

Pointers for Powerpoints from the DISCCRS VI Mentors

Below are some comments on improving presentation skills, compiled from discussions with the DISCCRS VI Symposium Mentors at La Foret Conference Center, October 22-29, 2011.

How to use these guidelines:

- a) If you are sure the point does apply to you, ask others to suggest how to address it and think about other presentations you have seen and see how they address it.
- b) If you are sure the point does not apply to you, disregard it.
- c) If you are not sure whether the point applies to you, ask others and then follow either a) or b).

Content

- Always cover fewer points than you want to
 - Don't say everything, focus on 1, 2, or *at most* 3 points
 - Leave audience wanting more – mention other projects at end to prompt people to come ask you
- Put your work in context, e.g., where does your work fit into the broad climate change research context
 - Do not go directly to the species, chemical, or river basin on which you are working
- Show how your research can help THEIR research: do not assume your audience is interested in your research focus. Do assume you can get them interested (so they cite your work) if you show them how it links to their work.
- Target your audience: your talk for the interdisciplinary DISCCRS crowd should be pretty different from that for your disciplinary annual conference
- Have one slide on “Broader Impacts” – following NSF guidance. Show how your specific research helps the broader *research* community, the *policy* community, and the *public*.

Presentational format

- Read “Eloquent Science” by Schultz – has very practical information on doing presentations, writing articles, etc. effectively.
- Project confidence
 - Use a strong voice, stand up straight, loosen your shoulder muscles
 - Take deep breaths, practice your voice
 - Consider voice training
- Maintain eye contact, look at your audience, not the screen
 - Fewer words per slide helps! That way you CAN'T read your slides
- Use laser pointer ONLY IF you are not nervous and can hold it steady

- Identify and try to regulate distracting elements of your speaking style: pacing, twitching, swinging your arms. “Ummm”, “uhhh”, etc.
 - Have friend count them for you
 - Practice transitions – that is where most people insert vocal and physical “tics”
- Don’t speak too fast
- Avoid jargon (e.g., anthropogenic) – practice explaining your research to your family
- Never have full sentences of your own on a slide – only do it if it’s an important quote from someone else.
- Most font sizes are too small.
- Test your font/background colors. And remember, some people are colorblind so red and green may not be distinguishable.