Tips for Designing a Formal Presentation for SCHOLAR Day:
In PowerPoint or Another Medium

Instructions for Designing a Formal Presentation

Your presentation should contain sufficient information so that, along with your extemporaneous comments, others can understand the logic of your research project, the methods used in the project, the results of your data analysis, and your conclusions. The following information is a guide for your presentation, and it is based on the guidelines provided for creating an abstract. Presentations are really just flushed out descriptions of a person’s project abstract.

These guidelines were prepared by a social scientist, but they can apply to almost any sort of project if you consider the suggested section headings in light of your own project.

Presentations should be a talk, not a reading. Do NOT read verbatim each of your slides if you’re using PowerPoint. Use the software to give the audience some phrases or images to cling to; then talk about them on your own! See some very useful critiques of PowerPoint on the M drive before starting: M:/EH/schwargg/SCHOLAR Day/Handout/.

Provide a Title (with your name below) – 1 slide

Abstract (1 paragraph, double spaced) – 1 slide
You do NOT need to read this during your presentation, nor is it always necessary.

Review of Literature: Briefly show that you’ve read/studied what others have said on your topic! Summarize the major findings on important independent and dependent variables, listed as key points (cite authors as needed). – 1 slide

Theory & Hypotheses: Discuss what you wanted to find out and what you thought you would discover. Or, in other words: State your propositions and each hypothesis relevant to them. Use as few slides as necessary without having your slides appear to be crowded.

Research Design: Show how you went about your research (observation, experiment, textual analysis, interviews, etc.). Summarize your research design, but include all important aspects regarding your sample, research method, and return rate. These can be listed as key points - use as few slides as necessary without having your slides appear to be crowded.

Analysis of Data: Show your data and how you analyzed it. In scientific terms, state each hypothesis, present the data in table form that you used in testing each hypothesis, and state whether the hypothesis was supported (not proven!) or refuted – 1 slide per hypothesis. (If you had additional findings, manipulated key variables or dissected an index, these should also be presented in the appropriate place, using as few slides as necessary.)
Conclusions: Summarize your conclusions, particularly how your findings support or fail to support your theory and any weaknesses in your research design and/or problems that you encountered that may have affected your results. List these as key points – use as few slides as necessary without having your slides appear to be crowded.

References: If you cited research in a slide, include a list of your references – 1 slide

You don’t want viewers to have to squint at your slides, so adjust the font of the type to make your information readable from a distance (18 point font is about the smallest you can use for people to be able to read). Adjust the spacing of the information so that each slide appears neat and orderly. Don’t run information between slides. Adjust the font or edit the information so that each slide contains “1 unit” of information. Feel free to use slides containing photographs, video clips, or other visual information useful in your PP presentation.

Your verbal comments will be a VERY important aspect of your PP presentation. Obviously, your slides will point out bits of information; however, most of your slides will list only key points, so your comments should serve to supplement the information on the screen and take the audience through the important details of each section of your project. Be particularly thorough and detailed when describing how each of your variables were measured and in presenting the data and tables that you used in testing each hypothesis. Your comments should lead the audience through the data in any tables, explain what statistics mean, and demonstrate how you reached your conclusions about each hypothesis being supported or refuted. In short, structure your comments so that the audience understands the logic and reasoning behind your research, your findings, and your conclusions. This advice works for scientific research AND it works for any other kind of research being presented. In essence, you want to discuss your project with your audience; use the slides to help the audience stay with you.

Your presentation MUST NOT exceed 15 minutes. Plan your presentation for 10-12 minutes. That way, if you run over slightly, you will still be within the 15 minute window. And, any remaining time can be devoted to questions from the audience. The faculty Moderator will be seated near you and will have several small cards to inform you how much time you have remaining in your 15 minutes. Even if you have not finished your presentation, the Moderator will have to stop you after 15 minutes. This will be embarrassing for your department, faculty sponsor, and the College, but mostly embarrassing for you. So, practice your presentation several times until you are certain that you will not exceed the 15 minute time frame. Feel free to have some notes in front of you at the podium, but DO NOT read from these notes. Your attention should be primarily focused on the audience and the slide on the screen as you explain the information it contains.

Finally, you should be prepared to answer any and all questions about your project. Remember, you know more about your project than anyone else. You are the expert, so, don’t be nervous! Some of the questions may ask about how any problems you experienced may have biased your
results, what the implications of your findings are, or ask you to speculate about some issues related to your research. If you don’t understand a question that is asked, it is always better to ask for clarification of the question, rather than attempting to answer a question that you don’t understand. (Plus, asking for clarification gives you time to think about an answer!) Have a copy of your entire project paper on hand for quick reference.

Be sure to save your presentation, in whatever form you will be using, to an external memory device in case of emergency.