

A Good Paper Deserves a Good Presentation

How to get the most out of your presentation at ICIP 2015

Your manuscript is a summary of your work; it is through your manuscript that you have been selected to come to ICIP 2015 and present your work. The manuscript is typically available to interested attendees right away (through the distributed conference proceedings) and to a larger audience later on (through IEEE Xplore).

Now that you are coming to the conference, your focus should be on preparing a quality presentation of your work. This is what will give value to the conference for you and for the other attendees: your presentation is the means through which:

- Your work will get noticed at the conference,
- Conversations and discussions will be started, and
- You will entice attendees to read the details in your published manuscript.

This is why we so emphatically state that “*A good paper deserves a good presentation*”.

In this document, we list some generally accepted advice on how to prepare for your paper presentation, be it oral or poster. This document relies on several sources that are listed at the end, for reference or further reading.

1- Oral Presentation

Presentation Slides Contents

Whatever the software you use for preparing your slides, the following advice should apply.

Slides are only supporting material

People often think that the first step in preparing for an oral presentation is the creation of supporting slides.

On the contrary, first and foremost, you should plan your presentation; your slides are only supporting material for your presentation, **they are not** the presentation. You, as an author, will deliver an oral presentation; you will use your slides to help your audience follow your train of thoughts and its logical and hierarchical organization or to display graphical or pictorial results.

Far too often, presenters prepare a presentation that is centered on fancy, attractive slides; as a presenter, you and what you say should be the focus of attention, not your slides, an especially not their formatting, typesetting or visual effects.

Be concise

Presentations are limited to 15 minutes plus 5 minutes for questions. As such, you do not have time to talk about all the details of your work, and your audience does not have time to understand any details either.

Organize your presentation around your main message

Think about the main, single message that you want to convey about your work, and use this as the thread for your presentation (this usually takes a bit more time than you would think); then, divide up this message into a logical series of smaller messages, and use these simpler messages to build your presentation. How many of these smaller messages you can convey will depend on the time allotted for presentation, and this is typically the point in your preparation when you should start thinking about timing.

The structure of your presentation comes from the articulation of your messages

A typical presentation at an engineering conference follows the following organization: introduction, followed by background information and problem statement, then description of the contribution and description of results. You do not have to follow this strictly, but

- this is what your audience is accustomed to, so it will make it either for them to follow and,
- most often, this structure is the logical output of the process of identifying key messages that we have just described above.

Address the experts and the non-experts

Keep in mind that the reason that you are there is that you have a message to deliver to the audience. Depending on your specific research area, there might be only a few people in the world who are completely familiar with it. Keep in mind the other colleagues in the room when preparing your presentation and aim at making them understand why the problem you are trying to solve is important and how your contribution to the solution is in itself important and how it has impact.

Keep your audience with you along the way

Always make sure that your audience knows where you are in the flow of your presentation. Often people accomplish that by having transition slides in their slide deck, which repeat the outline of the talk and draw attention to the point that is going to be talked about next. Having such transition slides does not save you from actually saying that there is a transition. You should always guide your audience, by first stating what you are going to talk about next (e.g. “we will now move on to the presentation of our algorithm”), talk about that subject (e.g. present the main steps of your algorithm), and then recapitulate what you just talked about and transition to the next topic (e.g. “now that we all understand now the algorithm works, let’s explore in detail its convergence”).

Use images and videos: you are at ICIP!

In a conference such as ICIP, images and videos are at the heart of your results. Do not hesitate to illustrate the performance of your algorithms or techniques by displaying images or videos, and pointing out for your audience the specific features they should pay attention to. Remember that you might be doing your presentation in a large room, so using an image or video that zooms in on some of the visual details that you want your audience to observe is always a good idea.

Formatting of Presentation Slides

In keeping with the advice above, it is important that your slides be a support for your presentation, and that they do not get in the way of your message delivery.

Keep your slides simple – One Idea, One slide

You should not have to “rush” through slides. The number of slides and their content should reflect what you want your presentation to be, in terms of messaging. Their content should be light enough that the audience does not start reading long sentences on your slides while you are talking: wordy slides are a very good way of distracting your audience from what you are saying, and that clearly is not your goal.

Keep the number of slides low

Simplicity is always preferred in slides. Do not write full sentences on your slides, but use short bullet points mainly made up of keywords. Do not try to convey more than one idea per slide. A generally accepted pace at which to go through a slide deck is at a speed of one slide per 2 minutes, or slower.

Having too many slides and rushing through them to fit in the allotted time is one of the most frequent mistakes and one that always result in loss of interest.

Typesetting and layout advice

In terms of typesetting, make sure you use large fonts; this should be easy if your slides are not too wordy: ideally, on the order of four bullet points per slides, each bullet point containing 1 to 4 words, but clearly not more than 7 bullet points with 7 words per bullet point. The preferred font types for presentation slides are sans-serif fonts (Arial, Helvetica, Calibri, etc.) as most people find them more readable from a distance.

