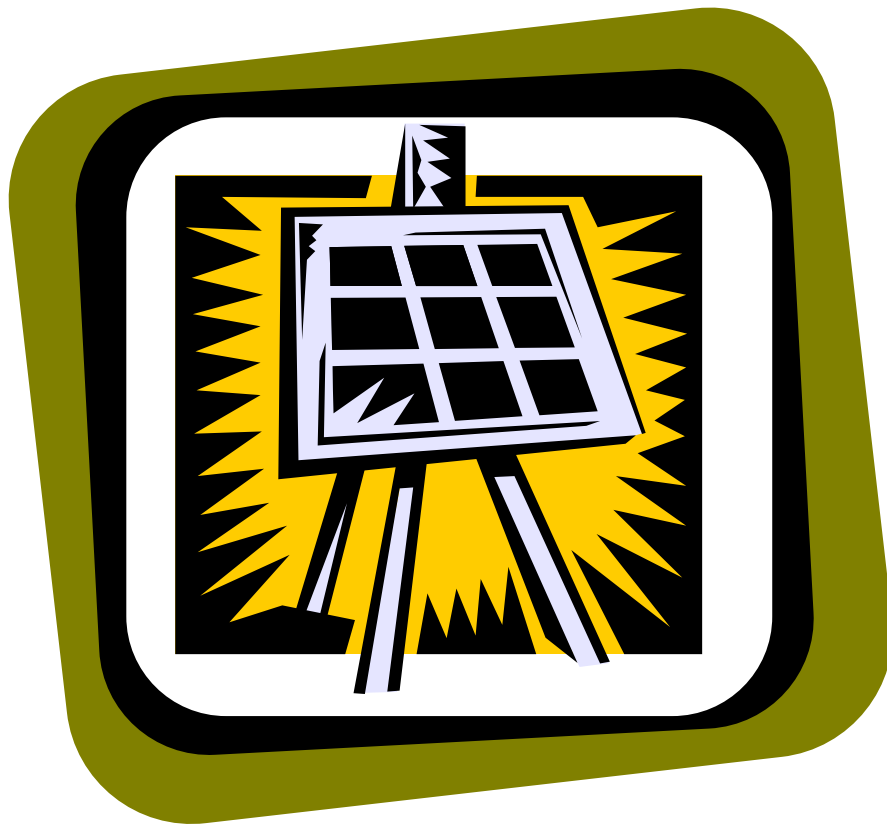


# The AOTA Presenter's Handbook



**AOTA<sup>®</sup>**

American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.

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## Introduction

This handbook has been prepared to help you develop and present a successful presentation at the AOTA Annual Conference & Expo. The contents should assist you in meeting these goals:

- Provide participants with a positive, practical, educational experience.
- Ensure that your professionalism and expertise are appropriately presented.

A Speaker Concierge Room will be designated at the Convention Center for the use of all AOTA Session Presenters. Computers, an LCD projector, and screen will be available to allow presenters to preview or make finishing touches to their presentations. AOTA staff will also be on hand to answer any questions presenters have. The Speaker Concierge will be open during the following hours:

Wednesday, April 28	10:00 am-7:00 pm
Thursday, April 29	7:00 am-7:00 pm
Friday, April 30	7:30 am-5:30 pm
Saturday, May 1	7:30 am-5:30 pm
Sunday, May 2	7:30 am-10:00 am

We strive for excellence in each of our programs, and we know you will too. Our staff is on hand to assist you in any way through all phases of program planning and implementation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call on us.

All presenters must register for the Annual Conference & Expo. This can be done online at [www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org); by mail or fax using the Registration Form in the *Conference Program Announcement*.

### Contact Us:

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Professional Development  
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Visit us on the Web at [www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org)

## Guidelines for Preparing a Program Presentation

The guidelines for oral program presenters are critical for a successful presentation. AOTA strongly encourages each presenter to read, print, and follow these guidelines carefully. Use them to develop your presentation. Practicing with a colleague is probably the single most important thing you can do beforehand. The courtesy of staying within your allotted time will assure that the other participants have their equal time on the program and allow the audience the opportunity to ask questions. Know what to omit if you start to go over your allotted time. You are responsible for ending your presentation on time.

