

Presenting A Paper At EPA: Advice For Students

Congratulations! You are about to embark on an exciting intellectual adventure at EPA and we want you to get the most out of the experience of sharing your research with colleagues at our annual meeting. We have compiled this guide to assist you. Many prominent psychologists today began their career as a student presenting at EPA. Thank you for submitting your work and participating in our meeting. We are honored and we look forward to meeting you!

Before EPA

1. Prepare your talk well in advance

If you leave your talk to the last minute, you will not be able to benefit from your advisor's help and suggestions. Prepare your talk well in advance of the meeting and practice it. Work with your advisor in designing powerpoint slides and ask for feedback on your practice presentations from your advisor and other students.

2. Make it easy to read

Some people may sit as much as 50 feet from the screen. Make sure your slides are legible. Pay special attention to labels on graphs. Less is often more when it comes to the amount of content you should plan to include in a slide. It should be visually attractive and engaging. However, don't overdo "cutesy" additions such as clip art or colored fonts. Don't forget that some people are color blind.

3. Brainstorm possible questions

Don't expect to wing it in the question period. Don't plan on running over your allotted time to avoid questions. A common mistake students make is to think that they cannot prepare to deal with questions. You can. Make a list of the kinds of questions that a good audience should ask you and write out answers to each question. Try to hint at one or two in your presentation. Your audience will want to ask you something so that you get the full professional experience. If you end your talk with a slide of future directions, a silence can often be broken with a request to hear more about one of those directions. I've seen job candidates give beautiful, polished, well-rehearsed talks and then freeze up during the question period. Ask your advisor to help you anticipate questions.

4. Contact your session chair

Check the program to find out who your session chair is. Break the ice and introduce yourself by email. Ask if he/she plans to bring a laptop and what kind (windows or mac) or offer to bring yours for the session. Loading all presentations onto one laptop keeps the session moving along. Ask the chair how he/she plans to run the session and keep speakers to their allotted time.

At EPA

5. Attend other paper sessions

Go to a session in your area. Pay attention to how it is run by the session chair so you have some idea what to expect. Watch the presenters in the room where you are going to give your talk. Are there blind spots or places where they obscure the screen? Can you hear them at the back of the room? What kind of

questions are they asked? Who is asking them? You can learn a lot from watching good and bad presentations.

6. Dress for success

Wear clothes that you would normally wear in a business setting (for women—dress or pants suit; for men—long pants and tie). Do not wear flip-flops, sneakers, or the type of high fashion shoes you might wear to go out. Remember, as a professional, you want attention to be on what you are saying, not on what you are wearing.

7. Giving your talk

Arrive 10 min before the start of the session. Find your session chair and ask to load your powerpoint presentation on the laptop. Run through it quickly to make sure it is working. If you have a movie to show, check that the link works and that you do not have to re-insert any links into your powerpoint. Introduce yourself to the other presenters in your session.

Speak loudly and clearly. Make eye contact with your audience. Breathe and enjoy your 15 min presentation. Keep an eye on the session chair for the cue that you are running out of time.

During the question period, repeat the question for the audience before answering it. Not everyone can always hear the question and this gives you time to formulate your answer. Don't guess if you don't know. It is okay to have someone take your picture at the end of your talk during the applause so that you can show it off to family, friends, and your advisor when you return home!

8. After your talk

Sit down and listen attentively to the rest of the presentations in your session. It is discourteous and unprofessional to leave the session early. You may also miss opportunities to network after the session with researchers who have further questions for you. Bring handouts to distribute to people who take an interest in your talk. Email cards should be available so people don't need to write down your email when you run out of copies. At the end of the session, congratulate other speakers in your session, thank your session chair, and hang around to schmooze!

After EPA

9. Follow up

Send an email follow up to any new contacts you made at your talk. Remind them of your presentation and thank them for expressing an interest in what you are doing. Clarify any loose ends if necessary. You are building your professional network. Well done!

10. Feedback

After the conference, please let us know at EPA what worked for you and what might be improved. Constructive feedback is very helpful and we'd love to hear from you! Email: epaexec@gmail.com

Source used to compile this guide:

<http://www.psichi.org/conventions/attendees.aspx> (Susan Krauss Whitbourne, University of Massachusetts Amherst)

February 2011