

DMIN'06 Guidelines for speakers

General Information

- Standard equipment will be placed in each room
 - one overhead projector
 - one LCD/data projector with cables (an LCD/data projector is the machine that projects PowerPoint or other computer generated programs from a laptop to the screen)
 - one screen
 - one Laptop
 - one Microphone
 - Be sure to use presentations for the LCD projector, handouts or other visuals, especially if you have formula, data or graphics. Ideally, develop slides for the LCD projector.
 - Each speaker is allocated time according to the schedule. Please time your presentation to allow some time for questions & answers, i.e. for a 20 minute slot please allow 15 minutes for presentation and 5 minutes for questions.
 - The tips and suggestions below are intended to help you. Please put them to good use. Effective presentations make learning and technical advances more likely. They also enhance the perception of the presenter in the eyes of the professional community. Boring, ineffective presentations are not paid much attention and often are quickly forgotten, especially by planners of future invited sessions.
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Before DMIN'06

Content organization

- Make sure the audience walks away understanding the five things any listener to a presentation really cares about:
 - a. What is the problem and why?
 - b. What has been done about it?
 - c. What is the presenter doing (or has done) about it?
 - d. What additional value does the presenter's approach provide?
 - e. Where do we go from here?
- Carefully budget your time, especially for short (e.g., 15 minutes) presentations.
- Allow time to describe the problem clearly enough for the audience to appreciate the value of your contribution. This usually will take more than 30 seconds.
- Leave enough time to present your own contribution clearly. This almost never will require all of the allotted time. Often, not enough time is allocated to present the general problem domain in the beginning and the results at the end. However, these are often the most important aspects in a multi-disciplinary conference.
- Put your material in a context that the audience can relate to. It's a good idea to aim your presentation to an audience of colleagues who are not familiar with your research area. Your objective is to communicate an appreciation of the importance of your work, not just to lay the results out.
- Give references and a way to contact you so those interested in the theoretical details can follow up.

Preparing effective displays

- Keep it simple. The fact that you can include all kinds of cute decorations, artistic effects, and logos does not mean that you should. Fancy designs or color shifts can make the important material hard to read. Use animations where it benefits the understanding of your presentation, not more. Less is more!
- Use at least a 24-point font so everyone in the room can read your material. Unreadable material is worse than useless – it inspires a negative attitude by the audience to your work and, ultimately, to you. This is similar to looking at a 15” laptop screen from some 2-4 meters back!
- *Never* use a photocopy of a standard printed page as a display – it is difficult to overstate how annoying this is to an audience.
- Try to limit the material to eight lines per slide, and keep the number of words to a minimum. Summarize the main points – don't include every detail of what you plan to say. Keep it simple.
- Limit the tables to four rows/columns for readability. Sacrifice content for legibility – unreadable content is worse than useless. Many large tables can be displayed more effectively as a graph than as a table. Also, the organisation of each table must be explained in the presentation detail, so large tables take a lot of time!
- Label your graphs and axis clearly with BIG, READABLE TYPE. Try to avoid and ALWAYS DEFINE abbreviations, although they may be established in your domain.
- Use easily read fonts. In general, standard fonts are easier to read than fancy fonts. Avoid overuse of italics.
- Dark letters on light (or transparent) backgrounds work well for overheads. Light letters (yellow or white) on a dark background (e.g., dark blue) often will be easier to read when the material is displayed using slides or LCD (data) projectors. Avoid any lettering over the top of graphic images. It can make it impossible to read.
- Use equations sparingly – audience members not working in the research area can find them difficult to follow as part of a rapidly delivered presentation. Avoid derivations and concentrate on presenting what your results mean. The audience will concede the proof and those who really are interested can follow up with you, which they're more likely to do if they understand your results.
- When you do need to use equations, define your notation. An effective way in PowerPoint is to use "callouts".
- Don't fill up the transparency or slide – the peripheral material may not make it onto the display screen – especially the material on the bottom of a portrait-oriented transparency.
- Identify the journal when you give references: Smith, IJF03 clues the reader that the article is in a 2003 issue of the *International Journal of Forecasting*, and is much more useful than just Smith 2003.
- Finally, and this is critical, always, always, always preview your slides. You will look foolish if symbols and Greek letters that looked OK in a WORD document didn't translate into anything readable in POWERPOINT – and it happens!
- A common problem with PowerPoint presentations is that fonts are not embedded in the document and so equations lose important symbols. To embed fonts in PowerPoint, go to the Tools menu, select Options, click on the Save tab and click "Embed truetype fonts".

