The "Do's" and "Don't's" of Conference Presentations

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Structure

1. **Content** What do I include in the talk?
2. **Slide Design** How do I make it look pretty and be interpretable?
3. **Speaking Style** How do I explain my point to the audience?

Content

- Thank the moderator
- Introduce yourself
- Orient your audience

Content

Thank the moderator

Introduce yourself

Orient your audience

- Organize your talk to tell a story
- Less is more! Prioritize **coherence** over **completeness**
- Figures, diagrams, and images are better than text

Content

Thank the moderator

Introduce yourself

Orient your audience

Offer take-home message

Restate implications

Organize your talk to tell a story

Less is more! Prioritize coherence over completeness

Figures, diagrams, and images are better than text

Slide Design

- Don’t be afraid to use PowerPoint themes and design suggestions
- Keep figures and tables simple and highlight key points
- Minimum font size of 22-24 (including figures and tables)
- Avoid relying on color in figures, or use colorblind-friendly palettes

NCEAS colorblind safe color schemes

NACCR design guidelines

Aligning slide content (not so great)

Aligning slide content (better)

Slide Design: Bullet Points

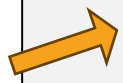
- Use for unordered lists of related thoughts
- Ways to use bullet points:
  - Summarizing key takeaways
  - Lists of variables
  - Listing research objectives
- In a nested list (above), make sure the nesting makes sense, and each level has multiple points
- Use consistent formatting (spacing, indentation, point design)

How NOT to use bullet points

- Bullet points shouldn't be used for full paragraphs or long sentences of text. Also, there probably shouldn't be full paragraphs of text on your slide anyway.

- Idea
- Research objectives
  - Objective A
    - Methods
      - Result A
  - Objective B
    - Method
      - Result

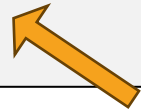
This has too many nested levels and is difficult to follow



- Topic Heading
- Point 1
- Point 2
- Point 3

Topic Heading

- Point 1
- Point 2
- Point 3



Because there are no other items at the same level as "Topic Heading," it does not need its own bullet point

- No need to use a bullet point for a single thought

Speaking Style

- Physically engaging with the talk helps keep the audience's attention
  - Leave the podium if possible, and if the microphone is mobile
  - Use the laser pointer or point at key images
- Explain your figures, including axes
- Using notes is fine, but avoid reading off them
- Look around the audience (or at the wall above their heads)
- Always use the microphone, including for audience questions
- Speak slower and louder than you think you need to

Dealing With Nerves (And How to Fake It)

- Take actual breaths
- Find a "buddy" in the audience (it's ok if you don't know them!)
- Sip water as a chance to gather your thoughts
- While practicing:
  - Visualize an audience
  - Breathe intentionally
- Everyone prepares for talks differently. Learn what works for you!

Remember, you are telling your project's story!