

Oral Report guidelines

There is not much time to speak during the oral report; I find it a good idea to focus on one or two of your most interesting topics rather than rush through a comprehensive presentation of your entire report. Do not worry if these elements are not statistical—the main reason for an oral report is not to demonstrate your statistical prowess, but to obtain practice conveying technical information.

Having said that you should concentrate on only one or two topics, take care that you do not spend too much time on these elements. In the past, I have recommended specific elements of their reports for students to discuss. Almost invariably, students go into too much detail on these elements and end up exceeding their time limit. Usually I get the blame for having encouraged them to discuss a topic in detail. Be aware that a short time limit has to be enforced in order that all students have the opportunity to present their talks.

John Spurrier's referenced page has a lengthy list of do's and don't's. The mechanical mistakes I commonly observe in a short presentation mostly involve a failure to engage the audience. Students like to address the overhead projector, talk to the screen, stare out into middle distance, stare at a corner of the room—anything but talk to the audience. Some of these problem can be addressed through adequate practice; students often seem surprised or are caught unaware by their PowerPoint slides. This is a good sign you needed at least one more practice session. You can refer to your overheads or note cards as a reminder, but be sure to step away from the overhead and talk directly to your classmates. In addition, idiosyncrasies that are acceptable for a long lecture should probably be avoided for a short talk—don't put your hands in your pockets, balance on the outside edges of your shoes, hold your hands behind your back, rock back and forth, etc. **Make sure everyone in your group speaks.** I sometimes neglect to mention this in class and find that a group member is not scheduled to speak, particularly in a large group. I want everyone in the class to have an opportunity to practice oral presentations.

The amount of information on any single overhead should be minimal. Copying an entire page of computer output directly to an overhead is never effective; pull out the relevant information only and reproduce it using a large font. Be sure to trust your graphics and your text. If you have put alot of work on the slides, you need to let the slides do your work for you—do not over-explain the information presented. I know students feel they should be teaching their material, but in this short format, you need to present rather than teach.

If you are using PowerPoint, make sure that your version of PowerPoint is compatible with the version on the classroom computer. It is a good idea to have visuals and graphics—you can convey information much more quickly, which is a real advantage given the short time frame for presenting information. I don't require visuals as part of the presentation, but I have noticed that your fellow students judge a presentation much more harshly if no visuals are available.