

**PREPARING FOR  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES**

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Preparing for International Conferences

**Organization**

- **Seminar Topics**
  - *Selecting the Conference*
  - *Preparing a Proposal*
  - *Developing a Poster*
  - *Delivering a 10-Minute Presentation*
- **Individual Work**
  - *Develop/revise a research proposal, poster, and/or presentation*

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**SELECTING THE  
CONFERENCE**

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**Three Types of Academic Conferences**

- **Thematic Conferences**
  - *organized around a fairly specialized topic - usually quite small scale*
- **General Conferences**
  - *a somewhat broader focus - treats different topics within a particular field*
- **Professional Conferences**
  - *not exclusively for academics; commercial companies may contribute by giving presentations.*

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## 10 Factors to Consider in Choosing the Right Conference

- **Goals** (for your university, department, research group, self)
- **Cost**
- **Location**
- **Who's Going?** (friends/colleagues/ contacts)
- **Who's Speaking?**
- **Topics Covered**
- **Number of Talks/Sessions**
- **Format**
- **Timeline**
- **Networking Opportunities**

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## Descriptions of Peer-Reviewed Conference Session Types - 1

- **Paper:** Papers submitted individually are grouped with others on a common theme and become part of a 45-90 minute session. A chair and discussant are usually assigned to monitor time and comment on papers. Each presenter has 10-15 minutes to present and discuss the key points of his or her work.
- **Panel/Symposium:** Formal, thematic, 45-90-minute multi-presenter session including a well-integrated set of research, practice, theory, or teaching-oriented content. Usually includes a chairperson and three to five presenters.
- **Poster:** Graphic presentation of your topic displayed on poster board. Posters are often presented during an evening reception and/or poster exhibition.
- **Roundtable:** 45-minute oral presentations with small-group discussion; attendees are seated around a table. Roundtable presentations typically include 15 minutes of presentation, followed by 30 minutes of discussion and feedback. Ideal format for networking and in-depth discussion on a particular topic.

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## Descriptions of Peer-Reviewed Conference Session Types - 2

- **Expert Lecture:** Formal 45-minute presentations by a single acknowledged expert in the field who shares conceptual or methodological innovations through a lecture followed by response to audience questions.
- **Demonstration:** Formal 45- or 90-minute presentation that shows how to use or apply a concept or tool.
- **Professional Development Workshop:** Precede and follow the conference; focus on helping attendees to learn or refine their skills related to the field. Workshops often differ from sessions offered during conference in at least three ways: 1) each is longer (either 3, 6, or 12 hours in length) and thus provides a more in-depth exploration of a skill or area of knowledge, 2) presenters are often paid for their time and are expected to have significant experience both presenting and in the subject area, and 3) attendees pay separately for these workshops and are given the opportunity to evaluate the experience. Proposals submitted for Professional Development Workshops tend to have a significantly higher rejection rate than those submitted for other types of conference sessions.

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## Descriptions of Peer-Reviewed Conference Session Types - 3

- **Alternative Session Type:** Format that is informative, invigorating, and exposes the audience to new ways of disseminating, connecting with, and learning about key topics. This format applies to any submission falling outside the types offered by the conference, due to novelty in format or style.
- **New Member/Graduate Student Session:** Sometimes there are special sessions for new members and graduate students. Some conferences also offer a way for new conference attendees to identify themselves in a way that prioritizes their submission.

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## How to Find the Right Conference

- **Through your own academic institution**
  - Many conferences advertise their call for papers through faculty heads of or contact persons in academic departments in the field of the conference.
- **Through your own network** (colleagues, supervisor etc.)
- **Through mailing lists**
  - Sign up for mailing lists within a particular discipline
  - Colleagues/peers can point you to interesting mailing lists
- **Through search engines or portals**
  - [Allconferences.com](http://Allconferences.com) (conferences, trade shows and conventions)
  - [Conference Alerts.com](http://ConferenceAlerts.com) (academic conferences worldwide)
  - [WikiCFP](http://WikiCFP) (academic conferences worldwide)
  - [PapersInvited.com](http://PapersInvited.com) (academic conferences worldwide)

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## TIPS FOR PREPARING THE PROPOSAL ABSTRACT

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## Caveat

- Individual conferences have specifications about proposal length, format, and content.
- Conference requirements should always be your first point of reference.

