

FLASH PRESENTATIONS

A reference guide

The flash presentation format—perhaps you’ve heard of it but not seen one, seen one but not done one, or done one/many but wish there were more information on how they should go. This document will provide some tips and guidelines.

What is it? A regular presentation that happens quite quickly

In a flash presentation, the presenter takes everything that would have been said in a regular, 12-15 minute presentation and condenses it into less than half that time. Consider a flash presentation as the jazzy, in person, oral version of a well-written structured abstract.

Flashes can be in different time allotment formats (e.g., 3 minutes, 5 minutes, or even (for competitions) 1 minute). Whatever the time allotment given, they all have the same focus: to deliver the essence of an interesting research endeavor. Because the time is so limited, flashes are not appropriate formats for every research project; they are best suited to quantitative work, provocative work, and/or preliminary/ongoing work requesting feedback. The aims and scope of each individual presentation must be clear (if it is from a larger project, quickly situate it for the audience and explicitly state the aspect this one presentation will cover). Given the demands of creating a good one, flash presentations are not something to wing—they take significant practice.

Flash presentations are not the time for nuance, detail, or rich backstories—save that for Q&A responses.
Tell us what it’s about, what you did, and why it’s cool.

- **Keep your slides minimal**
 - Avoid animations. Brief words, valuable figures.
 - Not more than 4-5 slides total (example ↓)
 - S1: title slide; setup (presentation name, my name, topic, how it’s pertinent, theory using, main research question setup; today I will x, y, z). *[click]*
 - S2: the thing, the problem, the tension; one should address this with X. *[click]*
 - S3: Here’s how I Xed. *[click]*
 - S4: Results. Implications. Punchy takeaway. Thank you.
- **Tell us the essentials**
 - If we don’t get what you did, what you did it on, and/or see why it matters that you did this, the script needs revision. Give concrete example on implications.
- **Have a script**
 - Literally write a script (try to have it memorized), then practice it with your slides. Time yourself.
- **Make it interesting**
 - Practice your flash presentation on someone outside of your field of study¹. Can you get them engaged? Barring that, after seeing your presentation, would it be clear to them why people who do what you do (broadly defined) would find it interesting?
- **Keep it rigorous**
 - When the scientific substance is sound, the flash format makes it fun. However, the foundation must be there first and foremost. Clear methodology, solid theory. State your findings explicitly and tell us the analyses that revealed them. Articulate your conceptualizations and state operationalizations.

¹ If a live person is not available, a stuffed animal makes an excellent audience member. Maintain eye contact with them--they are very emotive and judgmental if you look for it. Practice until you see approval there.