# Tips for nice figures, posters, and presentations.

Taylor Sparks presentation at URES

**Key points for capturing and retaining audience interest:**

Tailor each presentation for your specific audience, venue, and objective

Strive to explain things as simply as possible. Maximize audience understanding, not just those with specialization. If all understand this enhances a culture of quality where all can contribute.

Before preparing presentation outline what is main objective and 2-3 main supporting arguments

Spend 1/3 of time telling people why they should care about topic and why you did what you did.

Attention drops very quickly! (as little as 5 minutes)

Use engaging full screen images

Pose questions directly to audience

Use extensive analogies and examples to audience

Vary the tone and volume of your voice

Present unexpected quotes, statistics, or statements

Involve audience in lecture. (Turn to your neighbor, sketch what you would expect, for example)

Make eye contact with audience members and if possible or appropriate encourage discussion

Use humor (be careful! Consider vetting your content)

Incorporate multimedia, props, videos, and other demonstrations

Use stories and narrative

Use body language appropriately. Don’t pace or be distracting with hands, hold still, use arms instead of laser points if possible, stand next to screen if possible, return attention to yourself after giving attention to screen for a figure.

**Key points for Figures/Fonts:**

Go watch Jean Luc Dumount’s youtube video <https://youtu.be/meBXuTIPJQk>

Copy people who make nice figures (check out Ram Seshadri’s guide) <http://www.mrl.ucsb.edu/~seshadri/PreparingFigures-2014.pdf>

Serif font for paragraphs (documents), sans serif for presentation figures

Square plots shrink gracefully

Use redundant information coding (color, stroke, markers, etc)

Pick appealing colors

Don’t just use whatever info machine spits out. Harvest data with datathief or plot digitizer if necessary. <http://arohatgi.info/WebPlotDigitizer/>

Make sure text font size is uniform throughout figure and easy to read

Never shrink figure to create inset and consider using panel figures instead

For microscopy cut out information that distracts, draw your own nice large scale bar

**Key points for posters:**

It’s just a prop!! Nobody reads posters! Only put info that helps present

Minimal text. No paragraphs if possible, bullets are best

Save prime real estate (center, high) for most important stuff

Large font size, make sure it’s legible from at least 5 ft away

Don’t leave out WHY you did the research and WHY audience should care

Make references and acknowledgements small and brief

Bring something to touch and show while you speak

Practice very short delivery, most people don’t want the whole thing

Ensure the image resolution is large enough

Think outside the box (cut part away to add a tablet to make it interactive or have an unusual layout?)

**Key points for slides:**

Do not just jump into research! You must get people to care about the why of your research before the how or what.

One message per slide and put it at top as a full sentence instead of useless “motivation, background, results etc”

Place acknowledgments up front if you worry about running out of time.

Simplify figures and plots to just the essential message. Replot if necessary.

Catch interest with compelling photographs

Use questions as segues

Rely on multiple analogies and explanations to “over-communicate” message

Consider illustrated step by step guide to complex processes (experimental procedures, for example)

Use shortcut URL’s if you’d like people to remember/visit them

Save equations as images ahead of time

Pace audience with multi step figures if you must use complex figure/concept