

LAHSS-Con Talk Tips

When you're the speaker

1. Practice, Practice, Practice!

- Out loud, not just in your head.
- Aim to sound natural not memorized.

2. Talk To People, Not at Slides

- Your audience is the priority, not your PowerPoint.
- Make eye contact and speak like you're explaining, not reading— if you're reading the slide, then they don't need you.

3. Keep the Structure Simple

- Have a clear opening, structure your talk around a few main points, and close clearly.
- Avoid cramming in too many ideas. You can answer questions later.

4. Design Useful Slides

- Slide design should serve your message. You are the speaker, not your slides.
- Your slides aren't your script.
- One idea per slide. Text should be in short, complete sentences.

5. Nerves Are Normal—Use Them

- Almost everyone feels nervous. Take a few long, slow deep breaths. You'll feel much less nervous once you get moving.
- Don't be afraid to pause a few seconds during your talk to catch your breath.
- If you mess up: just keep going.

Presenting a poster?

Develop your pitch. Reflect on your project and come up with a brief pitch. Be ready to speak clearly, but for no more than three minutes or so. Then people can ask questions.

Be present. Stay with your poster throughout the entire session. Stand to the side so that it is easy for others to come closer and read.

When you're in the audience

1. Listen Actively (Not Just Politely)

- Stay engaged—don't drift to your phone or laptop except to take notes.
- Track the speaker's main idea and key points with notes.
- Good, active listening = a more rewarding experience and better questions later

2. Ask Productive Questions

- Ask a genuine question. Don't make your own point unless you want a response.
- Aim for clarifying or extending questions, not "gotcha" moments.
- Good question starters:
 - *"Can you say more about...?"*
 - *"How would this apply to...?"*
 - *"What are the implications of...?"*
- Keep it concise—this isn't your presentation.

3. Be Respectful and Constructive

- Assume the speaker is doing their best (because they are).
- Frame challenges as curiosity, not criticism.
- Instead of: "That doesn't make sense..." try: "Could you help me understand...?"
- Your goal is to support learning, not score points.

Be engaging. When someone visits your poster, say hello and ask if they have any questions. Make sure to look people in the eye as you are speaking. Look enthusiastic (even if you're tired!).

Thank your audience. Remember to thank all visitors to your poster for their time and feedback.