

Platform Presentation Tips

Practical Requirements

The following information is provided to help platform presenters prepare and deliver their presentation.

1. A platform presentation is a 12 minute oral presentation of a paper followed by 3 minutes of question time, moderated by a chair. Papers will be grouped together around related topics and there will be between 3 and 6 papers per session. Sessions will up to 1.5 hours.
2. Most presentations are a mix of verbal and visual communication. A fixed microphone, a lectern and data projector for Microsoft PowerPoint presentations will be available to all presenters.

Platform presentations fall into the following categories which will be grouped together around related topics:

Research reports are presentations of original scientific data encompassing any established research approach, design or method.

Special interest reports include presentations of new or unique programmes or theories and descriptions of innovative ways in which established methods have been adapted to meet the needs of physical therapy practice, management, education or policy. They include professional resource materials, such as computer-based programs, training or audiovisual material.

Tips on **Preparation**, **Preparing visual aids** and **Delivery** are provided below and a **Final check** at the end.

Preparation

Below are some tips to help you plan and prepare your presentation, ensuring that it is accessible to delegates. They are presented for guidance only and the responsibility for the presentation rests with the presenter.

Remember that the audience will only have one chance to hear the important messages that you are delivering so it is essential that your presentation delivers those messages clearly and concisely.

What are your aims?

To inform, inspire, maybe to demonstrate or prove, or maybe to persuade: your choice of presentation style should match the aim of your presentation.

Who is your audience?

A WCPT audience is made up of physical therapists in the most part. Delegates to WPT2011 may come from all over the world. English is the language of delivery for all presentations; however, for many English is not their first language. It is important to keep your messages clear for all delegates.

Preparing the content

All presentations have a beginning, middle, and end. There are different schools of thought about the order in which material should be presented. One recommended order is:

- tell the audience what you are going to tell them
- tell them what you want them to know
- tell them what you have told them

An alternative is:

- state the conclusion to provide a focus for the talk
- develop an attention grabbing opening that spells out the benefits of listening
- spell out the data and arguments

Think about the key message that you want the audience to take away and the constraints of a 12 minute Congress presentation. Do not try and fit too much in to the presentation. It is better that the audience has key messages clearly delivered.

Draft the outline of the presentation and develop it in full if you prefer to. However consider that the language and syntax used in a verbal presentation is different from that used in writing.

In preparing your draft, an active voice and concrete rather than abstract language is preferable. Give specific examples that are relevant to your audience.

Include case studies, examples, quotations, analogies, questions and interesting statistics as appropriate to the topic and the audience.

It may be helpful to reduce your presentation onto index cards with large letter or coloured memory joggers.

Preparing visual aids

Microsoft PowerPoint should be an adjunct to the verbal presentation, not a replacement. The following are hints for preparing visual aids:

Text

- Keep slides simple but interesting. The title slide should reflect the title of your abstract accepted for presentation.
- PowerPoint may provide for greater creativity and formatting, but the temptation is to have too many slides; a rule of thumb is one slide per minute.
- Limit the amount of information on any one slide. Try to use keywords and phrases and include no more than 4-5 points per slide. This will help your audience to concentrate on what you are saying.
- The layout of the slide should have light and empty space. Too much information on one slide makes it difficult to read and attracts the attention to the slide rather than the speaker.
- The text, tables and graphics should look integrated. Words and illustrations should go together.
- Leave space between lines of text.
- Place the text in the top 2/3 of the slide so the audience at the back can view the text.
- Use different size fonts for main points and secondary points:
 - font size for headings should be no less than 38pt
 - font size for text should be no less than 24pt
- Use sans-serif fonts that are easy to read, such as Arial.
- Use upper and low case and avoid using too many style changes eg shadow, bold, italics, etc.
- Text should be left justified (with the right side ragged) as this is easier to read.

Colour

- Keep in mind that your audience might include people with visual impairments. Consider accessibility guidelines to make your slides easy to read (for example, see Lighthouse International: <http://www.lighthouse.org/accessibility/design/accessible-print-design/making-text-legible>).
- Select colours with high visibility and high contrast. Note: using colours for decoration may be distracting.
- Use colours that will stand out and be easy on the eyes (dark backgrounds and light text is best).
- Limit the use of colour to 2 – 4 shades/colours. Check if your institution has a house style that must be followed.
- Keep a common theme throughout the presentation.

Images, graphs and charts

- Use only appropriate graphs, charts and images that closely follow or complement the findings/concept expressed in each slide.
- Diagrams, graphs and charts are a good visual aid; they also tend to hold interest better than text. Don't overcrowd your slides, and label them fully.
- Graphics should tend toward the horizontal, greater in width than height, ideally 50 percent wider than tall.
- Use colours to distinguish different data groups in graphs and avoid using patterns or open bars in histograms.
- Lines in data graphics should be thin.
- Labels should be placed on the graphics itself, no legend is usually required.
- Remove all non-essential information from graphs and tables.
- Focus on principle results.
- Illustrate your point by verbally discussing the graph or chart.

