

Guidelines for Presentations: MSc PhD & Postdoc days

For First-Year MSc students

- Time Limit: 3 minutes
- Slide Limit: A maximum of 5 slides, inclusive of the introduction and acknowledgement slides
- Introduction Slide: The introduction slide should include the talk title, your name and research group.

Whoever moderates your section will introduce you and give the title of your talk, so please do not repeat this information but jump straight into the content

For Second-Year MSc students, PhD students and Postdocs

- Time Limit: 5 minutes
- Slide Limit: A maximum of 7 slides, inclusive of the introduction and acknowledgement slides
- Introduction Slide: The introduction slide should include the talk title, your name and research group.
- **One** Methods and Techniques Slide to be presented at the end of your talk

As with the first year MSc students, whoever moderates your section will introduce you and give the title of your talk. So this information should not be repeated and you can instead directly begin with the content.

The Methods and Techniques slide is to support networking at NHM. It is useful for all of us to understand each other's technical expertise to support further collaborations.

There will be two minutes for questions after presentation.

Tips on Making & Presenting Scientific Talks

by Micah Dunthorn & Isabelle Ewers

1) Always think about the audience.

Present your data in the most compelling and interesting way possible. Would you want to hear your own talk? And if you were in the audience, would you understand the message you want to convey? Think about who will be in the audience and what they already know. At NHM there both biologists and geologists, so not everyone will have the same training as you do.

2) Be yourself.

Although your supervisors and colleagues can help you decide what you present and what your slides look like, ultimately your talk should be a reflection of you. What works for one presenter

will not work for all. And the audience will appreciate the differences. Although you may be anxious (see #10 below), there is no need to add extra pressure trying to act or talk in a way that is not true to who you are.

3) Present one single, simple message backed up with three or fewer supporting results.

This is the formula for easily-understandable and easily-remembered talks. End your Introduction with a clear hypothesis/aim/question, and address this clear hypothesis/aim/question in your Conclusion (i.e., the single, simple message). Although you will have many more results, it is difficult to remember more than three things, especially during a talk.

4) Audience listens for first and last 30 seconds.

The rest of the time the audience tends to be sleeping, day dreaming, thinking about the next coffee break, or being anxious about their own talks. To keep the audience's attention, begin your talk with a powerful and thought-provoking opener, and end your talk on a clear conclusion that relays your single, simple message.

5) Use pictures, not text.

The audience is more likely to pay attention if there is something nice to look at on the slide. Include pictures of the organism or subject you study, and field/lab work pictures are always great. Make the pictures as big as possible. If you are just beginning to give talks or you have difficulty speaking in English, use more text on the slides for support.

6) Be brief with your methods.

Unless you have a methodological study that you are presenting to experts in your sub-field, the methods are the least important aspect of your talk. There is no time to teach your methods and the audience won't even try to learn them. What you need to explain in your methods depends on who is in the audience. You can always have extra methodological slides at the end of your talk that you can show if someone asks for it.

7) Simplify your figures.

Figures used for publications are not good for talks because they are way too complicated. Re-make and re-label your figures so that only the most important information is included. Show only one graph per slide. And always read out loud the axes and legends of a figure (if there are any) before telling the audience what the data shows in that figure.

8) Practice your talk by yourself and in front of others.

Practice a lot. And after you did that, practice some more. Learn to receive and incorporate productive feedback from your friends and colleagues, as they can help you think about how the audience will perceive your talk.

9) Keep to the time allowed.

Ending your talk on time allows the audience to ask you questions, and allows the next speaker to start their talk on time. If you end early, everyone will be happy; if you end late, everyone will

be annoyed. It will be easier for you to stay within the time limits if you practice your talk enough times.

10) It is okay to be anxious – most people are.

Accept that those feelings of anxiety will be there and choose a reason to give your talk (even if that reason is merely to finish the talk and be done with it). Giving talks in front of a smaller audience, such as at NHM, will not necessarily relieve your anxiety, but at least it will allow you to gain the confidence that you can make it through. Many people's anxieties stem from their fear of what the audience is thinking, but remember they are all likely sleeping (see #4 above).