### Planning and Preparation

The following guidelines should help you to plan a solid, well-structured presentation:

- Find out how much time you have for your presentation and plan accordingly. At the AOTA Annual Conference & Expo, sessions range from 20 minutes to a full day. The length of each session type is listed below:
  - Institute—6 hours
  - Workshop—3 hours
  - Posters and Research Work In Progress—2 hours
  - Short Course—1.5 hours
  - Research Platform—1.5 hours with three 30-minute papers or 1 hour with 2 30-minute papers with common themes presented together
  - Research Paper—30 minutes
- Be sure your presentation covers what your accepted abstract describes and that you address all of your stated learning objectives.
- Gear your presentation to the “level” (introductory, intermediate, or advanced) you identified in your proposal. However, don’t EVER “speak down” to your audience. You are the identified expert but your audience will listen more intently if they feel a collegial connection with you.
- State your objectives in the beginning of your presentation and prepare concluding points for the end, before questions and discussion.
- Put yourself in the participant’s place. Project enthusiasm for and interest in your topic.
- Try to relax. Most people are nervous presenting before a group. Focusing on a responsive person in the audience helps you connect with the audience.
- Remember that audiences invariably are sympathetic to the presenter and want to hear what you have to say. However, they will not accept or appreciate excuses or a sales pitch.
- Effective learning is a shared partnership between student and speaker. Reinforce this partnership by interacting with your audience. Ask questions and invite comments.

### Your Message

Decide what your major point is and describe it in the first 2 to 3 minutes of your presentation. This is your essential message that will help your audience understand your presentation in terms of their own setting, patient population, or research interest.

### Its Context

Ground your message. Set your major point within a context by explaining where you work, your population—clients, literature review, or data collection procedures. Rather than giving detailed explanations, summarize the important variables you have used that help explain how you arrived at your major point.

Group your facts or points in small bundles with headings that can easily be understood and remembered. Turn a fact into a picture (with either a verbal description or a visual aid) to help the audience visualize what you are saying. Enumerate your points as you make them.

### Expanding Your Message

Describe your intervention, research project, or topic area in depth. What were its unique components or procedures? Don't "tell" the audience all about your topic; rather, think about what they would like to hear. The average conference attendee has 6 to 10 years of professional experience and wants to know about interventions that work or what is new on the horizon in terms of professional issues, assessment, intervention, and research.

### Impact and Application

Use your last 5 minutes to emphasize how your procedures, data, or issues will influence the profession. If you have presented preliminary research data, tell the audience what comes next. This is your time to draw conclusions or speculate about what you did, analyzed, read, or experienced.

Because your goal is to interest your audience in your topic, be prepared for questions during the discussion period at the close of the presentation. Since these presentations often leave the audience "wanting more," we suggest that you provide a brief handout, one page or less, for the audience including a topical outline of your presentation, references with full citations, and details on how you can be contacted for further information. **See the section on Handouts for ideas and guidelines for preparing handout material.**

### Involving the Audience

Although it is not realistic—nor is it expected—that all presentations be hands-on in nature, we recommend that you include some type of interactive component in your session. Our members tell us repeatedly that their preferred learning style is interactive. Some of our best, non-hands-on sessions are those in which participants are asked to take responsibility for some portion of their learning.

Involving the audience can be accomplished by providing participants with an opportunity to directly apply some of the principles they have been learning throughout the presentation to get immediate feedback from faculty and peers. A few examples include group discussion, case

studies, demonstrations, simulation, role play, or a structured experiential learning activity. It is important for the speaker to determine the most appropriate methods for his or her session on the basis of material being presented and the size of the audience. A simple “show of hands” only takes 10 seconds and can connect you with your audience.

### Large Groups

The large group is appropriate for guided group interaction, question-and-answer periods, feedback sessions, demonstrations, and audiovisual materials. When leading a guided discussion, the presenter should develop a list of questions or points that will stimulate the discussion of a specific topic.

Enriching information can be added to the session when participants are encouraged to share resources and experiences from their individual work environments. It is important to avoid recognizing the same individuals over and over and to encourage participation by as many people as possible. If the discussion begins to wander from the topic, you must redirect it. This is your responsibility.

As with other educational approaches, the discussion that follows should help participants integrate the exercise with the theme of the presentation. Large-group discussions should be guided with lead questions presented by the faculty.

### Small Groups

Small-group sessions have proven to be highly successful in occupational therapy continuing education and it is strongly suggested that the small-group size be 6 to 8 people. For these activities, it will be helpful to assign a group facilitator to foster the discussion and coordinate the report of the small group in the large-group format. It is helpful to describe the facilitator’s role to the entire group before the participants break into small groups.

