An Aural Scientific Presentation should have the following attributes:

1) Suitability to the Audience:

2) Currency of Topic:

3) A clear Objective:

4) A clear description of the Experiment, Observation, or Study:

5) A clear presentation or outline of the Methodology:

6) A definitive Conclusion:

7) Acknowledgments and Attributions (References may be placed where pertinent.)

STRUCTURE OF A TALK

A presentation should, where applicable, have the following Structure:

1) Title Page with Authors and Contact Information:

2) A Brief Introduction to the Subject and its Theory or Methodology:

3) Why this work is important and what “your” contribution to the Subject will be.

4) Body of the Work (Your work and supporting literature, contrary work should be acknowledged with qualifications.)

5) Conclusions

6) Acknowledgments
MECHANICS OF A TALK

Make titles and Headers Larger than general text.

Make general text no smaller than 24 pt, block, bolded lettering. Use color for emphasis and understanding, not decoration. Landscape orientation with 1” margins fits most overhead projectors.

Make Figures and Pictures with captions legible to the back tier of your audience. A picture can convey instantly meaningful information and relationships. A picture properly rendered is indeed “worth a thousand words.”

Use successive “blowups” for complex diagrams. These may be on the same or successive slides. Use of color can distinguish effectively regions of interest, draw attention in a complex field of view.

A talk should have movement! Keep the information content per slide manageable, a slide should not ordinarily be shown for less than 30 seconds nor more than 3 minutes. Ideally the average time to keep movement is about one slide per talk-minute. Deviations should have reasonable justification. A slide may be left up, however, when the speaker digresses or launches into an explanation or rhetorical question. Be aware that this is easily abused and can be abusive.

A talk should “tell a story”. Talks should have an internal connectedness and coherence of thought. This makes both the telling and the listening less taxing. A “story” naturally flows, disconnected facts and observations do not. If more than one topic must be presented, use a transition slide to re-orient the audience. For lengthy talks, cues may be placed on slides to aid a speaker in transition, they should be subtle, unobtrusive, and may be much smaller than normal text (so only the speaker may see.)

Using note cards or a “list of slides” is useful in practicing a talk. They generally mark one as a beginner if used in a formal presentation, although a “list of slides” to which one may refer without manipulation on a podium in a lecture are used by many polished speakers. TV uses Teleprompters to give the illusion of speakers never having to read text, turn pages or fumble with note cards. This is not a major flaw in presentation, and is subjective. Use may cause minimal distraction from the subject matter.

Movement of the speaker may enhance or detract from a talk, as can being “frozen in place”. Use body movements to emphasize points, and present a “relaxed image”. Avoid distracting floor pacing or other behaviors with no purpose. In some environments approaching the audience can have great effect, in others it can be intimidating. Forget what your mother said about “not talking with your hands”.

Use of Technology: As PowerPoint and other presentation aids become more common the ability to enhance, or overburden, a talk with visuals becomes available to the non-professional speaker. The technology shouldn’t be the object, the subject matter should be paramount.