DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY MEDICINE
Presentation Guidelines

Avoid common errors when presenting research:

- Avoid using long complicated words to impress people—it doesn’t!
- Avoid spurious accuracy.
- Percentages: if there are less than 100 in the sample, don’t give decimal places: 7 out of 11 is 64%, not 63.64%!
- Statistical values should only be quoted to 2 places, eg. P<0.05; r=0.94
- Give subject ages as mean (to one decimal place) and range, not standard deviation, for example: mean 43.1 years, range 29-68 (easy to understand) mean 43.148 years, s.d. 7.415 (hard to understand)
- When drawing charts, don’t let a computer design crazy scales for you, eg. 2.19, 5.38, 7.57 ...
- Don’t assume that everyone reading or listening to your paper is an expert in the field—make it clear enough for students, and for people from other disciplines.
- Understand that there may still be a real difference between two groups, even if the statistical test fails to support it (eg. Because the sample was too small).
- Also understand that a statistically significant result may have no practical significance in the real world.
- Whether it is a written paper, an oral presentation or a poster, have someone else review it before you go public!

Oral Presentations: Planning & Preparation

- Don’t simply read a paper that would be suitable for publication—an oral presentation is a totally different medium which requires a totally different approach.
- One picture is worth a thousand words.
- Humour is useful within limits—it can make a talk more interesting, but must not distract the audience from what you are trying to say. Sometimes a relevant cartoon will help get a point across, but a long irrelevant joke will detract from the talk.
- Avoid irrelevant sides—nature scenes, glamour pictures, etc. They may wake the audience up, but they may also distract or offend.
- Use only images that are licensed!
- Unless you are very experienced, do a dry run for timing. It is better to make it too short than too long—leave them begging for more, not begging you to stop!
Look through the slides after loading the magazine, to make sure none are backwards or upside down.

**Speaking—General Pointers**

- Make a point of studying the technique of other speakers when you go to meetings—learn from both their good and their bad points.
- Preferably, talk off the cuff, using the slides as notes. If you can’t do this, use notes on file cards. If you are too frightened and must use a script, write it as a speech, not as a written paper.
- If you are using notes or a script, make sure there is enough light to read. If not, try and get a reading light of some sort.
- Find out how to use the pointer and control the slides before you go up to give the talk.
- Look at each slide as it goes up on the screen—don’t just plough ahead, oblivious of projection problems.
- Talk to the audience, not to the screen or your notes.
- Make sure you can be heard—allow for the deaf person in the back row! If using a microphone, stay about 12 inches from it and talk normally—don’t either stray away from it, or talk too closely into it.
- Point to relevant items on the slides. This is difficult if you are reading from a script or heavily dependent on notes.
- What is on the screen must relate to what you are talking about—if you want to talk about something different, you need another slide.
- Conversely, don’t put things on the slide that you don’t intend to talk about—make a simpler slide. Busy slides are a disaster!
- Stick to the time limit. No matter how interesting it may be, you will lose your audience’s attention if you over-run significantly. Rule of thumb—Average one slide per minute, so for a ten minute talk use ten slides (maybe eleven or twelve), but certainly not fifteen, twenty or more!
- Tell your audience clearly when you have finished. Don’t say “Well, that’s about it..” or “any questions?”
- Thank them for their attention and wait for the applause!

**Projection & Slides**

- Always look at the screen to make sure the image is satisfactory.
- Don’t block the projector beam.
- Don’t block the audience’s view.