

Presenting with a Partner

Good organization is always necessary when structuring a presentation, but even more so for a talk given by more than one person.

It is up to you and your partner how you choose to divide up the speaking duties, as long as **each partner speaks for roughly the same amount of time**. Bear in mind that changing speakers can be distracting to the audience, and tends to slow the talk down. With the limited amount of time you have to present your proposal, it may be wise to keep speaker shifts to a minimum. That said, here are some possible strategies for dividing up a presentation:

Option 1: Speaker A delivers the first half of the presentation, and Speaker B delivers the second half. Make sure that the break between the two speakers comes at a logical point in the talk – in this case, probably between the methods and the predicted outcomes – rather than in the middle of a section (even if that's where the exact halfway point falls).

Option 2: Speaker A delivers the introduction and conclusion, while Speaker B delivers the body of the talk. For this proposal presentation, it might make sense to have Speaker A present everything up to and including the theoretical background; then have Speaker B talk about the project details and methods and the predicted outcomes, then have Speaker A finish up. (This breakdown may work well if one partner is more interested in the theoretical issues while another is more excited about the nuts and bolts.)

Option 3: Speakers A and B alternate sections. Students who choose this option should take especial care to rehearse smooth transitions.

In general, remember that **the audience naturally expects a change in speaker to signal a change in topic**. Let your speaking order complement the organization of your talk.

Further tips for preparing a joint presentation:

- Practice together! You may wish to practice your own segments of the talk apart as well, but definitely **make the time to rehearse as a team**. Figure out how long each section of the talk is running, and make sure you'll have enough time for everything. Also, make sure the talk fits together as a whole (e.g., is the overview an accurate reflection of the points that will be covered? Have you comprehensively described the needed resources, given the methods you present?). If possible, ask another group to practice with you, and trade off being the audience.

- Whoever gives the project overview should also give an outline of the talk, including who will be speaking on what.
- Whenever you shift speakers, let the audience know that you've come to the end of one section, and let them know what's coming. (E.g., "Now that I've given you the overall goals of this research project, B is going to fill you in on our details and methods.")
- While it is likely that each of you will be responsible for preparing the particular slides you actually present, the slides should not **look** as though they were designed by two separate people. Use the same template, font, etc.
- Likewise, partners should aim for similar speaking styles. This is not to say that you should try to imitate each other! If one partner speaks extremely formally and the other very casually, however, it will be rather jarring to the audience every time there is a shift.
- The only time that both partners should be "onstage" at once is during the question/answer period. At all other times, make sure that whoever is not speaking at the moment is standing far enough away that they do not distract the audience. **Before you give the talk, figure out where exactly you want to position yourselves, and how you will choreograph any shifts.** Where is a good place for the non-speaking partner to stand? Will he or she be responsible for advancing the slides, or will the speaker do it? By no means should the non-speaking partner interrupt the speaker, except in an emergency.
- On the topic of emergencies: we devoutly hope it will not happen, but each partner should be familiar enough with the whole presentation that he or she could take over and give the entire talk, if the other were ill or otherwise unable to present.