



# AABB Speaker “How-To” Guide

Create the Best Presentation for  
Your Audience

Have a question? Contact AABB at [professionaldevelopment@aabb.org](mailto:professionaldevelopment@aabb.org) | [aabb.org](http://aabb.org)

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# Preparation & Planning

- **CONNECT** with the Program Chair before planning your presentation. Define time allotment, scope and order of presentations.
- **DO PREPARE** in advance of a presentation (never just wing it, it will show).
- **DO PLAN** your presentation out before you start creating it – outline your story and the key slides, their objectives and key messages that you want to cover.
- **DON'T ASSUME** that your audience has the same level of knowledge around the details as you do. This is important when creating cascade presentations.
- **DO SEND** your presentation around to peers or interested parties for comment and feedback where appropriate before you present. They may be able to pick up on errors or missing information or add additional insight to your presentation. The best presentations are rarely created by one individual.
- **DON'T FORGET to follow our AABB guidelines for ACCME compliance. Please review the “Presentation Review Checklist for ACCME Compliance”. This guide will help you understand what is acceptable and what is not.**

## Consistency of Style & Tone

### Style:

- **PLEASE BE SURE** to use the official AABB presentation template available on the AABB website. However, this is not mandatory.
- **DON'T MIX UP** different styles through your presentation (e.g. if you start out using Title case in your headings keep this going throughout).

### Tone:

- **FRIENDLY:** We are inclusive and welcoming. We want to develop dialogue and engage our audiences.
- **AMBITIOUS:** We create challenging but achievable goals for ourselves and continually strive to achieve our future aspirations. We want to motivate and enthuse our audiences.
- **CREDIBLE:** All that we say is evidenced and honest. We communicate clearly and concisely with our audiences and use facts, where appropriate, to support our statements.
- **CONFIDENT:** We have a rich heritage and we are proud of our achievements. We are focused, determined and committed to our future goals.



# Visual Accessibility

## Contrasting Text

- Sharp contrast = Easy to read
- Poor contrast = Hard to read

## CAPITAL LETTERS

- ALL CAPITAL LETTERS ARE THE EQUIVALENT OF SHOUTING!
- ALL CAPS ARE HARD TO READ

## Font Point Size

- Minimum font size = 24 points
- Preferable font size = 28-32 points
- Titles should be 36 to 44 point size if possible.

- Do break up your presentation with relevant images and/or graphics. Not everyone needs them, but some people are more visually stimulated and therefore need to see imagery or graphical representations to understand as well as just the words on the screen.
- When choosing imagery use images that have some connection to the slide objective or key messages.
- Choose the right color(s). We recommend using contrasting colors, light type on a dark background or vice versa, like white on cobalt blue, or dark green on a pale yellow. Avoid red type – it looks good on your computer but is virtually impossible to read off of the slide screen. And at all costs avoid bright yellow as a background, it is blinding for everyone.

**Little contrast =  
Little readability.**

- Don't use difficult to read fonts like Comic Sans or the Calligraphy style fonts. When in doubt use San Serif fonts.
- Avoid using all capital letters – except for headings. All caps are perceived as SHOUTING, and the words are more difficult to read.
- Don't use anything smaller than an 24 point font – and preferably a 28-32 point as the minimum size. Not only will this larger sized font fill up your slide so there is not so much empty space, it will also limit your text. **Note** – Not all font sizes are the same. A 24 point font might be fine in Arial, but will be smaller in Times New Roman.
- Do be mindful of people with color blindness. Avoid teaming the colors of red and green together.

- Don't create long bullets with several sentences; try to keep your bullets to single sentences, two maximum.
- Do use bullets instead of paragraphs. People find it very hard to read off of the screen and paragraphs can make people instinctively switch off and disengage with a presentation as they appear to be hard work to read.
- Don't use more than six bullets per blank slide.
- Don't use more than six words per bullet point on your slides.

# Slide Layout & Content

## Don't Cram Too Much Information Into One Presentation Slide

- Don't place too many words or too many key messages on one slide

## Don't Put Word for Word What You Are Going to Say on Your Slide

- This immediately makes people switch off.

## Three Key Messages per Slide

- Key Message #1
- Key Message #2
- Key Message #3

## Animation

- Do I really need to animate this slide?

- Don't try to cram too much information into one slide. This is not just the number of words (though that is a big part of it), but also the number of key messages you are trying to cover.
- One slide should really have no more than 3 key messages. Unless, it is an early positioning slide where you are outlining a number of messages at a high level that you then go into more detail later in the presentation.
- Do have some fun with your presentations. The presentations that work best and are most memorable are often the ones where you have a bit of fun and engage with your audience.

- This goes for the content and the way in which you present it. Remember, people listen to other people, if you don't seem to be enthusiastic about your content why should they?
- Don't use acronyms or technical terms unless you have previously prefaced them with the actual title/phrase and or relevant description.
- Don't put word for word exactly what you are going to say on your slide. This immediately makes people switch off and disengage with your presentation.
- When considering animation of any kind think – do I really need to animate this slide?

# Types of Graphs & Their Use:

## Bar Graphs:

If you are comparing two or three subjects (or groups) for two or three variables, then a bar graph is great. A “stacked” bar graph is good if you have to express proportions of the whole (e.g., out of 10 trials, what proportion ended in success vs. failure, with “success” at the bottom of the bar and “failure” stacked on top, and a separate bar for each subject). If the total for each subject (or group) doesn’t add up to 100%, then it is better to put the variables side-by-side, with a cluster of bars for each subject. Think creatively about how to summarize your data so that you have just a few bars up on the screen at any one time.