### Simulation Methods

When using audience participation in role-playing, games, or simulation exercises, it may take several forms—an activity done in groups or a demonstration in front of the audience, for example. Whatever form it takes, a good simulation experience requires that the purpose of the exercise be clear, the rules be defined, and the players be well versed on their contributions to the scene.

### Case Studies

Case studies are very effective in highlighting, reinforcing, and integrating information that is being presented. They can be presented as either informal verbal “examples” or more formal written scenarios of a particular case. Case studies can also be used to facilitate either small or large-group discussions or activities.

### Questions and Answers

An easy and effective way to involve the audience is to open up the dialogue between speakers and participants. Ask the group at the beginning of the presentation what they hope to gain from their attendance. Establish whether you will take questions spontaneously throughout the presentation or whether there will be a question-and-answer period at specific junctions. Make

sure, however, that you build in time for questions and try incorporating some of the following techniques:

- Before your presentation, think about what questions might be asked; formulate brief, clear answers to each question and rehearse those answers.
- Develop some questions of your own to ask the audience in case the question-and-answer period begins slowly.
- Throughout your presentation ask questions of the group, even if they are only answering the questions in their minds as they listen to you. Ask questions like “Has anyone done this? How did it work for you?”
- During your presentation, answer questions to clarify ambiguities immediately. Repeat questions participants pose to ensure that the entire audience has heard the question. Postpone questions related to resolving individual or specific problems to the end of the session or to a private discussion later.
- Do not become involved in an extended dialogue with one person; take as many questions from as many listeners as possible.
- If someone asks a question that you cannot answer, you have several options:
  - Say that you will locate the answer and get back to him or her.
  - Suggest appropriate resources that will provide the answer.
  - Ask for suggestions from other members of the audience.

**Always repeat the question, so that the entire audience hears and understands it;** this also serves to refocus attention on you, the presenter. This is particularly important if there are people in the audience using augmented communication devices.

### Presentation Tips

The average 8 1/2- x 11-inch page, typed, double-spaced with 1-inch margins contains 250 words. The average speaker can present approximately six of these pages in 12 minutes. Have text that is highly legible (double-spacing helps) with well-marked cues for visuals; number the pages to maintain your sequence while speaking.

So that everyone can benefit from your presentation, be sure to speak loudly and clearly into the microphone but not too fast. Describe visuals and always repeat all comments and questions into the microphone. The audience will appreciate it if you look at them rather than at the screen or your paper. Shift your gaze to include everyone. Keep your hands away from your mouth so that people who speech-read can understand you. Use active words and short sentences. Words should reinforce visual material.

For those people interested in your data, you may consider distributing copies of your paper on request. Papers and materials for your presentation should be sent ahead of time to your hotel addressed to your attention and labeled “Hold for Arrival” or brought with you. Do not send any materials directly to the Convention Center.

## Guidelines for Preparing a Poster Presentation



AOTA will provide a poster board for each author presentation. The author should prepare all materials in advance. The poster board will be 4 feet tall by 8 feet wide, mounted on stands. The poster boards have a cork background.

Posters may be set up 1 hour before the start of the session. To locate your assigned poster board, look for the 3-digit session number to which your abstract was assigned. **It is important that you DO NOT rearrange the numbers. The numbers allow attendees to easily locate the poster presentation they are interested in reviewing.** Presentations should be taken down within 30 minutes after the session ends. Display materials not removed following the conclusion of the session will be discarded.

A poster session is a graphic presentation of the author's report. A poster is not simply a research paper tacked onto a board. The authors illustrate their findings by displaying graphs, photos, diagrams, and a small amount of text on the poster boards. The authors will then hold discussions with the registrants who are circulating among the poster boards. Many authors find it helpful to present a brief introduction to answer the obvious questions and allow the remainder of the time for more in-depth discussions. The author must remain by his or her poster board for the duration of the poster session. **If handouts are distributed, bring approximately 75 copies.** Highlight the author's name and address information in case the viewer is interested in contacting him or her for more information. No audiovisual equipment is permitted for poster presentations.

Materials should include the title of the presentation and the list of authors. Letters in the title should be at least 1 inch high. Bring all illustrations needed—figures, tables, color photographs, or charts.

The material should be well labeled and legible from a distance of 2 yards. Lettering should be bold. If you will be posting typed material, use a large font size (20–24-point font) on white, pale yellow, or cream-colored non-glossy paper. Use 1-inch margins. Avoid use of fancy fonts. Use uppercase and lowercase letters. Simple serif fonts such as “Times New Roman” are easier to read than sans serif fonts such as “Geneva.”