Sound and animation

- If you elect to use animation use MPEG2 for video files and MP3 for audio files.
- Use sounds only if they help convey, complement, or enhance the message. Sounds can be distracting and can make your presentation less effective.
- Use animation only to make a point and not to make your presentation more interesting – use content and delivery style to do that.
- Use animation judiciously and be consistent with the animation which you use.

Transitions

- Use transitions to help your presentation make more of an impact by varying the way one slide replaces another.
- Keep transitions to a minimum; too much movement will distract your audience.
- Use the same transition or a variation of the transition.

Content

- The title of the presentation should be the same as on your abstract.
- Consider using the headings given in the guidance for abstracts for research and special interest papers. However, many presenters simplify this to introduction, purpose, participants, methods/materials, results, discussion/conclusions and recommendations/implications (for practice, research, education, management and/or policy).
- References should be included, if used, but try to keep them to a minimum.
- Have an acknowledgments slide where you acknowledge contributors and funding organisations.
- Ethics approval if appropriate should also be mentioned and the appropriate committee/body acknowledged.
- Provide information about where/how you can be contacted on the final slide.

Delivery

Speaking at an event such as a World Congress is never easy for even the most experienced public speaker, but there are things that you can do to prepare.

Preparation

Practice in front of a mirror with a tape recorder, in front of a video camera, using a mobile telephone or an audience of colleagues or friends. You may be amazed at how much longer the presentation takes than you think it will.

- Think about the language you choose.
- Consider the pace of delivery; avoid speaking too quickly whether you are a native English speaker or not, and try to avoid reading your paper.
- Consider the tone of your voice and verbal expressions (eg “uh”, “er”, “you know” amongst other verbal fillers).
- Consider non-verbal communication (body language, facial expression and gestures).
- Consider where visual aids enhance, but not replace your verbal presentation.

Remember a practice run permits a speaker to make mistakes when they do not count, allowing time to make corrections to content or in style before the actual presentation.

In advance

Make sure you have uploaded your presentation according to the instructions you will be sent by the WCPT Secretariat. On-site in the speaker ready room:

- Make a final check of the presentation.
- Check you are comfortable with the presentation equipment and how it works.

On the day

- Meet with your chair and other presenters in the speaker lounge 30 minutes before the start time of your session. Details will be provided in your programme notification notice.
- Undertake a relaxation strategy. As a physical therapist, it's likely you already know that deepening and slowing your breathing stimulates a relaxation response.

As soon as you stand up you should be aiming to establish a rapport with your audience. A good way to break the ice and find your voice is to thank them for attending and to introduce your talk. Make

sure that you face your audience and speak confidently and clearly. Your performance in the first few moments will set the tone.

The focus should be on the audience and the messages you want them to take away at the end of the session. If you concentrate on the audience, you will observe them and notice if they are following all your points so that if possible you can address any problems as they arise. It will also take the pressure off you as the centre of attention.

Maintain eye contact with people in all parts of the room. Eye contact enables you to check whether the audience is following your talk.

When delivering your presentation from the podium stand upright and avoid leaning on the podium or slouching. Avoid doing things which may distract the audience, such as gesticulating.

Smile and remember to **keep to time**. There will be an indicator on the presentation screen in the room to show you the time remaining and a traffic light system to alert you when you are nearing the end of your time. The session chair will have been instructed to stop you if you are going over time in order to keep all sessions to time.

Taking questions

There will be three minutes of questions following the 12 minute presentation. No matter how prepared we are we tend to think only of the answers that we know the answer to, so ask friends, family members or colleagues to react to a practice run. The aim is to lessen the likelihood of being surprised by questions and to practice maintaining composure under the stress of a public speaking situation. Other tips include:

- Based on the feedback from a practice session, think about short succinct answers to the most likely questions. Put the questions on cards and perfect the answers on the back of the cards.
- Listen actively to the question; it helps to look directly at the questioner and, if necessary, ask for the question to be repeated or clarified. Often the second time the question is more concise and much clearer.
- Repeating the question in your own words gives you the opportunity to establish that you have heard and understood the question as intended as well as giving yourself time to think of the reply. You may make the question less aggressive, narrower or give a broader focus.
- Pause before you respond, even if you know the answer. Blurting out a response without thinking it through may make you look insecure and anxious. A thoughtful pause, especially if you feel under pressure, reminds you to slow down and collect yourself and your thoughts.

Final check

Here are some questions to help you check the final presentation.

- Is the message clear?
- Do the key points stand out?
- Is there a good balance between verbal presentation and visual aids?
- Is the sequence of your talk clear?
- Is the visual material appropriate?
- Do the colours you've chosen work together and are they accessible from the back of the room?
- Heed the chair's instructions/signals regarding keeping to time.

Again, seeking advice from colleagues and asking them these questions will help you make any final adjustments before the presentation.

And don't forget to enjoy the experience and follow up on any contacts after the event.

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