Ten Tips For Your Presentation

1. Put all key words in the title
   Make it easy for people to understand the theme of your paper. Use plain words. Aim to make the title direct and unambiguous, because it is the first point of call. People will decide whether to come to your presentation, or even just read the full abstract. Only if they can see what your paper is about.

2. Begin immediately and get to the point quickly
   You have only a short time for your presentation and the ensuing discussion, typically between 15 and 30 minutes. Doing a recap five minutes into the presentation for the benefit of latecomers is a luxury you mostly cannot afford. Tell the audience what the problem was. Tell them what you found. Tell them what the implications are. Go beyond mere description to make a scholarly contribution. Members of the audience expect that you will be giving their neurons a workout.

3. Deliver on what is written in the abstract
   You owe it to conference participants to honour the commitment you gave when you submitted the abstract. If through absolutely extraordinary circumstances you have to depart from the advertised topic for the paper, do not spend half the time apologizing for what went wrong. Just explain what happened and get on with the main act.

4. Be economical in the structure of your presentation
   You cannot afford to go into all the nuances and special conditions that affected your study in a short oral presentation. Simplify to communicate. Hit the high points. Do not give too much weight to the method unless a new method is what the paper is about. Start heading for the conclusion soon after you launch into you presentation. In the punch line, state clearly and concisely what you consider to be surprising or interesting, counterintuitive or confirmatory.

5. Aim for continuity and smooth transitions
   If your paper has been the collaborative work of several colleagues, they may not all need to share the floor action. Switching between speakers often disturbs the flow and proves nothing. Changing the seating arrangements especially for you session usually wastes time. Work around the room architecture as far as possible.

6. Be enthusiastic in the presentation
   Show your commitment for the topic, and your own keen interest in what you have to present. Make sure everyone can hear and see. Use the microphone properly if necessary. Do not literally read your paper. Speak to it. Employ good body language. Maintain eye contact. Avoid annoying mannerisms such as pacing the floor or wringing your hands. They often signal nervousness.

7. Use appropriate technology
   Software-driven digital presentations can, if properly designed, be brilliant for progressively revealing structural features and for illustrating interactions dynamically. Most conference presentations these days, however, are ruined by an apparent compulsion to use electronic slide shows. These shows are often nothing more than dot-point summaries of what is said. Many come complete with text gimmicks, dramatic backgrounds or distracting animations. Members of the audience then divide their attention between listening to the speaker and watching the screen. They do not give full attention to either in case they miss something. Similarly, the speaker may not know whether to look at the audience, the computer monitor, or the projection screen.

   Regular overhead transparencies are still a powerful medium for displaying graphical or diagrammatic information or for illustrating relationships you have discovered. Although overhead projectors are relatively low technology, they are readily available in most venues. Furthermore, if something goes wrong with the one in your room, a replacement can usually be wheeled in quickly and without the help of technical support staff.

8. Stick to the time limit
   Be courteous and fair to later presenters in your session. Ensure that you do not encroach on their time allocation. Besides, your audience will get twitchy as soon as you cross the line. Rehearse your presentation, preferably with a real audience of colleagues or friends. This should give you a clear idea about how your timing will go. If you intend to provide for questions and discussion, round off your presentation properly and leave time for them without depending on the chairperson.

9. Put the supporting detail into your written version
   You cannot cover all the salient issues in a short presentation, but you can refer colleagues to the full written version for elaboration and clarification. Distribute any handout after the presentation, not before. Otherwise participants will shuffle through the paper throughout your presentation.

10. Follow up at the conference
When you have completed your presentation, you may wish to have an extended talk with some of the discussants or clarify some points. Make a note of the persons concerned and arrange to meet during one of the breaks in the conference program, such as lunch. Social contacts are often useful, but contacts based on a substantive line of research often provide professional benefits for the long term.