### General Guidelines

1. Many posters can be designed using a PowerPoint™ slide.
2. Posters should be well laid out and formatted, visually appealing with the use of color, and present a professional image. Do not laminate the poster because of potential glare from overhead lights.
3. Keep in mind that your information must be concise; focus on summarizing the information of your presentation.

4. Select the most notable aspects of your research because not all the information can be presented. For presentations on research, usually the Results and Discussion sections are the emphasis of the poster presentation. Next in emphasis would usually be the Conclusion, Methodology, Abstract, and Literature Review.
5. Because this is a formal and professional presentation, posters should not contain arts and craft items such as glitter, handwritten or hand-colored items, pictures cut out of a magazine, and so forth.
6. Leave about 4 to 8 inches between the columns of your poster.
7. Ideally you should stand near the last column (i.e., near your folder) so that readers can ask you a question after viewing all the poster sections.
8. A one-page (front and back) handout may be prepared for distribution to session participants. It may be helpful to place these handouts in a folder attached to your poster in the lower right corner so that they are easily accessible for you and allow you to be hands-free during the presentation. Make sure your name, e-mail address, phone number, and mailing address are on the handout so attendees may contact you.
9. The most natural way for a reader to proceed is left to right, so begin your abstract in the upper left corner and end with your Conclusions or Summary in the lower right corner.
10. Arrange your material in columns that can be read top to bottom. Thus, a viewer can read the far left column, then step to the right to read the next section, which will allow another viewer to start reading the first column. Leave a reasonable amount of space (e.g., at least 6–8" inches) between columns.
11. Don't put key information (e.g., a photo or table of results) at the very bottom of a column so that a reader must squat down to see the information clearly.
12. Define different sections clearly. Use headings of reasonable size (larger than the text) to identify the start of each major section. Use colored backgrounds to delineate sections.

## Planning Sections of the Poster Board

### Title

- As a general guideline, the title should be no more than 10 words. The title should be a label, not a sentence.
- Place author names under the title; don't forget to include the appropriate credentials after the names. Include the sponsoring institution or worksite under the presenters' names.
- Center both the title and the names at the top of the poster.
- The title should be readable from a distance of 20 feet, be bold and dark, and be in a non-serif or almost-non-serif font (i.e., Arial, Comic Sans, Berlin Sans, Tahoma). Reasonable font sizes might range from 135 point to 210 point.
- Author names should be readable from a distance of 10 feet and be in a bold and dark font in non-serif or almost-non-serif fonts. Reasonable font sizes might range from 72 point to 150 point.

### Headings of each section of the poster (i.e., Abstract, Methodology, Discussion)

- Use consistent font style for all headings.
- Use non-serif font (i.e., Arial, Comic Sans, Lucinda Sans).
- Use the boldest and darkest font possible.
- Make font size large enough to be easily read from a distance of 4 feet. Reasonable font sizes might range from 48 point to 60 point.

### Text

- Use consistent font style for all text.
- Use non-serif font (i.e., Arial, Comic Sans, Lucinda Sans).
- Use the boldest and darkest font possible.
- Make font size large enough to be easily read from a distance of 4 feet. Reasonable font sizes might range from 24 point to 36 point.
- Use double-or 1 1/2-spacing (in MSWord, hit the “Control” key + the number “2” key for double-spacing or “Control” + “5” for 1 1/2spacing).

### Abstract

- Be sure to include the following: Objective–Statement of the Problem or Research Question(s), Brief Methodology, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion.

### Background or Literature Review

- Should be one to two paragraphs in length.
- Highly synthesized section—abbreviated Introduction and literature review section ending with the purpose, hypothesis or research question, or research objective.

### Methodology

- Include design, participants, instrument(s), and procedures.

### Results

- Should comprise majority of poster. Although often one of the shorter portions of a written paper, it is the major portion of a well-designed poster.
- Include main findings.
- Report factual data in enough detail to support conclusions drawn.
- Factual data should be followed by tables and figures.
- Tables and/or figures will have greater visual appeal if they are in color. Be sure and label or title each table or figure or note explanation at the bottom of the table or figure.
- May relate results with research question(s) if not in **Discussion** section.

### Discussion

- May relate results with research question(s) if not in **Results** section.
- Include interpretations of the results.

- Include a concise comparison with literature reviews.
- Include research or practice implications.

Conclusion

- Include summary of findings and implications.
- Identify future lines of inquiries or research.