Light lettering on dark background is also generally more legible and pleasing to the eye. Be careful with your usage of color though; stick to obvious dark/light contrasts (e.g. dark grey vs. white), instead of trying fancy combinations (e.g. yellow on dark green): what looks great on your computer screen might be completely washed out and illegible once projected. Some color schemes that look appealing to you might actually put off a portion of your audience with a different cultural background. Refrain from using color to convey too much information: remember that a non-negligible portion of the population is color-blind and your message might be lost.

It is generally agreed that the font size should not be smaller than 24 points for regular-sized rooms. Also note that the 16:9 aspect ratio should be privileged to make the most of the slides real-estate and projection equipment at ICIP.

Delivering the Presentation

In conclusion, here a few suggestions to help you go through your presentation:

- Inasmuch as possible, refrain from memorizing your speech or from reading it. The slides are there to guide your thought and speech; use them as cues.
- Relax. If you are nervous about giving your speech, keep in mind chances are that a significant portion of your audience also is and understand how you might feel.
- Interact with the audience. Do not focus on your presentation but look around and try to look at the audience. This will greatly help you focus and will raise the attention given to your speech.

- Maintain a good volume as this will keep the audience awoken. This will also slow down your speech back to normal speed, an all too common trait of inexperienced lecturers.

2- Poster Presentation

In a poster session, your poster is a support for a 5-minute discussion that can turn into a much deeper interaction.

Your poster is just supporting material for your presentation

As an instrument that supports your interaction with an audience, the poster shares many features with a slide deck: it is a support for presenting your work, it is not the presentation itself; it should be clear, legible and well organized; and it should be created around the message you want to deliver.

Build your presentation around your key message

The creation of the contents of the presentation should follow the steps outlined above for oral presentations: you should start from the high level message you want to convey, then divide this message into smaller, lower level messages. The logical articulation of these messages constitutes the backbone of your presentation. Remember, as in the case of an oral presentation, that you might face experts as well as non-experts, and your presentation should be accessible to both.

Create poster sections from simple messages

You then need to build your poster from the presentation. As it is meant to support your presentation, a safe approach is to divide it up into sections that correspond to the messages you want to convey. Each of these sections should contain a meaningful title, some short explanatory text and visuals to illustrate your message (block diagrams, graphics, and figures).

Keep the flow of ideas clear in your poster layout

Once you have established what your sections should contain, you can decide how to lay them out on your poster. The classic layout of ideas and sections on a poster is to simply position the sections one after the other in a series of columns, with a reading order from top to bottom in each column, and columns read from left to right. Other methods are of course possible, and sometimes more elaborate layouts are used successfully; however, the key is that the reading order be obvious to a conference attendee who would happen to pass by.

Make your poster attractive and somewhat self-explanatory

The fact that attendees will pass by and just give a quick look at your poster, or will try to get the gist of it by just looking at it on their own (maybe simply because they arrived at your poster midway through your presentation to other attendees) makes it necessary for your poster to be both visually appealing and sufficiently self-explanatory. This requirement will typically make your poster a bit wordier than the slide deck you could create to present the same work. Ensure that graphs have all axes properly labeled, a clear legend and a short descriptive caption.

Formatting advice

Just as time was the limiting factor in an oral presentation, space will be limiting the amount of information that you will put on your poster: fonts should be large enough for all text to be readable from at least 1 meter away; and clutter does not make for a visually appealing poster.

It is strongly recommended that the posters be formatted according to the following recommendations:

- In as much as possible, try to avoid printing your poster on an assemblage of A4 or letter-sized sheets of paper as this limits the latitude you have for layout, is not visually appealing to the audience, and somewhat conveys a sense of carelessness;
- The heading should list the paper title, author(s) name(s) and affiliation(s). It should be in CAPITAL bold face type and readable from a distance of ~2 m (~6 ft). This translates into a height of 25 mm (1 in) or more for the letters;
- The font size for the headings of the abstract, introduction, results, conclusions, references, and any other sections, and the text and the captions for figures and graphs should be readable from a distance of ~1 m (~3 ft);
- As stated above, the normal flow of your poster would be from the top left to the bottom right. If the flow is not obvious, use arrows to lead your viewer through the poster. Use color for highlighting and to make your poster more attractive;
- Try to state your main result in 6 lines or less, in lettering about 15mm high so that people can read the poster from a distance;
- The smallest text on your poster should be at least 9 mm high, and the important points should be in a larger type. Use a sans-serif font to make the print easier to read from a distance.

At the session: interact with the audience!

When presenting your work at a poster session, interact with your audience; address the audience (i.e. do not spend your whole presentation facing your poster). Refer to the poster at key times: point to sections when you change topics, discuss clearly graphs and block diagrams, but do not read the text from the poster.

3- Additional Links for Further Reading

- [Preparing for Visual Presentations](#)
- [Technical Session Guide for the Presenter](#)
- [Guidelines for Preparing Visual Presentations](#)
- [Suggestions for Preparing Effective PowerPoint Presentations](#)
- [Effective Presentations](#)
- [Giving a Talk](#)
- [Designing Conference Posters](#)
- [How to create a poster that graphically communicates your message](#)
- [Selecting the Correct Font Size](#)