

Mathematica Policy Research (MPR)

10 Tips for Presenting Your Research (November 2007)

1. Keep it simple—you want your audience to be able to grasp your point immediately:
 - Don't cram too much text on a slide or use tiny font sizes. Font size for headings should be at least 24 points for readability.
 - Keep your sentences short. Search for one word that will do for two.
 - Plan to spend a few minutes on each slide. For a 20-minute talk, 10 slides are enough.
2. Don't use all CAPS or *italics*. Use **boldface** sparingly (for example, in major items in a list).
3. Don't use complex figures or tables—they might contain all that you think you need to convey, but your audience can't grasp the details in the same way as in a report. Give only the most important facts visually (bar chart), and convey the rest in your talk.
4. Use color as an organizational tool, to help the audience see key parts of the slide. Don't use different colors to represent the same thing. (For example, don't use yellow in one bar chart to represent benefit recipients and then use red in the next chart for the same group.) Similarly, avoid color combinations that are hard to read, like yellow type on a white background.
5. Don't read your slide text word for word. Reading word for word suggests you are not well prepared or have too much text on your slide. If you are presenting to a group who may have difficulty reading text or interpreting charts, be sure to emphasize the main “take-away” points from the slide and provide context for figures and tables without reading every word.
6. Use parallel construction in text. ("Start outreach early. Maintain a continuum of care. Follow up to ensure good health.")
7. Present the material in a logical way (for example, chronologically, by category). If your presentation is complex or multi-faceted, it may be useful to include a “roadmap” slide at the beginning that shows key milestones in your presentation (e.g., research questions, method/data, key findings, policy implications, next steps).
8. Less is more. Don't overwhelm your audience with too many slides. Hone in on key concepts or results and fill in the details verbally. Be sure to include a slide that summarizes the 2-3 most important research findings or “take away” conclusions.
9. Practice makes perfect. Go to the farthest corner of the room and make sure your slides are readable. Rehearse with your slides on the projector, making sure you don't block the audience's line of sight.
10. Remember: talk to your audience, not to your slides! Think carefully about who is in the audience so you can tailor your presentation to reflect different backgrounds and interests. This can be helpful in anticipating questions during and after your presentation.