Your Role at Conference

Many first-time presenters approach the poster session like an art show and wait quietly and anxiously while the viewers judge. But the purpose of the session is to stimulate dialogue, and you should be prepared to take a role in doing so. People who visit your poster probably choose to do so because they have some related experience or research. If they don't ask questions of you, start things off by asking questions of them, such as "Do you also work with stroke patients?"

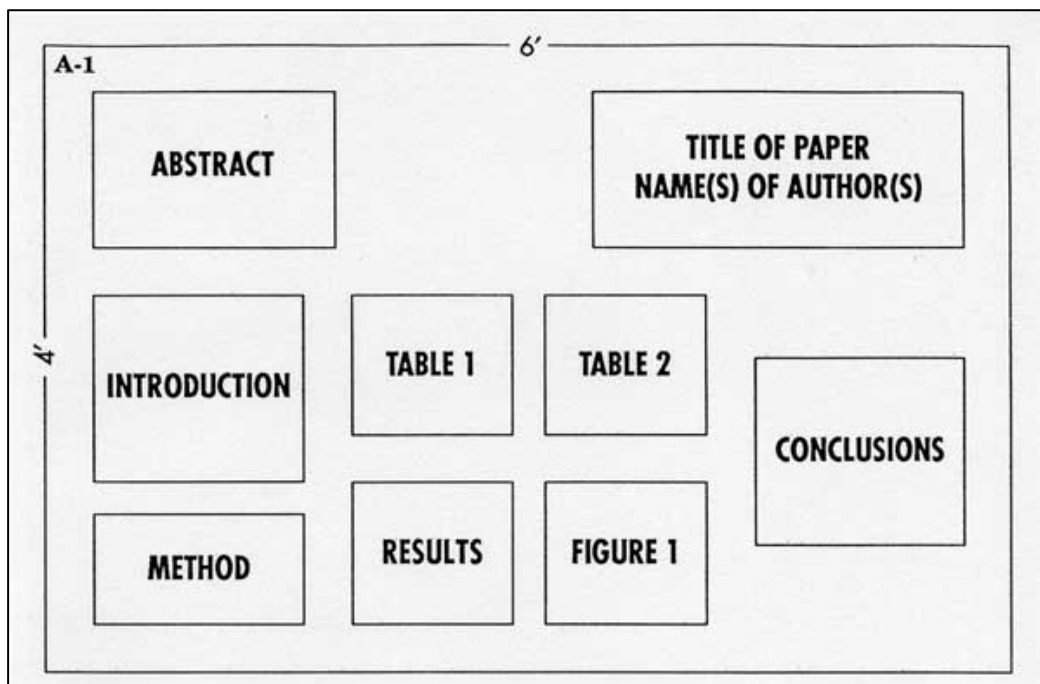
Another approach to engage viewers is to ask "Would you like a brief overview of the study?" This offer can be helpful for engaging a viewer who may be feeling a little uncertain about reading through all the detail on the poster.

After the Conference Is Over, Then What?

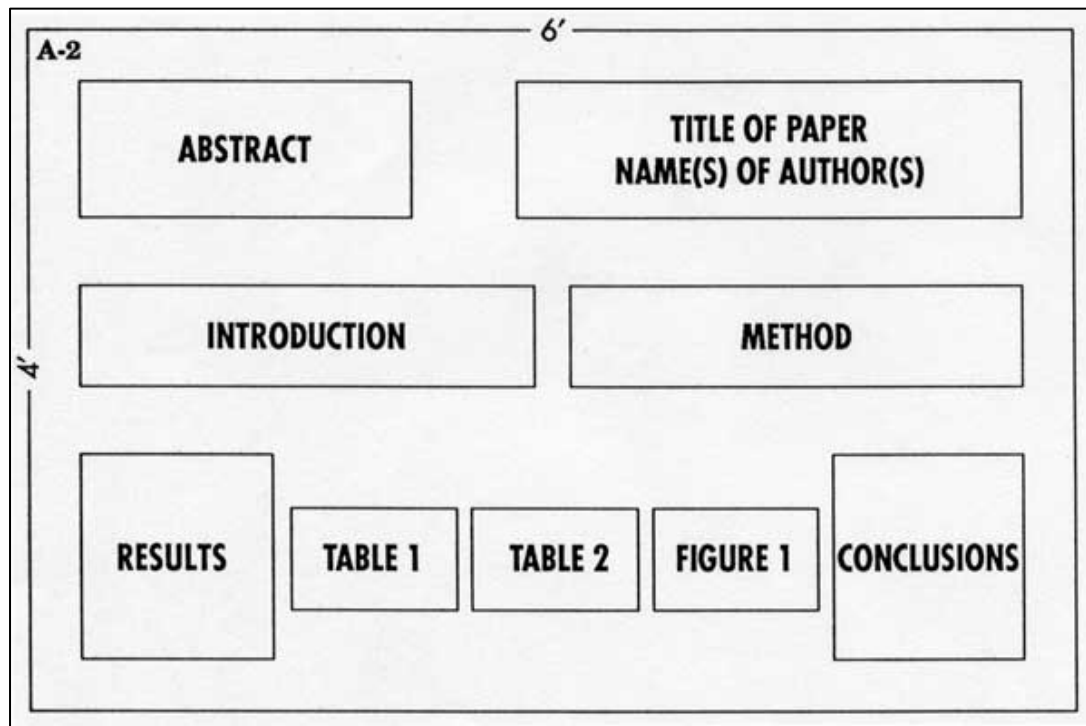
Before packing your poster away, think about display options in your facility, such as bulletin boards, and so forth. The poster can easily be mounted on foam core sheets (available at art supply stores) and then set up on tabletops, counters, and so forth, to show your work during an open house or other functions.

