

Intensive Course in Research Writing

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Intensive Course in Research Writing: Session 3 (29 June 2016)

Today

- Introduction: oral and poster presentations
- Presentation/discussion: giving oral presentations
- Presentation/discussion: citing references—some basics
- Workshop: drafts of methods sections
- Guest segment: example of a short talk

Preparing Poster Presentations and Oral Presentations

Obtaining Chances to Present

- Unsolicited invitations (but beware of predatory conferences)
- Submission and peer review of abstracts
 - Of course, follow the instructions.
 - Write abstracts readably, especially as reviewers are busy.
- Note: Sometimes abstracts of proposed presentations
 - may be longer than abstracts of journal articles
 - may include one or two figures or tables

Oral Presentations

Preparing an Oral Presentation

- Obtain and carefully follow instructions.
- Include much less detail than in a paper to publish.
- Stick to the main idea.
- Give the presentation a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- If feasible, structure the presentation largely as a story.

Preparing a Presentation (cont)

- Remember: People must be able to understand what you say as you say it. Therefore, for example:
 - Pace the presentation carefully.
 - Repeat important points.
- Minimize use of abbreviations/acronyms.
- In general, prepare notes, not a full text.

Preparing Slides: Some Guidelines

- At most one slide per minute, on average
- One theme or idea per slide
- Simple and uncrowded
- Thus, usually no published graphs/tables
- Bullet points (not paragraphs) for most text
- Large enough lettering to read

Compare this slide and the previous one.

In general, do not average more than one slide per minute. Limit each slide to one theme or idea. Keep slides simple and uncrowded. Thus, beware of using published graphs and tables. In general, use bullet points (not paragraphs) for text. Make sure all lettering is large enough to read.

Rehearsing the Presentation

- Time the presentation carefully.
- Try to make the presentation slightly shorter than the allotted time.
- Perhaps rehearse for others.
- Perhaps have others ask you questions.

Coping with Stage Fright

- Note that a little nervousness can help you perform well.
- Realize that people will attend to hear the content, not to judge your speaking style.
- Prepare well, but don't over-prepare.
- Exercise a little.
- Beware of too much food, water, or caffeine.

Coping with Stage Fright (cont)

- Hide physical signs of anxiety.
- Realize that a presentation need not be perfect to be excellent.

Giving the Presentation

- Arrive early.
- Make sure audiovisuals are working.
- Speak slowly enough.
- Speak clearly.
- Look at the audience.
- Show enthusiasm.
- Avoid distracting habits.

Answering Questions

- Lay the groundwork for relevant questions (for example, by stating in your talk some items that people can ask about).
- Perhaps have the moderator or a colleague to ask the first question.
- Briefly repeat each question.
- Keep answers brief.

Answering Questions (cont)

- If you don't know an answer, say so. Perhaps
 - offer to find out,
 - suggest how to find out, or
 - see if someone present has the answer.
- If a question seems irrelevant, offer to answer it later, or move to a related item.
- If a question is hostile, answer politely and briefly; perhaps offer to talk later.

Answering Questions (cont)

- Make note of questions. Use them to help shape future presentations and publications about the work.

Looking Ahead

- Later today: an example of a 15-minute talk of the type for this course
- Next Wednesday (July 6) through the following Wednesday (July 13): talks by class members
 - 15 minutes each (10–12 minutes of presentation, plus 3–5 minutes of questions and answers)
 - On a professionally related topic (your research or something in your field)
 - For an educated general audience (this class)
 - Can rehearse, get feedback beforehand

Homework for Tomorrow

- Please read the chapters listed.
- Revise the draft of your informal abstract, using feedback received.
- Bring in some figures, tables, or both from papers reporting research similar to yours. (Either print out a copy of each or bring in electronic copies.)

Citing References: Some Basics

Functions of References

- To give credit to others for their work
- To add credibility to your work by showing that you used valid information sources
- To help show how your work is related to previous work
- To help readers find further information

References: Importance of Accuracy

- Studies show that many references are inaccurate.
- For references to fulfill their functions, they must be accurate. Therefore
 - Make sure that you accurately state what the cited material says.
 - Make sure that all information in the citation (for example, author list, article title, journal title, volume, year, pages) is accurate.

Another Reason Your References Should Be Accurate

Often, authors whose work you cite will be your peer reviewers. Inaccurate references to their work will not impress them favorably.

Formats

- Various formats exist for citation in text—for example:
 - Accuracy of references is important (Day and Gastel, 2016).
 - Accuracy of references is important.³
- Various formats exist for items in reference lists—for example:
 - Pineda D. 2003. Communication of science in Colombia. Sci. Ed. 26:91-92.
 - Pineda D. Communication of science in Colombia. Sci Ed 2003;26:91-2.

A Reminder

Be sure to use the format that your target journal requests.

- For the citations in the text
- For the reference list

Citation Management Software

- Examples: EndNote, Reference Manager, RefWorks, Zotero
- Allows you to keep a database of references
- In many cases, provides the citations and references in the proper format for your target journal

Placement of Citations

- Ambiguous:
 - This compound has been found in humans, dogs, rabbits, and squirrels (Tuda and Gastel, 1997; Xie and Lozano, 2014; Flores, 2002).
 - This compound has been found in humans, dogs, rabbits, and squirrels.^{1,4,7}
- Clear:
 - This compound has been found in humans (Tuda and Gastel, 1997), dogs (Xie and Lozano, 2014), and rabbits and squirrels (Flores, 2002).
 - This compound has been found in humans,¹ dogs,⁴ rabbits,⁷ and squirrels.⁷

Other Advice on References

- If you haven't read an item, don't cite it.
 - Discussion question: If an article isn't freely accessible online, how might you obtain it?
- Check each reference against the original source.
- Carefully follow the journal's instructions to authors.
- Use other articles in the same journal as models.

Comments: Methods Sections Looked At

- What are some things you noticed about the methods section of the paper you are using as a model?
- What questions do you have?

Workshop: Drafts of Methods Sections

- Read your group members' methods sections fairly quickly, to get the general meaning.
- Read each methods section more carefully, and write comments on it.
- Discuss each methods section, noting strengths and then providing suggestions.
- Give the commented-on methods sections to the authors.

Discussion: Workshop on Methods

- What are some comments you received?
- What are some revisions that you're thinking of making?

An Example of a Short Talk
(by a guest speaker)

Analysis of the Short Talk

- What were some strengths of the talk?
- In particular, how did the talk relate to the advice provided on giving a presentation?

Wishing you a good afternoon!