



## **Guidelines for the perfect PowerPoint Presentation**

By now, you should have spent some time creating your best presentation for SAWMA 2026

If this is your first SAWMA conference: Welcome, Good luck, and have fun!

Below are some important pointers to keep in mind when creating your presentation as well as some information relating to the student presenters who qualify for special awards.

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### **How can my speech be more effective?**

- Support your main points and findings with:
  - Statistics
  - Testimony
  - Stories
  - Anecdotes
  - Examples
  - Visual aids
  - Facts

Use different sources to support your points; do not rely on just your opinion to convince a crowd

### **Where do I start?**

- Get all the information you have on your subject together and see where you have gaps. Your goal will be to fill in these gaps.
- You would need to do extensive research to fill in these gaps – but you are a student and by now it is safe to assume that you will know how to do basic research.
- **Keep an open mind.** The information you discover may cause you to change your mind about a topic or prove it to be inappropriate or incorrect.
- Use different sources to give you a broader view of your subject. Keep notes of what you read and where you read it
- After you have made notes pick out the information which best supports your idea/subject.

### **How can I keep my work interesting?**

- Use different types of support material.
- Cite statistics where it is important and add a story or anecdote at a different point.
- Keep it at the level of the audience – if the topic is above the mental capacity of the crowd they will lose interest.

Credits to Jeanetta Selier & Jeanette Fouche 2022 who compiled and refined the guidelines

- If your support material is complex or involves statistics, find the human-interest side and include that information in your speech.
- Try to relate some points, numbers or facts to the everyday lives of the audience. This will allow them to better relate to your topic.

### **Should I use visual aids?**

- Yes - people remember best what they simultaneously see and hear.
- They offer five benefits:
  1. They increase understanding
  2. They save time
  3. They enhance retention
  4. They promote attentiveness
  5. They help control nervousness.

### **What kind of visual aid should I use?**

- This depends on different factors, such as:
  - The information you wish to convey
  - The size of the audience
  - The equipment available
  - The time available to prepare visuals
  - The amount of money you can afford to spend
- The most common visual aids are computer-based aids as this allows you to display dramatic visual aids such as animations and simulations.
- Charts, graphs, diagrams, models and digital pictures are some of the main visual aids used in computer-based presentations.

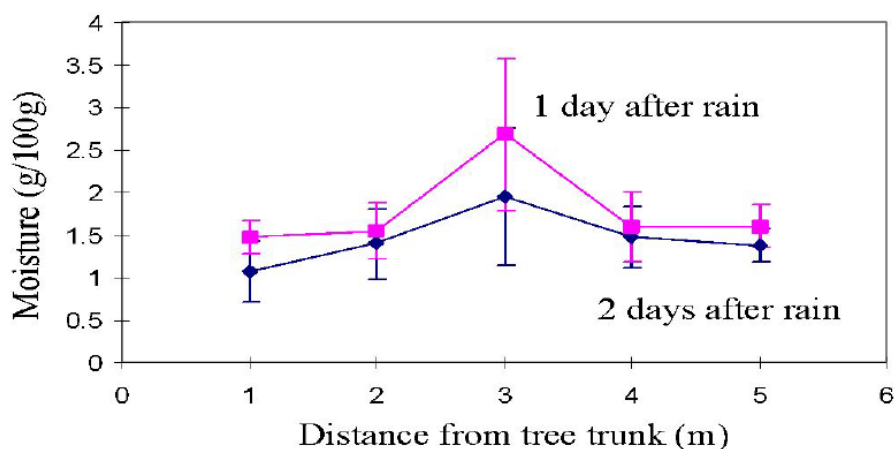
### **When should I use visual aids?**

- Visual aids are intended to complement a presentation, not to be the presentation.
- you do not need a visual aid for every sentence you say or every point you make. If you emphasize everything, then nothing seems important.
- You should use them only:
  - To reinforce a main point
  - To enhance understanding/remembrance of complex material
  - To save time.