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## Consider Your Audience

- **Consider disciplinary background of potential reviewers.**
  - *What is the disciplinary position of the conference itself?*
  - *Does the conference focus on a particular sub-field of a larger discipline?*
    - If so, speak to the core scholarship of that sub-field or discipline by responding to, extending upon, or drawing from that scholarship.
- **Consider the wider general academic audience.**
  - *Show your expertise while remaining accessible to a general academic audience.*

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## Have a Key Point

- Focus on one “paper-sized question.”
- HAVE A POINT your paper will advance.
- Even if you don’t yet know what that point is, make a concise and intelligible claim.
- Emphasize the innovative.
- The abstract doesn’t have to break new ground; it need only *suggest* your paper *might* do so.

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## Relate Your Topic to Larger Disciplinary Concerns

- Engage the interest of your audience by situating your presentation within larger disciplinary conversations and concerns.
  - Cite key source or scholar, or situating your work in line of inquiry or major debate in your field of study.
  - Pose compelling questions that indicate a new way of thinking about a particular topic or subject area.
  - Briefly explain how your presentation contributes to larger discipline:
    - How does it challenge, extend, or complicate existing work in field?
    - If possible, highlight the broader implications of your presentation.

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## EX: SITUATING TOPIC IN DISCIPLINARY CONTEXT/ CONCERNS

*Since the heated debate between Flower & Hayes and Cooper & Holzman in the early 1980s, cognitive approaches to understanding composing processes such as thinking-aloud protocols (TAP), have largely fallen out of popularity in the field of Rhetoric & Composition. In this presentation, I argue that we revive the debate and re-examine methods like TAP in the context of new media and multimodal digital composing.*

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## EX: SITUATING TOPIC IN DISCIPLINARY CONTEXT/ CONCERNS

*While we often link multimodality to combinations of sound, image, and movement on computer screens (Lauer, 2009), scholars like Palmeri (2007) remind us that multimodal composing is not always digital; complex assemblies of different modes of communication happen in a range of sites. Furthermore, Kress (2003) argued that communicative modes are connected to their spatio-temporal relations. This panel explores multimodality from a range of methodological and theoretical perspectives, asking: What might we gain by extending insights and questions from multimodal theory into a range of composing practices?*

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## EX: POSING QUESTIONS

*This presentation will examine how Korean female entrepreneurs in the U.S. are portrayed in the media, centralizing on the following questions: What happens when Euro-American conceptions of modernity, progress, and success move across borders and return in hybrid forms? What do media depictions of Korean female small business owners tell us about how these women are perceived by different groups? Finally, how do cross-cultural interactions rhetorically reconfigure the way different peoples make meaning of the world?*

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## EX: POSING QUESTIONS

*How, if at all, does the formulation of arrangement change in the domain of new media? What kinds of factors do people take into consideration when composing such digital compositions as mixtapes? What is factored into the arrangement process? Methodologically speaking, what are the affordances of using a method such as TAP? What are other viable methods for doing research on digital composing?*

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## Engage the Conference Theme

- Many academic conferences are planned around specific themes, which you will find in the call for proposals/papers.
- Write your proposal with the call in mind because reviewers are generally asked to consider how well the proposal engages the conference theme during rating.
- These themes are also oftentimes general enough so that you can fit almost any presentation topic into it with a little tweaking.

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## Get to the Point

- Most reviewers won't want to spend too much time figuring out the point of a poorly written proposal.
- Make your point early on,
- Be sure that individual sentences flow into one another well.
  - *Make good use of transitions so that connections between ideas are clear—this can really help give your writing the clarity it needs for quick skimming.*
- Also, brevity is key.
  - *Wordiness is a signal to reviewers that you don't know what you're talking about.*

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## Proofread, Edit, Double-Check

- Proofread your proposals!
- *Some reviewers are sticklers for grammar or may find mechanical errors overly distracting.*

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## PARTS OF THE PROPOSAL ABSTRACT

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## Parts of the Proposal Abstract - 1

1. Big picture problem or topic widely debated in your field, possibly with reference to scholars
  - **Sentence 1:** The question of xxx has been widely debated in xxx field, with scholars such as xxx and xx arguing xxx.

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## Parts of the Proposal Abstract - 2

2. Gap in the literature on this topic.
  - **This GAP IN KNOWLEDGE is very, very bad, and detrimental to the welfare of all right thinking people. This is the key sentence of the abstract.**
  - **Sentence 2:** However, these works/articles/arguments/perspectives have not adequately addressed the issue of xxxx.

