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**Suggestions for Short Oral Presentations**

**General**

* Time is limited. Plan ahead, use it well. NHCA platform talks are intended to be 15-min. long in a 20-min time slot. This allows time for introductions, questions, and transition to the next speaker.
* Less is more. Remove clutter from slides, remove excess slides from the talk, remove everything nonessential. Over stuffed means under explained.
* Practice your talk (more than once). This ensures smooth delivery, and also that your material will fit within the allotted time.
* Arrive early so that you can meet the session chair, be sure the slides are loaded, and familiarize yourself with the mic, pointer, and any other equipment associated with your talk.
* Turn off your cell phone (don’t just put it in airplane mode), or leave it at your seat. Cell phones can interfere with microphones and sound systems.
* Be considerate to your audience and those who follow you. End on time.

**Slides**

* As a general rule, allow 1 - 2 min./slide, i.e. a maximum of 15 slides.
* Slides should complement not compete. Do not read your slides to the audience, and likewise do not expect them to read text-filled slides while you are speaking to them.
* If you are not going to mention it, do not put it on your slide.
* To the extent possible, minimize margins, logos, branding and needless graphical elements; reserve them for the title and closing slides.
* A degree of consistency across slides is desirable, such as similar background colors, fonts, and sizes, but this does not mean artistic elements, or corporate or institutional logos, should appear and take space, and the audience’s attention on each slide.
* The most popular and versatile background is white, though other light colors can work. Black text on white is easy to read and to print. Dark backgrounds like black or dark blue, with white or yellow text also work well, but waste ink when printing. Dark colors on dark colors can be difficult to read. For example, avoid red on blue.
* Consider colors when creating charts. As with text, avoid color combinations that may be difficult to distinguish. Charts should be readable to someone who is colorblind; consider combinations of colors and line types for line charts, or colors and textures for bar charts.
* Sans serif fonts like Arial, Calibri, and Helvetica, are easier to read at a distance than serif fonts like Times New Roman.
* Bigger is better because it is more readable.
  + Expand single (or at most double) graphs or images to fill the slide.
  + With text/bullet slides limit the number of lines of text to a maximum of 12; less is better.
  + Although it depends on room and screen size, as a rule, 20-point font is the minimum to use for text, figure labels, and annotations, but 24-point or larger is preferable. As a test, use PowerPoint to print your slides out 6/page and hold at arm’s length. The text should be easily readable. On charts make sure that symbols are large enough to differentiate.
  + With large lists or tables, consider splitting them on multiple slides, but retaining the header on each slide.
* Present graphs/charts on their own without distracting text that must be read while the viewer is also trying to listen to you and decipher the chart. In wide-screen (16x9) format two charts can work well on one slide.
* Graphical material requires explanation – be sure to describe the axes, units, the legend, and any key points in the figure. Explanations will be quicker if you work towards making your charts/figures “stand alone,” by using simple but descriptive figure titles, legends, and axes labels.
* Be cognizant of significant digits. Reporting numbers to a meaningless degree of precision, such as 95.24 dB is misleading and also makes a slide more difficult to comprehend. Integer values convey information clearly and percents are better understood when rounded.

*Prepared by Elliott Berger and Don Finan, January 2019*