Oral and Poster Presentations: Top Tips

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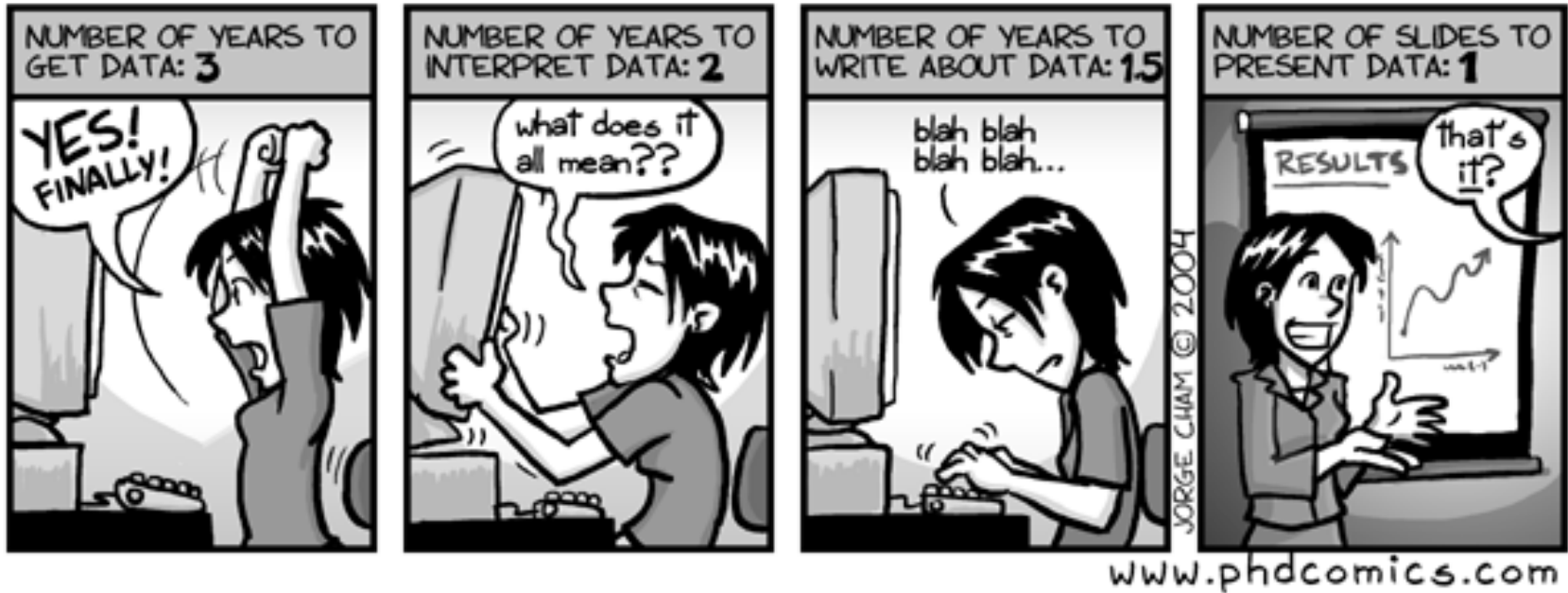bgastel@cvm.tamu.edu

Tips for Both Oral
and Poster Presentations

1. Start early.

2. Obtain—and follow—any instructions.

3. Consider the audience.

4. Condense.

"Piled Higher and Deeper" by Jorge Cham
www.phdcomics.com
(used with permission)

5. Get feedback from others (including good proofreaders).

6. Revise.

7. Rehearse.

8. Be positive.

Tips for Oral Presentations

9. Structure the talk largely as a story.

(IMRAD format—Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion—basically a narrative)

10. Consider building up to the most important content.

11. Include much less detail than in a journal article.

12. Begin and end strongly.

13. Remember: People must understand what you say as you say it.

14. Avoid unfamiliar abbreviations and acronyms.

15. Beware of using too many slides.

(Typically, about 1 slide per minute is the limit.)

16. Keep slides simple and uncrowded.

(a guideline for text: no more than
7 lines of 7 words each)

17. Generally use bullet points, not paragraphs.

(OK to use phrases rather than sentences)

18. Make sure all lettering is legible.

(For main text, beware of using less than 28 point.)

19. Time the presentation carefully when you rehearse.

20. Arrive early, and make sure audiovisuals are working.

21. Speak slowly and clearly.

22. Look at the audience.

23. Show enthusiasm.

24. Avoid distracting habits.

25. Briefly repeat each question.

26. Answer each question briefly.

27. If you don't know an answer, don't fake it.

Tips for Poster Presentations

28. If you can, base the poster on images that present key messages and attract viewers.

29. Plan to include little text.

(a general guideline:
500–1000 words)

30. Plan to make the poster understandable on its own.

31. Organize the poster logically.

32. Place the text in vertical columns.

33. Include plenty of white space.

34. Unless required, don't include an abstract.

35. Use large enough type for the title.

72 point or more

36. Don't write the title in all capital letters.

- TITLE OF YOUR POSTER
- Title of Your Poster
- Title of your poster

37. Choose images that both attract and inform.

- Photos
- Flow charts
- Graphs
- Other

38. Keep images simple, so they are quick to understand.

39. If feasible, use graphs rather than tables.

40. Make images large enough.

41. Remember to label each image.

42. Keep each section of text relatively brief.

43. Make the text large enough to read easily.

(at least 18 points)

44. Where feasible, use bulleted or numbered lists (not paragraphs).

45. If paragraphs are used, keep them short.

Also: Do not right-justify.

46. Include your contact information.

47. Prepare presentations of various lengths.

(for example: 1, 3, and 5 minutes)

48. Think ahead about questions you might be asked.

49. Perhaps have handout material available.

- Copies of the poster
- Reprints of papers
- CVs
- Business cards

Some Resources on Posters

- "Designing Scientific Posters" by Colin Purrington (posted at http://colinpurrington.com/tips/academic/posterdesign)
- "Better Posters: A Resource for Improving Poster Presentations" (blog at http://betterposters.blogspot.com/)

A Final Tip for Both Oral and Poster Presentations

50. Use the experience to enhance your future presentations, publications, and research.

Wishing You Much Success!