Poster Board Layout Examples (to see more samples please visit the [AOTA Web site](#))

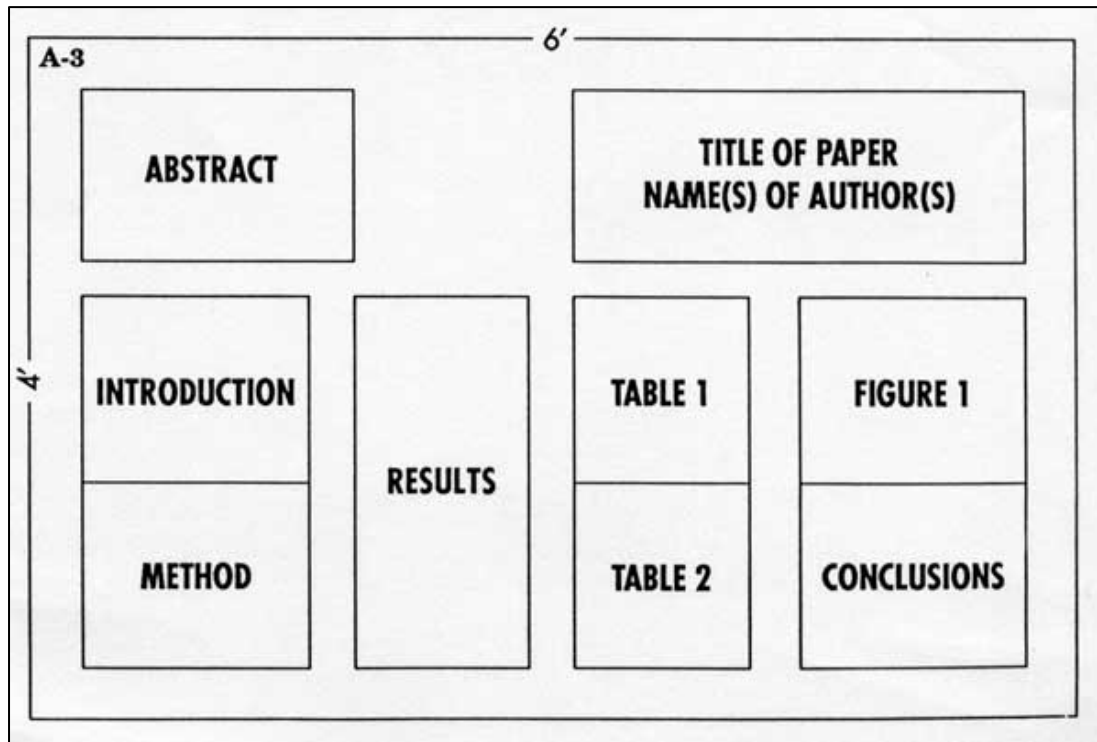
Poster Example 1



Poster Example 2



Poster Example 3



## Audiovisual Support

### Standard Audiovisual Equipment

AOTA will provide presenters (except poster presenters) with the following equipment:

- 1 laptop computer
- 1 podium and 1 head table
- 1 podium microphone and 1 wired lavalier microphone
- 1 projection screen
- 1 LCD projector

Please note that Internet access is NOT an available option.

