

Research Poster Presentation: How to Plan Your 1 Minute Pitch

You should introduce your poster presentation with a “1 Minute Pitch” that can sometimes stretch a bit longer than one minute. You don’t want to “give everything away” so to speak, but rather capture the audience’s interest, introduce yourself and the project, and spark a dialogue. It can be difficult to cram an entire abstract worth of information in your 1 Minute Pitch. Instead, imagine it more like introducing yourself and then setting up the main question, problem, or objective of your research project. It’s an introduction, not a summary. You can always follow up with the details as the discussion goes forward. There are three basic steps you should follow in putting together your 1 minute pitch. Take a look at the following steps, with examples, then try putting your own pitch together. On conference day, you should be able to give your pitch effortlessly without notes or relying on your poster.

Hook

This is a sentence or two that you use to get people’s attention and draw their interest. It could be a question or a statement that introduces the topic and its importance. Check out the sample hooks below:

“Have you ever gone swimming in Lake Michigan? Did you know that the interactions between bacteria and viruses in the lake determine how safe it is to swim?”

“Loyola University Chicago is one of the few places in the world with a microscope that can “see” individual atoms. I know, because I’ve used it.”

“On an average night in Chicago, 5,000 people experiencing homelessness sleep outside, including many women who are particularly vulnerable to violence.”

Introduction

After you deliver the hook, it is crucial that you explain who you are (name, year, major), who you worked with (faculty mentor(s)? grad students? other undergrads? etc.), in what capacity you did this work (course? fellowship? internship? etc.), and *what your exact role was*, particularly if it was part of a bigger project. If you’re presenting outside Loyola, make sure you mention Loyola. Check out these samples:

“My name is Deonte Gibson. I’m a junior biology major at Loyola. With the support of a Mulcahy Scholarship I conducted research in the Putonti lab under Dr. Catherine Putonti as my mentor. With three graduate students and eight undergraduate researchers, Dr. Putonti’s lab studies viruses and bacteria in Lake Michigan. My job this past academic year was to isolate and test viruses to see how they would respond to certain bacteria mutations.”

“Hi, I’m Claire Huxtable, a senior chemistry major at Loyola, and I’ve worked under Dr. Dan Killelea as my mentor for the past two years as a volunteer researcher in his lab. Dr. Killelea’s lab analyzes the surfaces of various metals using advanced microscopic equipment, and for the past year I have used this equipment to explore subsurface oxygen on silver surfaces while other students in the lab have explored different metal surfaces.”

“I’m Frankie Rose and I’m a junior psychology major at Loyola. In the Spring of 2013 I took Social Work 254 with Dr. Jeannette Johnson, a class that focuses on counseling for at-risk adults. I became interested in the particular challenges faced by homeless women. This past fall, with Dr. Johnson as my mentor and the Peace Shelter as a community partner, I designed and carried out an interview-based research project to find out how women who experienced homelessness defined the challenges and opportunities of their experience for themselves.”

Set-Up/Question

After capturing their attention and introducing yourself, you want to quickly indicate (if you haven't already) why your issue is important and how your research fits a need, but mostly you want to set up your central research question or problem, hopefully sparking the audience to start asking you more questions. Here are some examples:

“Researchers know that viruses and bacteria react to each other, but we don't have a very good way of predicting that, and that's important because it could help predict when it will be safe to swim, where fish die-offs may happen, where will be the best places to get drinking water, and more. So the question we need to know is, how do viruses respond when bacteria develop highly-resistant qualities?”

“The surfaces of metal objects are crucial for medical equipment, electronics, and much more. And while Chemists know a good deal about “absorbed oxygen” and how it affects metals, we don't know much about “subsurface oxygen,” which is also very important. By using this microscope, we hope to address that problem, and ultimately predict how different surfaces will react differently to subsurface oxygen.”

“While researchers have long highlighted the challenges that women face, including violence, it's important to get that perspective from those who experience homelessness directly so that the solutions we come up with fit that experience. In particular, as a psychology major, I was interested in exploring what the psychological challenges of homelessness were for women, and how they might be alleviated.”

Practice

Ok, now try writing a draft of a 1 Minute Pitch for your research poster presentation. Then rehearse it for your friends or in front of a mirror before your conference. And remember, it's ok to gesture toward your poster during this one minute pitch, but you should primarily be looking at your audience as you start the conversation.

Hook:

Introduction:

Set-Up/Question: