

Power Point Presentations—Hints

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(1) General guidelines

- a. Tell a story
 - i. Exposition (beginning): Set up the conceptual idea you tested; then give background about your species; end with your hypothesis
 - ii. Rising Action: Your methods
 - iii. Climax: YOUR DATA
 - iv. Falling Action: How do your data relate to your specific hypothesis
 - v. Conclusion: How does your study relate to the big picture?
- b. Strive to keep your audience awake:
 - i. Use a color palette that is easy to read
 - ii. Use lots of images (more later)
 - iii. Use fonts that are easy to read (more later)
 - iv. Is humor OK? Absolutely. Just keep it in good taste and not too frequent.
- c. Do NOT rush. Give the audience time to listen and to take in the info on your slides.
- d. Do NOT go over the time limit (a cardinal sin at a professional conference).
- e. Leave time for questions (a couple of minutes)
- f. Do you have to cite sources (like in a paper)? Generally, no. But...
 - i. You can refer to sources for major concepts (e.g., Trivers' parental investment theory), but you don't provide the reference (that amount of detail would interfere with your story)
 - ii. If your study directly builds on a previous study, you can cite it (in small print)

(2) Color palettes and background

- a. Can you use a template? Sure. Just make sure that any images on the template do not interfere with your text and figures.
- b. You can use either dark or light background colors (there is no "rule"), but don't choose anything too bright, which would be hard on the eyes of your audience.
 - i. Use light colored fonts on a dark background
 - ii. Use dark colored fonts on a light background
- c. Do you have to use the same background for every slide? Most people like to be consistent, but you can use different backgrounds; just make sure that the different backgrounds are complementary.

(3) Text

- a. Use headlines—they help the audience members keep track of where you are in your story
- b. Use as few words as possible to get your point across
 - i. Use bullets
 - ii. Use words or phrases, not sentences
- c. Use font sizes that are larger than you think that you need.
- d. Sans serif fonts are easier to read on the screen (e.g., Ethology versus Ethology)

- e. Be consistent: use the same fonts for all of your slides (Headlines can be in a different font from other text; you also can use a different font occasionally to make a word stand out)

(4) *Images*

- a. Most slides should be illustrated, with a photo, clip art, or a diagram. A picture really is worth a thousand words; plus, they help keep your audience awake.
- b. If you use images from the web, you should give the source (in small letters beneath the image).
- c. Use photos of your methods if at all possible
- d. Sometimes diagrams can be very helpful to explain the details of your design
- e. Can you use animation? YES. Even if it's not necessary, strictly speaking, it can sometimes help to keep your audience awake.
- f. Crop your images to remove any irrelevant background detail.
- g. Enlarge your images. Try to leave as little "blank" space as possible on your slide.

(5) *Pacing and Results*

- a. DO NOT RUSH. Give the audience time to listen and to take in your slides.
- b. Particularly, do not rush your results. Explain your graphs (e.g., what are the X and Y axes? Are your data means? Medians? What are the error bars (SEs? SDs?) What statistical test was used?
- c. On your data slides, explain how the data fit with your predictions. ("As predicted by my hypothesis, males were more aggressive than females").
- d. Note: Make sure that the labels on your axes are large enough to be read easily. They often are too small when you import them from Sigma Plot (or other graphics programs).
- e. Note: Don't forget to put the units of measurement on your axes

(6) *Acknowledgments*

- a. These are often a good way to "close" your talk
- b. List any individuals or funding agencies who helped with your study

- (7) Note: If your slides are well-organized and contain enough information, the slides will prompt you for what you need to say. Then you won't have to rely very much on notes.