Guidelines for Preparation of Effective Podium Presentations
(Adapted from the Association of Physical Anthropology Guidelines)

Simple is best for presentations – you want to focus on making a single main point, and making it simply, clearly, and concisely. It is not possible to cite all previous work relating to your study, provide detailed descriptions of your methods, or present lots of non-essential information. Your presentation should: 1) define the problem or central question; 2) indicate its importance; 3) tell what was done; 4) state what was found; and 5) consider the relevance or broader implications of the findings. Good visuals, rather than detailed text, convey the essential message of the talk, and key points and results. They allow the listener to both see and hear, to enhance understanding.

To maximize effectiveness, consider the following guidelines:
1. Clear purpose – organize your talk around a central theme. A single main point and unified story helps to avoid getting bogged down in details. Provide a conclusion that summarizes the main points and issues posed by the material you have presented.
2. Freedom from non-essential information – omit all but the most essential details, particularly with respect to methodological details. Stick to the main points. Save non-essential information for questions or discussions later.
3. Graphs, diagrams, and tables – Diagrams and graphs are useful for presenting research design or study hypotheses, results, and even a visual summary of key points. Avoid tables with lots of numbers.
4. Word slides – if you use bullet points or word slides, keep them short. Do not use full sentences. Do not include more than 5-7 lines per slide (acknowledgements or references cited slides excepted)
5. Fonts – use common, simple fonts. San serif fonts are the clearest. Text should be relatively large. Most of the “themes” in Powerpoint for example use 40-44 point font for titles, 28-33 font for main bullets, and 24-22 font for secondary bullets. Keep text size in mind as well when labeling figures, graphs, or tables.

Guidelines for Preparation of Effective Poster Presentations
(Adapted from the Association of Physical Anthropology Guidelines)

Poster presentations offer more opportunities for discussion with interested viewers, and is available for several hours for viewers. However, space is limited on the poster. Just as with a podium presentation, simple is best. Creating posters is not just writing your paper on a larger surface! Keep in mind the same focus on a single main point or story as is emphasized above for podium presentations. The same rules concerning conciseness apply: 1) define the problem or central question; 2) indicate its importance; 3) tell what was done; 4) state what was found; and 5) consider the relevance or broader implications of the findings. Good visuals, rather than detailed text, convey the essential message of the research, and key points and results. Good poster presentations require equal effort to good oral presentations.
To maximize effectiveness, consider the following guidelines:

1. Organization – make an initial sketch of your poster, allocating space for specific sections that will systematize your information. For example: Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Summary and Conclusions. Focus attention on a few keys points. Try different styles, colours, and arrangements to maximize clarity and simplicity.

2. Text – while a poster includes more text than slides, do not overdo it. Create a balance between visuals (e.g. diagrams, graphs, tables) and text. About half your viewing area should be visuals. Avoid making the visuals too small or trying to cram in too many. Try to limit the amount of text on your poster to 1500-2000 words so that it can be read in less than 10 minutes. Again, avoid non-essential information. Interested readers can ask you for more details!

3. Fonts – Text size should be at least 18 point, with 20-24 even better. Smaller font is too hard to read at any distance. Headings should be larger (30-36 points) and bolder font. Use short, informative (“headline” style) titles to state the essential point of each figure (remember people will be reading this when you are not there to explain, so it should stand on its own). Use consistent type styles and letter sizes throughout. Avoid presenting lengthy references cited lists, as they take up space and are distracting.

4. Eye movement – the pathway traveled by the eye should be natural, either top-to-bottom, or left-to-right. Remember broad columns of text can be hard to read when standing at a poster. Generally 2-3 columns work best, depending on the width of the poster.