



## UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

cultivating purpose-driven writers, communicators, & influencers  
write + revise + persuade

### Delivering a Conference Paper

Sydney Aguas

The purpose of this article is to explain how to write and deliver a conference paper for an academic organization so that a writer can verbally present their work in various contexts.

#### The Fear of Public Speaking

Sometimes, the only thing more daunting than writing a graduate-level essay is reading that paper aloud for others to hear, evaluate, and respond to. Most people are uncomfortable with the vulnerability of being openly critiqued, even if that criticism is constructive. To deliver a successful conference presentation, you need to write a strong argument and prepare yourself for some discomfort. Yet, by following several important principles, you can present your work with confidence and excellence.

#### Preparing Your Paper

Whether you are planning to write a paper for a conference or are adapting a paper you have already written, it is vital that you structure your paper to align with the conference guidelines and fit within the conference environment. A “Call for Papers” will often be published on various websites and disseminated through email and social media channels. Some CFPs are available through clearinghouses, like those for [Engineering conferences](#) and [English conferences](#). Make sure your idea meets the requirements of the conference theme; then, when you can fully articulate your vision, submit an abstract summarizing the paper.

While conference sessions vary somewhat in their requirements, conference presentations are always governed by specific time limits. Depending on the type of session you are a part of, you will be assigned a set amount of time to deliver your paper. In a panel presentation, which is the most common type, three to four speakers are each given between fifteen and twenty minutes, with another ten minutes for a question-and-answer period. Be mindful that it takes longer to present a paper verbally than to read it. Typically, twenty minutes is long enough to deliver an eight-page, double-spaced paper. Thus, if you are delivering a presentation based on a twelve-page paper you submitted for a class, you will need to significantly trim down the paper to fit the time frame and for the different needs of this new audience.

#### Finding Confidence and Poise

Using clear and informative signal phrases in your conference paper is also essential. At a conference, your audience does not have the benefit of reading your paper; they are only guided by your words. You need to give your audience a clear representation of your paper’s structure by using signal phrases to state (and restate) your thesis and main points. Each time you transition to a new point, you should reframe your previous point so your audience can follow your discussion. When reciting quotes in your presentation, it is advisable to tell the audience directly that the word, phrase, or sentence comes from a source and cite that source. For example, you might state, *As Thomas Jefferson is known for claiming, all people have the inherent, natural rights to, quote, life, liberty, and happiness.* Using signal phrases

will not only allow your audience to keep track of your argument but will also help keep them engaged in your presentation by reminding them of the relevant points in your essay.

Finally, be sure to deliver your presentation in an interesting and eloquent manner. Speak clearly, make eye contact regularly, and allow yourself time for natural pauses. You'll need to breathe, and the audience will need to catch up with you. Minimize your anxiety by knowing that most people in the audience want to learn, not to argue; they want you to succeed, not to fail. They may not agree with everything you assert, but they will often give you the benefit of the doubt.

## Conclusion

Delivering a paper at a conference is a critical step in your journey as a graduate student. Presenting at a conference allows you to share your research and ideas in a professional environment. Moreover, by answering questions and receiving feedback from other scholars, you can reexamine your research with a fresh perspective. In this way, students and scholars share findings, collaborate on ideas, and widen the scope of their knowledge.

## Tips

1. Be as concise as possible. In a conference presentation, omit any arbitrary explanation or discussion from your paper. Only include the most relevant parts of your argument and analysis.
2. Read your paper aloud or present it to others before the conference. Practicing your presentation out loud will make you aware of how long your presentation will be, ways you need to adjust your speaking pace, and places you need to insert pauses or verbal cues.
3. To prepare for answering questions, make a list of possible counterarguments or concerns related to your argument.

## Works Consulted

"Conference Presentations." *Purdue Online Writing Lab*, Purdue University, [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/graduate\\_writing/graduate\\_writing\\_genres/graduate\\_writing\\_genres\\_conference\\_presentations\\_new.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/graduate_writing/graduate_writing_genres/graduate_writing_genres_conference_presentations_new.html). Accessed 8 June 2024.

"How To Present a Research Paper in a Conference." *IFERP*, 13 Feb 2023 <https://www.iferp.in/blog/2023/02/13/how-to-present-a-research-paper-in-a-conference/>. Accessed 8 June 2024.

Majumder, Kakoli. "8 Tips for Presenting a Paper at a Conference" <https://www.editage.com/insights/8-tips-for-presenting-a-paper-at-an-academic-conference/> Accessed 8 June 2024.

"Tips for Presenting Conference Papers." *NC State University*, <https://history.chass.ncsu.edu/grad/conference-papers/>. Accessed 22 Aug 2024.