



American Planning Association – Texas Chapter
State Planning Conference & Short Course for Elected & Appointed Officials
COORDINATION AND PRESENTATION TIPS

1. To kick things off with your presentation group, set up a conference call with your session presenters. [Doddle Poll](#) is a great, free tool for finding a time to meet when multiple people are involved.
2. Make an outline first with your session presenters with key topics and speaker time limits. Don't forget to include at least 10 to 15 minutes for Questions and Answers. Remember your learning objectives from your session submittal and make sure your presentation will cover them.
3. When it comes to preparing slides, **less is more**. Don't try to rush through 100 slides in 20 minutes. A good rule of thumb is one slide per minute.
4. **Limit the words on a slide.** Your audience will view your presentation from a distance, so use large fonts and as few words as possible in your slides. If you can skip the words and just go with graphics for some slides, even better. If you're doing a presentation that requires a bunch of text, sprinkle pictures in between the boring parts to keep people from falling asleep. To improve accessibility, make sure you describe the images in your deck as you present.
5. **Be clear and concise.** Structure your talk around three to five "take away" points you want the audience to remember, which can be repeated multiple times. This will help keep unnecessary details to a minimum and allow you to highlight your primary message more clearly. Additionally, avoid using jargon and technical language. You want a broad audience, not just experts in your field, to be able to understand your results.
6. **Include illustrations.** A picture (or graph) is worth a thousand words. Keep your slides light on text and heavy on figures, but avoid overly complicated figures that are hard to comprehend. The purpose of you giving your talk in person is to explain to the audience what the graph illustrates in an easy-to-understand manner.
7. **Try an ice breaker.** Each of your audience members comes to your presentation in a completely different mood. A simple ice-breaker can put everyone on the same level and energize them for your presentation. Get your audience to do a simple exercise to reset their minds and refocus on your talk. For example, ask people to stand up and introduce themselves to their neighbors, or have them identify two or three questions they would like to hear addressed during your presentation. By starting with an ice-breaker, you show your audience that your talk will be interactive and require their participation.
8. **Engage the Audience.** Presentation experts have pinpointed that the audience's attention drops to zero after just 10 minutes of a presentation. To get their attention back, experts advise creating soft breaks within your speech. Therefore, take a break from your presentation from time to time and interact with your audience. Ask for their questions and incorporate them already during the presentation. Try adding in mobile phone live polling to question audience members (free software is available for this online). Get adventurous and ask the audience what they want to hear about so you can customize the conversation. Interactive exercises and/or discussions are highly encouraged in all sessions.

9. **Tell stories.** After watching a presentation, people remember stories the presenter told far more often than they remember detailed facts or figures. Want to make a lasting impact? Weave stories of your experiences or experiences you know into your presentation.
10. **Handouts are great.** If you have a handout that can be passed out for people in the audience, bring it! Handouts can be helpful for audience members to take with them as they return back to work.
11. **Practice makes perfect!** As researchers we know this is fact yet we often ignore it. Allow yourself enough time to practice your talk at least three times before going live on stage, focusing on transitions, eye contact, and rate of speech, which are often problematic when first giving a talk. Practice your talk in front of a diverse audience, including your lab mates who likely know a lot about your research and can give detailed comments, as well as friends or family outside of your research area who can provide a more general perspective. The more comfortable you feel during a talk, the clearer your message will be to the audience.
12. **Handling the Q&A.** For some, the most nerve-wracking part of a presentation is after you have delivered your prepared talk and are awaiting unknown questions. If you still feel nervous about answering questions, prepare additional slides that can answer questions you anticipate. A useful way to deal with questions you are not prepared for is to say you want to think about the insightful question and are willing to discuss it in more detail individually after the presentation.
13. **Make sure your presentation works both online and offline.** APATX makes every effort to foster enhanced visual presentations and provide its speakers with the highest quality presentation equipment and technical assistance. While APATX will supply WIFI access, **it cannot be guaranteed high-speed**. Please plan accordingly. Please do not rely on gaining accessing your presentation from the web prior to your session.
14. **Back up your backup presentation.** APATX will pre-load your presentation to the laptop, but play it safe and bring a backup flash drive and a print-out of your presentation in case of technical difficulties.

Sources: <https://www.invisionapp.com/blog/tips-for-conference-presentations/>, <http://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2010/04/presentation.aspx>, <https://blog.prezi.com/8-ways-to-make-your-presentation-more-interactive/>