is short.

*Audience concentration span is limited*

Data has to be even more reduced than for text.

*The intricacies of reasoning and proof have to be simplified to be readily conveyed in speech.*

Listeners’ memories are fleeting for a speech’s content but lengthy for its success or failure as a performance.

Some academic audiences enjoy entertainment while others regard entertainment with anathema.

*Oral presentation provides much better opportunities to inspire and enthuse an audience than does text.*

Your academic career needs solid respectability but combined with memorable performance that will encourage repeat invitations for you as a speaker.
CREATING PP SLIDES:
What made that last slide good or bad as a visual aid?

Size of text varies; colours poor re Background;
Order /hierarchy not established;
Looks boring – no pictures;
Too wordy; diagrams/pictures needed
Highlights needed; words in italics – less clear;
Boldness needed;
Background colour is calm;
Presenter was moving so slide less important
Has everything in – should it have been more than one slide?

Font – size, colour, type
Background
Number of points
Visuals
Sound.
Movement
Reading the visual aid
Reminders

Aim: too persuade

Challenges: little time, little audience concentration; audience memories are long for a poor presentation; some entertainment wanted; needs to be memorable; has to reduce and simplify data and conclusions; must have visual appeal

NOW JUDGE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MY POSTER IN THE LIGHT OF THESE AIMS AND CHALLENGES
For presentations, think about:

A  UDIENCE
A  IMS
A  CTUALITIES
A  NTECEDENTS
A  RRANGING
A  UDIBILITY
A  FTERWARDS
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PRESENTING YOUR RESEARCH

THINK ABOUT AUDIENCE
Who?
What is their relationship to you?

How much do they already know?
What is their level of education?

What mood are they in?
When and where will they hear your presentation?
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PRESENTING YOUR RESEARCH: THINK ABOUT AUDIENCE

A little practice... analyse these academic audiences (answer the questions on the previous slide)

Conference delegates at a poster or round table session

Conference delegates at a keynote or paper session

Students at a lecture

Faculty at a seminar

Potential research sponsors

Current research sponsors
Whatever the characteristics of specific audiences, allow for all being somewhat tired, bored, wanting to be entertained, easily distracted, easily loosing track of what you are saying, not always able to hear and see as well as you can.
Adjust for AUDIENCE

- the length of the speech/amount of text on a poster
- type of words used
- what can be left out
- what must be put in
- what they expect of the format
- the order in which material is presented
1) Reflect on the visual appeal of your own posters for a conference audience a) to whom you are talking about the poster b) who may be around the poster session when you are not present

2) In pairs, give each other feedback on the visual effectiveness of each poster for a conference audience at a poster session. While one in the pair gives feedback, the other is to employ active listening techniques. Take notes of your partner’s opinions.

2) Now let’s include you in the picture...how did you look while you were talking to your colleague?
For presentations, think about:

AUDIENCE

AIMS

ACTUALITIES

ANTECEDENTS

ARRANGING

AUDIBILITY

AFTERWARDS
AIMS

a) what do you want to achieve from your presentation?

b) what does the recipient want to achieve?
Analyse your aims and those of these academic audiences

Conference delegates at a poster or round table session

Conference delegates at a keynote or paper session

Students at a lecture

Faculty at a seminar

Potential research sponsors

Current research sponsors
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PRESENTING YOUR RESEARCH: THINK AIMS

THE GENERAL DEFAULTS ON AIMS ARE:

Audience’s - to gain information in an easier way than reading for themselves, to go away feeling they have learnt something difficult but have still felt entertained

Yours - to be remembered for good research
to persuade the audience to your point of view
to be asked back
Adjusting for the aims –

- the length of the presentation/poster

- type of words used

- what can be left out of the presentation/poster

- what must be put in

- what will make the most persuasive format

- the order in which material is presented

HOW WELL DO THE SAMPLE POSTERS MEET THEIR AIMS AND THE AUDIENCE’S NEEDS?
For presentations, think about:

**A UDIENCE**

**A IMS**

**A CTUALITIES**

**A NTECEDENTS**

**A RRANGING**

**A UDIBILITY**

**A FTERWARDS**
ACTUALITIES

What time, money, technical skills and resources do you have to devote to preparing your presentation?
(share ideas from your own posters on this)

How much time does the audience want to devote to your presentation?

Where will it be held? What equipment will there be?
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PRESENTING YOUR RESEARCH: THINK ACTUALITIES

KEEP EXACTLY TO TIME/ALLOTED SPACE

CHECK EQUIPMENT, ROOMS AND SPACE IN ADVANCE

HAVE BACKUPS

AND REMEMBER…
Thody’s Laws of Presentations

Prepare for the worst;
hope for the best;
don’t expect what was promised;
accept that your best is what you are capable of producing in the time available;
be able to laugh about it;
don’t tell the audience what’s gone wrong.
Reflect on your poster presentation.

What will you say or do to persuade passers-by to stop and listen?

Practise your opening sentence(s) with a colleague
For presentations, think about:

AUDIENCE
IMS
ACTUALITIES
ANTECEDENTS
ARRANGING
AUDIBILITY
AFTERWARDS
ANTECEDENT(S)

In what format are posters, conference papers, lectures, faculty seminars etc., conventionally delivered?

Do I follow this format or break away into something partly or wholly new? Try the quiz. See table of examples
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PRESENTING YOUR RESEARCH: THINK ANTECEDENTS

REFLECT ON YOUR POSTERS
SUGGEST AN ALTERNATIVE
For presentations, think about:

AUDIENCE
IMS
ACTUALITIES
ANTECEDENTS
ARRANGING
AUDIBILITY
AFTERWARDS
ARRANGING PRESENTATIONS

1) Reflect briefly on audience, aims, actualities, antecedents

2) Audit what you’ve already got: previous presentations and your written text

3) Decide TACTICS – general style
### Presenting Your Research: Think Arrangements

**ARRANGING PRESENTATIONS/POSTERS**

4) **Content - template**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Introduction</strong></th>
<th>Overview – research question; why it matters; what’s coming.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centre</strong></td>
<td>What you did, how you did it, what you found, what others found. As few main points as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End</strong></td>
<td>Repeat main points and who you are (for a poster, these are provided through a handout to give away and a business card)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHECK THE POSTERS AND YOUR OWN – DO THESE MEET THIS FORMAT?**
AUDIBILITY =

Exaggerated articulation

Speak slightly more slowly than in normal conversation

Project your voice
The optional extras: humour, visuals

The non-optional extra: REHEARSAL

SO NOW - IT’S REHEARSAL TIME
PRESENTING YOUR RESEARCH: THINK AFTERWARDS

AFTERWARDS
Questioners and questions

WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU WANT ANSWERED?
See your list.

FOLLOW UP
Invite anyone who wants to talk to you to stay on longer/meet for breakfast.
If you have copies left of your conference paper, don’t throw them away; leave them on a table in the conference registration area.
Exchange business cards.
Contact those you met by email.

AND KEEP SMILING:
YOU’RE STILL ON STAGE
For presentations, think about:

AUDIENCE
IMS
ACTUALITIES
ANTECEDENTS
ARRANGING
AUDIBILITY
AFTERWARDS
You’ve seen the film, now read the book:
Thody, A M (2006)
*Writing and Presenting Research.*

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Emerita Professor Angela Thody

CENTRE FOR EDUCATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Learning for Leading
Leading Learning

University of Lincoln
Lincoln University Graduate School: Professor Emerita Angela Thody

PRESENTING YOUR RESEARCH: ARRANGING PRESENTATIONS