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### Parts of the Proposal Abstract - 3

3. How your project fills the gap
- **Sentence 3: My paper addresses the issue of xx with special attention to xxx.**

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### Parts of the Proposal Abstract - 4

4. The specific material that you examine in the paper, including data, texts, etc.
- **Length depends on your total word allowance, and more sentences may be possible.**
  - **Sentence 4+: Specifically, in my project, I will be looking at xxx and xxx, in order to show xxx. I will discuss xx and xx, and juxtapose them against xx and xx, in order to reveal the previously misunderstood connections between xx and xx.**

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### Parts of the Proposal Abstract - 5

5. Your main argument and contribution, concisely and clearly stated.

- If you are wondering—how do I make an argument when I haven't written the paper yet? Well—that's the challenge.
- *Come up with a plausible, reasonable argument for the purposes of the abstract.*
  - *If you end up writing something different in the actual paper itself, that's ok!*

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### Parts of the Proposal Abstract - 6

5. A strong concluding sentence, possibly with implications for policy (what should we all do), practice (what should practitioners do), and further research (what else do we need to know)
- **Sentence 5+: In conclusion, this project, by closely examining xxx, sheds new light on the neglected/little recognized/rarely acknowledged issue of xxx.**

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## DOs

- **Have a catchy, informative title that conveys your ideas in a brief format**
- **Follow instructions carefully**
  - *Make sure your proposal does not exceed the word limit*
  - *Include/complete all required sections*
- **Don't leave the reader hanging**
  - *State upfront, even in the first sentence, what your research does and why it matters*
- **Start by writing without stressing about your word limit.**
  - *Once that is done, edit to your word count.*
- **Remove wordy phrases**
  - *EX TO DELETE: "it can be argued that," "Is is commonly acknowledged that," "I wish to propose the argument that"*
- **Make every word count**
  - *No fluff, no filler, no blather.*

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## DON'Ts

- Do not load up your abstract with jargon, too many questions, or exaggerated claims
- Don't wait until the deadline to submit your proposal.
  - *Some conferences send proposals directly to the section chairs as soon as they are submitted, and you may benefit from a primacy effects.*

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# PREPARING THE POSTER

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## The Basics – Poster (1)

- Must be clear, concise and attractive in order to generate discussion and feedback.
- Begin with a storyboard of needed information, tables, and graphics.
- Poster should attract interest from 5 meters away.
- Poster should be readable from 2-3 meters away.
- Avoid blocks of text.
- Use the 3-30-300 rule.
  - **You have 3 seconds** to attract attention. *The title of your poster should attract attention (consider formulating title as a question)*
  - **You have 30 seconds** to keep the attention and to get your overall message across: *Your key message, or take-home message, should be clear right away.*
    - Don't stick to the regular paper structure of introduction, methods, results, conclusion/discussion (which is usually your key message and in the end).
    - Put the information that is most important on top of your poster, right below the title
  - **You have 300 seconds** for the audience to read the entire poster

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## The Basics – Poster (2)

- Use fonts: TITLES 70–100, SUBTITLES 40, BODY TEXT 24
- Keep fonts consistent and limit variety.
- 50/50 ratio of graphics/text. Don't use graphics of poor resolution.
- Keep about 40% of your poster "white."
- Limit palette to 3-5 colors, with light color background
- Include your name and contact information; perhaps a picture?
- Consider printing handouts of the poster itself, or summary of your poster.

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## Sections of Poster

- Title
- Introduction
- Materials and Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
- Implications
- References, Acknowledgements, Contact Information

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# PREPARING THE PRESENTATION and accompanying handouts

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## The Basics – Presentation (1)

- Distill your paper into a talk
  - *Remember: oral communication is not the same as written communication*
- Prepare supplemental materials
  - *PowerPoint, Poster, or ?*
- Develop handout (e.g., paper, presentation summary, guided notes, reflection activity)
- Prepare your talk to fit the allotted time
- Aim for a typical to somewhat advanced person in your audience

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## The Basics – Presentation (2)

- Focus on your presentation goals
  - *What do you want the audience to know about your work?*
- Don't get lost in the details
  - *Emphasize the important issues or "big picture" significance of your work.*
  - *Downplay specifics, like details of the literature or the significance value of a statistic.*
- Summarize key points on the last slide

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## Presentation Organization

- Make an outline of the presentation
  - *Use your outline as an introductory slide*
  - *Follow the outline to lay out the slides*
- Mirror key parts of your paper
  - *Address key parts of the paper but don't try to duplicate it*
  - *Use the presentation to encourage the audience to read the paper*
- Estimate about 1 slide per minute of time