## Line Graphs:

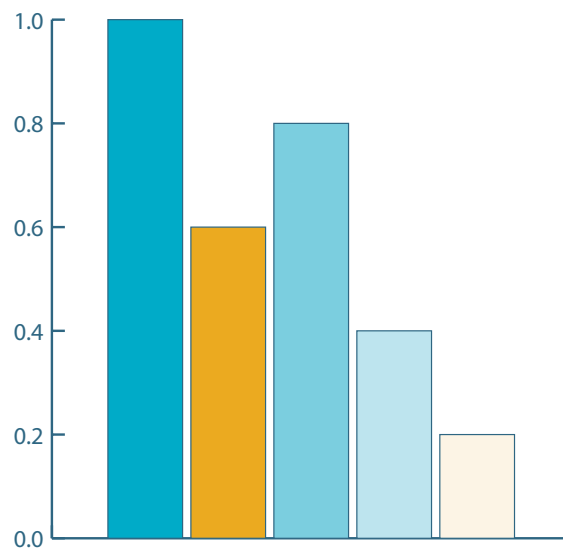
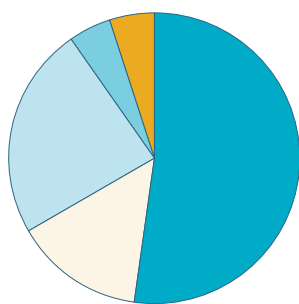
Line-graphs are good for displaying change over time (e.g., how weight increased over the 12 months of testing). One line-graph can accommodate several sets of data but too many lines can get confusing. Again, keep it simple. Three lines is probably the upper limit for any one graph.

## Pie charts:

Pie charts are good for presenting proportions of the whole. Two pie charts next to one another allow you to make a comparison. In this way, they are like stacked bar graphs.

## Scatter charts:

Scatter charts are often good for presenting data that does not follow an overall trend, but for which the comparisons of points is interesting. If you are going to draw the listeners attention to certain points then it is vitally important that you highlight that point in the chart for that moment of the talk and then add additional slides that draw the reader to each comparison that you are making verbally; rather than just having a splash of dots that the reader can’t differentiate and you waving at them with the laser pointer.



# Timing & Delivery

## Timing:

- It is considered rude to exceed your allotted time. Running overtime also suggests a lack of preparation and experience. A good moderator can justifiably be quite abrupt with a speaker who exceeds the allotted time.
- Defining the scope and roughly organizing your material to fit within the specified time are among the first steps in preparing your talk. Granted, it is difficult to edit your presentation into 20 to 30 minutes, but remember, other speakers face the same dilemma. Never try to squeeze your 30 minute talk into a 20 minute speaking slot.
- Preparing a short talk can be a very constructive exercise for the speaker. Every word must count. Every table, equation or figure must specifically and significantly contribute to the points you are covering.
- Many public speaking authorities recommend preparing a talk that is a few minutes shorter than your allotted time. When you reach the podium, you will need the extra time to adjust the microphone, respond to the person who introduced you, position your visual materials or make an ad hoc comment about a preceding talk. It is better to conclude with a little time left over than to rush at the end (when you are making your final points or summarizing).
- Even if you find that you have run out of time, never, never close your talk by saying, “I think I’ll stop here.” It sends a loud and clear message that you have not adequately prepared. A few, brief words of conclusion or summary are far better than leaving your audience thinking that you just ran out of time.
- Do rehearse your presentation before it is presented. You need to rehearse it to fully understand the timing and to understand if the flow is working as you had planned.

## Delivery:

- Use a well-modulated speaking voice and a conversational tone.
- Practice using a microphone with someone in the room to help you find your best public speaking volume.
- Avoid language like “ah” or “um” during your presentation.
- Speaking either too softly or too loudly conveys inexperience. Speak clearly and distinctly.
- Speaking too quickly portrays nervousness and a lack of self-confidence.
- Make eye contact with members of the audience. Use the visual feedback you get from them to assess how your talk is being received. If they seem to be drifting off, pick up the pace. If they seem confused or unsure, slow down and repeat important points. Try to have your eyes on the audience 90% of the time you are speaking, particularly at the opening, the closing, and at the end of each emphasized statement.



# Timing & Delivery

## (Delivery Continued)

- Smile. A smile at the opening and here and there in your presentation sends a powerful nonverbal signal to the audience that you are comfortable, self-assured, and in control.
- Vary the pace of your words. Pauses are essential to a strong delivery. Pause after the introduction of a new key point and after displaying a new visual to give the audience a chance to make the transition.
- If possible, use humor. A joke or two in your presentation spices things up and relaxes the audience. It emphasizes the casual nature of the talk.
- Watch your posture. Standing rigidly, gripping the sides of the podium, tells your audience that you are far from relaxed and confident. Draping yourself over the lectern is too informal and conveys indifference.
- Gestures add emphasis to your words and can even provide an outlet for nervousness, but use them judiciously.
- The thing to remember is, while you are speaking, you are in charge of the audience. You control the pace and the tone. You must gain the audience's confidence and capture their attention. It is up to you to interact with the audience and assess their reaction to your presentation.

## Q&A:

- Be personable in taking questions. Questions after your talk can be scary. However, questions are very important.
- First, repeat the question. This gives you time to think, and is beneficial to anyone in the audience whom may not have heard the question. Also, if you heard the question incorrectly, it presents an opportunity for clarification.
- If you don't know the answer say, "I don't know the answer to this question, I will have to look into that." Don't try to invent an answer on the fly. Be honest and humble. You are only human and you can't have thought of everything.
- If the questioner disagrees with you, and it seems as if there will be an argument, please defuse the situation. A good moderator will usually intervene for you, but if not you will have to handle this yourself. e.g. "We clearly don't agree on this point, let's go on to other questions and you and I can talk about this later."
- Never insult the questioner.