If a presentation requires audiovisual equipment that is not listed above, be sure to order any additional equipment prior to the Conference. Contact [conference@ota.org](mailto:conference@ota.org) for more information.

Carefully selected AV materials can be a refreshing adjunct to teaching methods. They offer variation for different learning styles and keep the flow of the day stimulating. AV aids are an important way to reinforce and enhance the major themes of your presentation by:

- Stimulating interest
- Clarifying content
- Simplifying complex information
- Improving the listeners' recall
- Keeping you on the subject

### Preparing a PowerPoint™ Presentation

Slides are used for emphasizing key points simply and clearly in a presentation. They are not appropriate for detailed information. Your verbal explanation or handouts should provide the detail.

#### General Guidelines

1. Slide presentations should be well laid out and formatted, be visually appealing with the use of color, and present a professional image.
2. Keep in mind that your information must be concise; focus on summarizing the most notable aspects of the information for your presentation.
3. Organize your presentation using headings followed by “bulleted” or numbered sub-points. Avoid using a narrative format for sub-points as this is difficult and lengthy to read.
4. It is better to have several slides per heading or concept than to cram all the information on one slide.
5. Use a high-contrast slide design scheme; see additional information about colors and text size.

### Title Slide

- As a general guideline, the title should be no more than 10 words. The title should be a label, not a sentence.
- Place presenter names under the title. Include the appropriate credentials after the names.
- The title should be readable from the back of the presentation room, be bold and dark, and be in a non-serif or almost–non-serif font (i.e., Arial, *Comic Sans*, *Berlin Sans*, Tahoma). Reasonable font sizes might range from 44 point to 72 point.
- Author names should be readable in a bold and dark font in non-serif or almost–non-serif fonts. Reasonable font sizes might range from 28 point to 40 point.

### Content Slides

- Headings should be readable from the back of the presentation room, be bold and dark, and be in a non-serif or almost–non-serif font (i.e., Arial, *Comic Sans*, *Berlin Sans*, Tahoma). Reasonable font sizes might range from 36 point to 54 point.
- Content should be in bulleted or numbered format for readability rather than in narrative format. Text should be readable in a bold and dark font in non-serif or almost–non-serif fonts. Reasonable font sizes might range from 20 point to 36 point.

### Slide Color Schemes

Keep in mind that colors on the computer screen appear different when projected on a screen. After creating your slides, project the presentation on a wall or screen to ensure that the colors are what you intended and that the slides are easily readable. Also make sure that the background and text colors contrast enough for readability. Consider the following color schemes for the best contrasts:

1. Blue background and yellow or white text
2. Black background and white text
3. Dark green background and white text
4. Dark yellow or gold background and black text
5. White, muted, or pastel backgrounds and black text
6. Avoid using contrasting colors that are opposite on the color wheel (i.e., orange and purple or green and red) because these combinations contrast too much and are difficult to read.
7. Avoid using colors close to each other on the color wheel because these combinations do not provide enough contrast for readability.

Always number your slides and transparencies and reference them in your presentation notes so you know which visuals to use at various points.

**Arrive at least 15 minutes before your session to ensure that your equipment is working and properly positioned.**

## Videotape and Film

Be sure to preview the videotapes, set up the AV equipment, move the film or videotape to the starting point, and prepare to troubleshoot or move into another form of presenting the material if the equipment should malfunction. AV equipment is available in the Speakers' Concierge for just this purpose.

When using videotapes, if sound quality is poor, be prepared to mute the sound and provide a narration of what participants are viewing.

After the audiovisual piece, move right into audience reaction/participation to integrate the content with other segments of the session. Help participants focus on the themes relevant to the topic at hand.

## Making Your Presentation Accessible

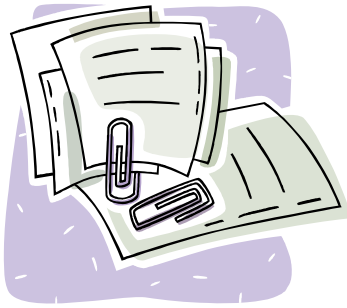


The most important aspect of an “accessible session” is a presenter who is responsive to the needs of each participant and takes the lead in creating a receptive and accommodating atmosphere. All participants should be afforded the same opportunities to benefit from the session and experiential activities.