### **What are some of the most important guidelines for visual aids?**

- To be effective visual aids should be:
  - Easy to read
  - Easy to understand
  - Pleasing to view
- Always consider:

- VISIBILITY - Everyone in the room must be able to see your visual aid. Use the largest possible lettering and both uppercase and lowercase. Use blank spaces to make text stand out
- LIMITS - Each visual should only have one main thought or point. Use no more than six lines of text and no more than six words per line per visual.
- MINIMALISTIC - Keep them simple. Avoid cluttering a visual aid with too much artwork or fancy graphics.
- COLOUR - Use colour carefully. Colours add interest and improve retention. Choose colours that enhance readability. For example, black letters on a dark blue background are difficult to read. Avoid using too many colours; two or three are enough. You may consider highlighting keywords in a different colour.
- CONSISTENCY - Include some consistent design elements, such as font, colours and/or artwork, which will make your visual aids more pleasing to the eye.
- VARIOUS AIDS - Use different types of aids. Variety adds interest. If you're giving a presentation with computer-based visuals, for example, follow a bar chart with a text visual or a diagram.
- It is best to avoid using RED in graphics and text at all, as it is difficult for most people to distinguish.
- Make sure visual aids are large enough to be visible to the audience at the back of the room.
- Go for contrast – a guideline is to use either light text on a dark background or vice versa. Be aware of colour-blind people (more common than one thinks) who often struggle to distinguish reds from greens and colours similar in tone.
- Try to avoid too much text on slides. It can be quite boring. If you must have text, try to introduce each point as you go along, otherwise, the audience tends to read on ahead while you're still discussing the first point.
- Maps, Pictures, graphs etc. all help make the point.
- Rework figures. A figure presented in an oral presentation has to be instantly comprehensible. To facilitate this, enlarge the text labelling your axes. If you have two lines on a graph, make it clear which is which with clear labelling (see example below). Even better, if you are a whiz with PowerPoint, introduce the lines onto the graph separately.



NB! - Proofread all visuals for spelling and grammar. If your visual is a graph, table, chart or diagram, be sure to title it so the audience knows what it is.

### **When and how should I display visual aids?**

Using visual aids successfully requires practice. Displaying them too soon, too late, or too quickly will decrease their impact. Consider these tips:

1. Display a visual just before you are ready to talk about it.
2. Maintain eye contact with the audience as you display the visual
3. Display it long enough.
4. Don't block the visual.
5. Don't write as you speak.
6. Display the correct visual
7. Have them ready
8. Rehearse.

### **What is the structure of a presentation?**

1) **Presenting a paper isn't merely a case of paraphrasing it.** Certain parts need to be stripped down, while others need more "airtime". Usually, the methods section can be edited down to the bare bones – if people have questions about the methods, they will come out in the question session at the end. While methods are reduced, results should get more airtime.

2) **Start with providing background information**, drawing from the introduction, other studies, and even the discussion, if you need to, and then end the introduction section with a concise statement of the specific question or questions addressed.

3) **Present the study in sections if it is composed of a few small experiments or investigations.**

Draw conclusions from each section of the study, as you present them, to make the link between the findings and the conclusions stronger. You need to lead the audience from point to point. For example, if you tackled a number of experiments/studies in the paper, present each separately – i.e., first specific question, methods, key results, some discussion (and how it might have led you to pose the second question), and then onto the next question (question, methods, key results, discussion... etc.).

4) **Summarize the major findings** of the research at the end of the talk, taking care to make each point separately.

#### **Let's recap some NB info on how make an effective PowerPoint Presentations**

1. **Use** the slide master feature to create a consistent and simple design template.
2. Simplify and limit the number of words on each screen.
3. Limit punctuation and avoid putting words in all capital letters.
4. **Use** contrasting colours for text and background.
5. Avoid the **use** of flashy transitions such as text fly-ins.