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## Per Slide

- Have one main idea per slide
  - *Bullet key points*
- Generally, limit yourself to no more than about 4-5 major bullets per slide
  - *Some designers use the 6 x 6 rule: no more than about 6 lines of text with 6 words per line*
  - *Avoid blocks of text*

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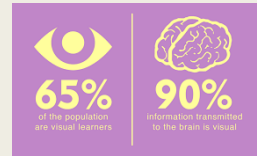
## Presentation Formatting

- Use font sizes of at least 24 pt (maybe 18 pt in a pinch)
- Use sans-serif fonts
- Stick to high contrast colors
- Use design templates for consistency and use simple templates
- Use highlighting and color sparingly
- Limit use of animations / special effects
- Check spelling and grammar for accuracy

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## Presentation Visuals

- Images can add interest and support the content
- Graphs convey data better than tables
- Use Microsoft SmartArt
- Create your own visuals



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## Handouts?

- For PowerPoint handout, be sure to format handout slides
  - Include title, contact information, permission to reprint statement
  - May be saved as a PDF for your future use
- Consider a worksheet handout, where you provide room for them to take notes and also reflect on relevance or identify further questions
- Consider printing a 2-page version of your paper with your contact information
- Consider printing 1-2 key visuals
- DISTRIBUTE BUSINESS CARDS!

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## Talking to the Audience

- Adopt a conversational tone
- Do not read slides
- Use notes sparingly
- Make eye contact with audience members
- Speak clearly and loud enough for all to hear
- Demonstrate enthusiasm for your topic

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## Engaging the Audience

- **Statistics and Data**
  - Surprise your audience by making effective use of statistics and numbers.
  - Charts and graphs should be simple enough for the audience to understand.
- **Repetition**
  - Repeat important points all through presentation.
  - BUT use different ways to repeat the same points.
- **Storytelling**
  - Stories are effective because there is no individual who does not have their own story.
  - People will sometimes remember them for a longer period of time.
- **Questioning**
  - The best questions are ones that get audience agreement, shock them to attention, and get them thinking. Post them on the PowerPoint!
- **Threes**
  - If you speak in threes, people tend to remember the points of your presentation better.
  - Consider these well known phrases: Up, Up and Away – Country, God and Duty – Love, Hope and Faith

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## Handling Questions from Audience

- Use questions as an opportunity for further engagement with the audience.
- Generally, keep answers brief and on topic.
- Admit it if you don't know an answer.
- If you are challenged or attacked, acknowledge the point, answer the question as best you can, and move on.

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## After the Session

- Take time after the session to meet with those who have more extensive questions.
- Have your business card or handouts available to provide to interested individuals.
- After the conference, respond to e-mail inquiries you may receive.
- Posting your paper and slides online can be helpful.

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## References

- [Writing the Academic Conference Proposal](http://gradhacker.org) (gradhacker.org)
- [How to Write a Paper or Conference Proposal Abstract](http://theprofessorisin.com) (theprofessorisin.com)
- [Designing Conference Posters](http://CollinPurrington.com) (CollinPurrington.com)
- [Tips for Designing Better Research Posters](http://Elsevier) (Elsevier)
- [How to Make a Successful and Attractive Research Proposal](http://Socializing Science) (Socializing Science)
- [Ten Simple Rules for a Good Poster Presentation](http://National Institutes of Health) (National Institutes of Health)
- [Tips for Successful Conference Presentations](http://Purdue University) (Purdue University)
- [Ten Simple Rules for Getting Published](http://National Institutes of Health) (National Institutes of Health)
- [How to Get Your First Research Paper Published](http://TimesHigherEducation.com) (TimesHigherEducation.com)
- [How to Get Published in an Academic Journal: Tips from Editors](http://TheGuardian.com) (TheGuardian.com)
- [Writing for an Academic Journal: 10 Tips](http://TheGuardian.com) (TheGuardian.com)
- [Getting Your Research Published in Peer-Reviewed Journals](http://Virginia Commonwealth University) (Virginia Commonwealth University)
- [How to Get Research Published in Academic Journals](http://Association for Educational Communications and Technology) (Association for Educational Communications and Technology)

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INDIVIDUAL WORK

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## Draft/Revise Existing Conference Proposal, Poster, or Presentation

*I could get a lot more  
work done  
if I did my work.*

- What do you want to work on?



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