Consider the following suggestions:

- **Be aware of the audience.** Be considerate of all participants and particularly aware of any people with disabilities in the audience and be responsive to their needs. Take time to observe the needs of your audience, and feel free to ask how you can best meet the needs of individual members of the audience as well as the audience as a whole.
- **Be aware of the lighting.** Make sure lights are not completely turned off, particularly if your session includes participants who use interpreters or have limited or low vision. Use dimmers or spotlighting when possible to adjust lighting and ensure that pathways and exits remain well lit.
- **Be aware of the seating.** AOTA ensures that designated seating is available for persons with hearing, vision, and mobility needs. Make sure participants who use interpreters can sit facing the presenter as well as the interpreter. Make sure participants who use tape recorders are near an electrical outlet. Allow adequate space for people in wheelchairs, scooters, or those using ambulatory aids. Ensure full access of all persons to the degree they wish to participate.
- **Be aware of your presentation skills.** Speak clearly, facing the audience as much as possible. Avoid standing with your back to the audience or source of light. Clearly describe visual aids, including writing on slides, boards, and flipcharts. Be specific when referring to charts, numbers, demonstration materials, and chalkboard or flipchart writing. Provide a verbal explanation of all visual materials used to illustrate the lecture. Printed versions of slides and overheads are very helpful for all participants, particularly for those with visual and hearing impairments. Whenever possible, use captioned films or videotapes. Repeat the questions and the comments of members of the audience in the session. Always speak to the participants, not the interpreter.
- **Be aware of written information.** Written information should be made available in some alternative mode: computer disk, Braille, large print (14- to 24-point font), or on audio cassette. Early planning is the key for accommodating the varied needs of participants. Make a few large-print copies of materials you plan to distribute for participants with visual impairments.
- **Be aware of experiential activities.** Make sure that everyone has a congenial partner or group and the opportunity to participate fully. Announce and provide a quiet area away from the large group or in the corner of the room for persons who have difficulties hearing within noisy environments or increased background noise.
- **Be aware of the language.** When speaking about people with disabilities, put the person first, not the disability (i.e., a child with hearing impairment rather than a deaf child or young man with T-1/2 spinal cord injury).

## Handouts



Handouts are not required, but are highly desired by many of our attendees—your audience! Use your best judgment, and if you decide to provide a handout, use it to reinforce the information you present in a program. Handouts should only be used to supply the attendees with an outline of your salient points so they can follow the progression of your presentation. You do not want your audience to be reading your presentation as you are presenting. You want eyes focused to the front of the room and engaged with you, the presenter. You need to bring attention up front where you want it and discourage conversations between participants during your presentation as they discuss points in the handout. Conference sessions are much different than classroom lectures or workshop presentations. Attendees are participating in a number of sessions over several days and are not able to delve into the material with the depth expected of single-topic presentations. Provide in the handout only what is needed to clarify your presentation and perhaps resources for further discovery. If possible, provide your contact information in case someone desires more in-depth material(s) after the presentation.

Some examples of information that might be appropriate for a handout include the following:

- Drawings, diagrams, or charts (Use only if unable to reproduce as an audiovisual.)
- Forms, checklists, or samples (Use if an audiovisual would be too detailed.)
- Glossaries or statistics (Use only if this information is critical in following your presentation.)
- Article reprints (Rarely necessary; interested persons can find this information from a reference.)
- Worksheets (If participants are asked to complete a worksheet, then provide it.)
- Bibliographies (These can be made available to those interested but are not necessary for all participants. Instruct attendees to see you after the presentation for a Bibliography, if interested.)

Always number your handout pages for easy reference during your presentation, and include your session name and number on all handouts.

All handouts will be posted to the AOTA Web site prior to and one month after Conference. This way, all Conference attendees will have access to all handouts. AOTA **does not** reimburse speakers for printing expenses.

If you have any questions, please contact [conference@ota.org](mailto:conference@ota.org).

**IMPORTANT: You, the presenter, are responsible for securing copyright permission for any and all copyright-protected material(s). This is not only AOTA's policy, it's the law!**

## Acknowledgments and References

### Acknowledgments

AOTA would like to thank DeLana Honaker, PhD, OTR/L, BCP for her contributions to the revision of the *AOTA Speaker's Handbook*. In addition, AOTA would like to acknowledge the American Public Health Association for permission to use their materials in the *AOTA Speaker's Handbook* revisions.

### Reference

Portney, L. G., & Watkins, M. P. (2000). *Foundations of clinical research: Applications to practice* (2nd ed., pp. 645-662). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall Health.