Timing your talk

- All speakers find it valuable to practice their delivery before the actual presentation.
- Don't deliver a 30-minute talk in 15 minutes. Nothing irritates an audience more than a rushed presentation. Your objective is to engage the audience and have them understand your message. Don't flood them with more than they can absorb. Think in terms of what it would take if you were giving (or, better, listening to) the last paper in the last contributed paper session of the last day. This means:
 - Present only as much material as can reasonably fit into the time period allotted. Generally that means a **MAXIMUM** of 1 slide or overhead per minute. Ideally even less.
 - Talk at a pace that everybody in the audience can understand. Speak slowly, clearly, and loudly, especially if your English is heavily accented.
 - Do **NOT** simply read from the slides. The worst presentations are those, where the paper is copied to the slides, and the slides are read. Your presentation would not add any value to the written form! Try to explain things using different examples, different contexts and wordings - this way your presentation can facilitate additional understanding to the paper, which can always be read offline.
 - Get colleagues to listen to you (beforehand to practice?), including some who are not too knowledgeable on the topic of your paper; they will be able to point out places where you may not come across clearly.
 - Make such rehearsals as realistic as possible and time them.
 - Refining your timing is one of the most important aspects of your rehearsal.
 - Balance the amount of material you present with a reasonable pace of presentation. If you feel rushed when you practice, then you have too much material. Budget your time to take a minute or two less than your maximum allotment. Again, less is more.
 - Please consider, that many attendees will have varying backgrounds. Therefore, a thorough introduction to the general **ACADEMIC DOMAIN**, the **PROBLEM** and /or **ESTABLISHED PRACTICES** will provide an invaluable setting for listeners. In addition, clearly demonstrate how your approach to solve these issues is devised and how it relates to established practices and prior publications.

Handouts

- Handouts are recommended. However, you should not merely read the handout to your audience.
 - If you use a computer to prepare your visual displays, you can get a handout with several slides or pages on a single physical page for essentially no extra effort using available software.
 - Handouts have an advantage over visual aids in that they are not subject to equipment availability and can be kept by the audience.
 - Handouts should include your name and email address for those who want to request the final version of the paper.
 - If you run out of handouts, be sure to collect business cards or names and addresses to mail copies later. Alternatively, provide interested people with an email address or web address from which they can obtain a copy of your handout.
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At DMIN'06

- Check the Errata Sheet for any last minute changes in the schedule.
- Check the location of your room, so you can arrive on time.
- Arrive at the meeting room 10 minutes before the session begins to take care of last-minute details. Be sure that the Session Chair knows you are there!
- Introduce yourself to your session chair 10 minutes BEFORE your session (NOT PRESENTATION!) starts so they are aware who you are. You may provide a short biography of 1-3 sentences or bullet-points for the introduction.
- Stay in the room for all prior presentations!
- Make arrangements with the chair for the distribution of your handouts.
- Always try to use the microphone and be sure that it works before you begin.

The presentation

- Stay aware of the time for your presentation. The chair is required to stop your presentation at the end of the allotted time, regardless of whether or not you are finished.
- Speak clearly and loud enough to be heard in the back of the meeting room.
- Remember that many points sound differently when presented orally than when the reader can go back and forth over the printed words and symbols.
- Speak from notes – do not read verbatim the written version of your paper.
- Be sure everyone in the room can see your material. With transparencies, this often means that you have to pay attention to the position of the transparency on the projector because only the top half of the screen usually can be seen from the back of the room. Make sure you do not block the screen. Move around if you must so that everyone has a chance to see everything. Handouts are a big help.
- Never apologize for your displays. More to the point, make apologies unnecessary by doing the material properly in the first place (see the recommendations above). Do not say, "I know you can't see this, but..." The reaction of many people in the audience will be "why bother showing it, then?" (Or, even worse, "Why didn't you take the trouble to make them legible?")
- Don't apologize for incomplete results. Researchers understand that all research continues. Just present the results and let the audience judge. It is okay to say, "work is on-going". Do not say, "I'm sorry that work is not done." This invites the audience to tune out or wonder why you are talking at all.

When finished

- Thank the audience for their attention
- The session chair will open the discussion up to questions IF there remains sufficient time in the session. If short on time, he may not allow questions or ask the next presenter to set up his presentation in the mean time.
- Gather you materials and move off quickly to allow the next presenter to prepare when the session chair has thanked you.
- Stay for the entire session, for the courtesy and benefit of your audience and your co-speakers. Afterward, be available for people to ask you questions.