

Guidelines for literature presentations

Powerpoint presentations are encouraged but not required, you can use other means of presentation if you feel more comfortable with them and/or if that fits your topic better. Chalk talks can look deceptively easy but are harder to prepare and organize. If you decided to use chalk, rehearse at the board!

Here are some general guidelines for putting together a presentation:

Introduction

1. What are the questions that the paper wants to address?
2. Why are these questions important?
3. What are the existing models, if any?

Body

4. How did scientists address the question? What were the designs and rationales of each experiment?
5. What were the results, and what did they indicate?

Conclusion/Discussion

6. How did the results improve our understanding of the problem (e.g., did they support an existing model, or did they put forward new models or raise new possibilities?)
Or if you disagree with the authors' conclusions, point out why.
7. (when appropriate) Did the studies raise any new questions? What can be done next?

Some tips on presentation:

1. Spend at least a quarter to a third of your presentation time for introduction. Describe the big picture that the study fits in, and why it is important. That means if you have 25–30 minutes for this presentation, spend at least 5 minutes providing the context.
2. Set your pace. A good rule of thumb is to have one slide per minute of talk.
3. Everything on each slide should be meaningful. Chip away anything not directly relevant. If the order of figures in the paper does not follow the best logical progression, feel free to rearrange them.
4. As I always emphasized in class, in kinetics papers there are lots of curves and numbers but you need to remember that the goal is to understand molecular mechanisms. So try to go beyond the numbers and think about the molecular model.
5. Time your talk, and rehearse. Nobody, even the professionals, manage to give a good presentation without practicing. You need to know your talk points for each slide. If you are still searching for the right words while you are standing up before the screen, you will be surprised at how fast time flies!