

Suggestions on Presenting Your Research

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Sociology 8001: Sociology as a Profession, University of Minnesota
October 2004

1. Present good work

- a. The better the raw material, the more you can do with it
- b. If you *actually believe* it, you will present with more confidence and authority

2. No apologies! Plan and prepare

- a. Most people underinvest, do a poor job, then resolve to do better next time (repeating cycle throughout career)
- b. You should never need to *read* a talk you have practiced three times (though writing out the full text of talks can be comforting early in your career)
- c. Never begin your talk with some lame apology about not being prepared.

3. Consider your audience

- a. Technical versus non-technical presentation/tolerance for jargon
- b. Generalist versus specialty audiences and acronyms (NLSY, OLS, FUBAR...)

4. Allocate your time in proper proportion

- a. 12-15 minute versus 40-50 minute talks
- b. Time yourself while practicing your presentation
- c. Know how to cut your talk in half on a moment's notice. What's the point?

5. Big and clear

- a. All graphics should be readable from the back of the room (font size of 20)
- b. Move around a little so all can see, and speak clearly so all can hear
- c. Roll with the audience and meeting norms (serious/playful; active/passive)

6. The talk itself

- a. *Introduce the characters quickly*
 - i. Situate your work in the literature but do not use up your time reviewing prior work
- b. *Build some tension*
 - i. Identify a puzzle or a pressing need
 - ii. Clearly state a research question bearing directly on this puzzle/need
 - iii. Avoid "straw person" arguments -- alternatives must be compelling
 - iv. Preserve conceptual precision here (you can simplify elsewhere)
- c. *Show the "hooks" in your approach*
 - i. What did you do and how did you do it? Your underlying logic?
 - ii. [Hooks are irresistably clever musical phrases in songs that get stuck in your head]
- d. *"Show us, don't tell us" Get to the evidence or results*
 - i. Better to present a few illustrative cases (with details) than a half-baked dash through all of your results
 - ii. Do not get bogged down describing data, but show us how it works
 - iii. Does a figure or quotation make the point better than a table?
 - iv. Can you summarize/condense a table without doing violence to the evidence?
- e. *Resolve the tension, however provisionally: several varieties*
 - i. Confirm suspicions
 - ii. Solve a puzzle
 - iii. Complicate the accepted wisdom
- f. *Finish Strong! Do not stagger to the finish mumbling "that's about it."*
 - i. I'd like to close on a programmatic note...
 - ii. To sum up, this study confirmed our ideas on X but raised new questions about Y...

7. Simplify

- a. Communicate your take-home message or finding
- b. Take another run at making the point, from a slightly different angle

8. Respond appropriately to questions

- a. Listen to the whole question, then think, then respond
- b. Go home to the most "bulletproof" finding or idea if challenged