LESSON 8

# Present Your Findings

Share your work as a short talk or poster with one clear message.

About 95 min | Reading 30 min | Slides 60 min | Quiz 5 min

> **Learning objective.** By the end you will be able to turn your research into a short talk or poster built around one clear main message.

## Key points

- Choose the one finding you want people to remember.
- Let one clear graph, image or quote do the work, and keep the words short.
- Practice out loud with someone who doesn't know your topic.

## Learn

Presenting is not reading your paper out loud. Listeners hear each point once, and people at a poster only stop for a minute or two, so you have to choose what matters most. Start by writing the single main finding you want people to remember. Then keep only the background, methods and results needed to support it.

For a poster, think headline, not essay. People should be able to read it from a few steps away, so use a short title and large text. Let graphs do most of the work and keep the word count low. Follow the order of your research (question, methods, results, conclusion) so people can follow it at a glance. For a talk, about one simple slide per minute is a good rule. Put keywords and visuals on the slides and keep full sentences in your notes.

Practice more than once, ideally with someone who doesn't know your topic. They'll notice the parts that don't make sense, and their questions may show you something to improve in your paper.

### Example

> Marcus tested which homemade filter cleaned muddy water best for his science fair. His first poster had five paragraphs of background, and visitors walked past it. He cut it down to a title that asked a question, one photo of his setup, one bar chart of cloudiness readings and three bullet-point conclusions. He practiced a 60-second explanation on his little sister. At the fair, people stopped and asked follow-up questions.

### Across disciplines

In science fields, posters and short talks built around data graphs are common. In the humanities, people often read or talk through a paper and focus on quotes, images or primary sources rather than charts.

### Watch

How to Present an Academic Research Poster, Syracuse University iSchool (5 min): youtube.com/watch?v=0ozwCEeaVWE

> **Takeaway.** A good presentation is built around one clear main message, backed by a simple visual and practiced on a real listener.

# Try it: The one-minute pitch

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Write your main finding in one sentence of 25 words or fewer.

2. Pick the one graph, image or quote that best supports it.

3. Sketch a poster layout or a 5-slide outline on paper: question, method, key result, meaning, next steps.

4. Say your pitch out loud to a friend or family member in 60 seconds and ask what confused them.

# Lesson 8 quiz

Circle one answer for each question. Pass mark: 4 of 5.

**1. What should you do first when turning your paper into a short talk or poster?**

(A) Copy the introduction, since it already explains the whole topic
(B) Write the one main finding you want people to remember
(C) Choose a colour scheme and fonts so the design looks professional
(D) List every source you used so the audience trusts your research

**2. An engineering team's graph shows a y-axis labelled only "Load" and an x-axis labelled "Bridge design". What is the most important fix?**

(A) Add units, e.g. "Maximum load before failure (N)"
(B) Switch to a 3-D bar chart so the differences look clearer
(C) Remove the axis labels and explain the graph aloud during the talk
(D) Add a rainbow colour scheme so each bridge design is easy to spot

**3. Sam is giving a history talk on letters written by soldiers in 1916. What should his slides mostly focus on?**

(A) Bar charts of how many letters mention each topic, as in a science talk
(B) Full paragraphs from his paper so the audience can read along with him
(C) Short quotes and images from the letters that support his main point
(D) A long timeline of the whole war so listeners have all the background

**4. Using the guideline of about one simple slide per minute, roughly how many slides should a 5-minute talk have?**

(A) About 5, with keywords and visuals on each one
(B) About 15, so each slide can show a small piece of the text
(C) About 2, each packed with full sentences so nothing is missed
(D) About 20, since quick slides keep the audience paying attention

**5. Why is it best to practice your talk with someone who does not know your topic?**

(A) They are less likely to notice mistakes, so it builds your confidence
(B) They notice what is confusing, and their questions may improve your work
(C) They can tell you whether your statistics and methods are fully correct
(D) They help you memorise the paper word for word before presenting it

## Further reading

- **Poster Basics: How to Create a Research Poster**, NYU Libraries. Readability rules, word counts, free tools, and good and bad examples.
  https://guides.nyu.edu/posters/poster-basics

- **Research Poster Resources**, Office of Undergraduate Research, The University of Texas at Austin.
  Step-by-step help planning, designing, reviewing and presenting a poster.
  https://undergraduates.utexas.edu/our/poster
- **Speeches**, The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. How to organise a talk for listeners, with tips for openings, endings and practice.
  https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/speeches/