### **What else do I need to know before presenting my best presentation?**

- **Practice makes not-so-nervous.** Most of us get nervous when giving a presentation. One study apparently found that people are more afraid of public speaking than death! One way to minimize your nerves is to practise your presentation. The more you practise, the more you can reassure yourself that you know what you are going to say and how you are going to say it. Always remember, you know more about your talk than anyone else in the room.
- **Don't rush.** Take a deep breath! Relax! People in the audience are not there to scare you; learn from them and learn from your presentation!
- **Make your visual aids work for you.** Direct the audience's attention to key features, such as trends in the data or interesting details captured in images. Visual aids should support your message, not distract the audience from you. If you can use a laser pointer steadily, use it to guide the audience to the point you are making. If not, refer clearly to features such as "the lower line", "the blue line", or "the graph on the left-hand side".
- **Be clear on unfamiliar terms:** Make sure that unfamiliar terms that you use are presented in the visual aids. This is particularly true for abbreviations. For example, if you use "NDVIs" in your presentation, be sure to put what the abbreviation stands for on the visual aids.
- **Don't mumble, make eye contact** with the audience, and try to **sound interested** in what you're saying. If making eye contact makes you nervous, try looking over people's shoulders at ear level!
- **Warn your audience that the end is near.** Slip in a phrase like, "One final point..." or even "In conclusion..." or just plain old "Finally..."
- **End your talk** by thanking the audience for their attention. Also thank your co-authors, sponsors, etc. if you have not done so already.
- **Stick to the time limit.** Not doing so suggests you were unable to highlight the salient points of your research. It is also inconsiderate to the audience and the conference organisers.
- **Handling questions:** If you have the presence of mind to do so, paraphrase a question before answering it to help those in the audience who may not have heard the question correctly. Also, don't be afraid to say you don't know the answer to a question.
- Visual aids help an audience understand and remember what they hear; they are a valuable tool for speakers. The most popular visual aids are computer-based visuals, overhead transparencies, flip charts, whiteboards, and props.
- The type of visual aid you choose depends on several factors, including the information you wish to display and the size of the audience. Visuals must be appropriate for your message and the audience and be displayed correctly with ease and confidence.

**Still not sure how to create your best SAWMA presentation? Have a look at the below sources for more information:**

<https://www.toastmasters.org/Resources/Video-Library/how-to-use-visual-aids>

Credits to Jeanetta Selier & Jeanette Fouche 2022 who compiled and refined the guidelines

How to Make a Good PowerPoint Presentation (Tips),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grJ0FbpfvOw>

DO's and DON'Ts in making presentation more effective:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X50StnWVh9I>

How to avoid death By PowerPoint | David JP Phillips | TEDxStockholmSalon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwpi1Lm6dFo>

### **Full presentations:**

- Strictly limited to 15 minutes (12 min to present and 3 min for questions).
- **If you apply the above information, then you should be good to go!**

### **Speed talk**

- Strictly limited to 5 mins (2 minutes have been allotted for questions on the programme)
- Think of the speed talk as an “elevator speech”
  - You are in an elevator with a VIP.
  - You only have a few floors (in this case, 5 min) to give him the best speech, highlighting the most important points, to convince him/her of the value of your project, research, opinion, or subject.
  - The points you would highlight to the VIP would most likely be the points mentioned in the abstract of that project/paper.
  - You can spend about 30 sec - 1 min on a slide – this will help you to plan the number of slides and the amount of information on each slide.

### **Do you feel like you are “in it to win it”?**

Student presenters will qualify for special awards for best speed and full presentations in the following categories:

1) Honours & Masters level

2) PhD level

The objective of these awards is to encourage a high standard of presentations and to motivate our young scientists.

The following evaluation criteria can serve as guidelines for the preparation of full presentations:

- 1) Title and introduction - in the context of the conference theme (/10)
- 2) Materials and Methods – logical sequence (/10)
- 3) Tables and Figures & visual appearance of slides (/10)
- 4) Results and discussion (/20)
- 5) Oral delivery and questions (/10)

**Student presenters, please inform Elma Marais ([office@sawma.co.za](mailto:office@sawma.co.za)) if you are presenting work done for your Hons/Masters or PhD project, and have not indicated so when submitting your abstract.**

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