NAOC 2020: Guide for Virtual Lightning Presentations

This document presents requirements and guidelines for giving an oral presentation at the upcoming Virtual NAOC 2020, based on accepted best practices for giving effective online presentations. *Please read through this carefully as you prepare your presentation, and also again well in advance of presenting at NAOC*.

We will be using Zoom Webinars for oral presentations (including oral papers, lightning talks, symposia, and plenaries). For poster presentations, as well as roundtables and networking events, we will use Zoom Meetings. *This document is aimed primarily at those giving oral "lightning talk" presentations via Zoom Webinars*. If you are unfamiliar with Zoom, you can find out more about the platform [here](). You can also sign up for a free limited membership, which is handy for practicing your presentation. Note also that the hosting platform for the conference will be EventPilot (info [here]()), which will coordinate the conference and help participants navigate the Zoom presentations and other events.

General

You will give your presentation, along with several other presenters, during a 90-minute session (there will be up to 13 concurrently running sessions during each time block). Each session will have a moderator and a technical support specialist. Each session will be recorded, and will be made available for viewing by all registrants for 30 days after the end of the conference.

You will have 3 minutes (exactly) for your presentation. We strongly recommend that you **practice your presentation** several times to ensure that it can be given within the 3 minutes. The slides for the talk will be broadcast from the computer of the Technical Support Specialist, not from your computer. *For this, you will need to prepare and upload a Powerpoint "slide show" presentation that is set to play with slides changing at the appropriate times* (see below). You will be able to see your slides on your own screen (as can all attendees), and so can pace what you say accordingly. This is one more reason to practice your talk well ahead of time! At the end of the 3 minutes, the moderator will mute your mic and prepare for the next presenter (there will be a two-minute transition between presentations).

Below we give details on how to set up and practice Zoom, how to design your slides, and how to sign into your session and give the presentation. In addition, _all presenters are required to attend a short training session during the week of 27-31 July or 3-7 August_. You can get more information about training sessions [here](#).

Setting up Zoom and other technical stuff

It is critically important that you prepare your technology well in advance of the actual presentation date. Important guidelines are given below. In addition, you should watch the video from ATIV Software, the company that developed the EventPilot platform we will be using for our virtual conference; you can find that video [here](#), and other useful technical tips can be found [here](#).

- _Download the Zoom Client app onto the computer you will use for your presentation_. The app is required to give a presentation (but not for audience participants). You can download the Zoom Client app [here](#). To avoid unnecessary complications, please ensure that your Zoom app is up-to-date with the current version. We strongly recommend that you use a computer, rather than a phone or other hand-held device, to give your presentation.

- _Use a modern browser that is updated to the latest version_. Chrome and Safari, as well as others, should work.

- _Test your internet speed_. You can do this at [Fast.com](#) or by using an appropriate app. The minimum speeds needed are 4 Mbps (download) and 2 MBPS (upload). Be sure to test from the location where you will be giving your presentation. If your internet speed is not adequate, or if you cannot present your paper "live" via Zoom for other reasons, you will be able to upload a pre-recorded video of your presentation that can be shown during your session. Instructions for this are given below.

- _If possible, use a headset_. The audio for audience members is far better if you use a headset with a microphone.

- _Test and practice Zoom on your browser_. This is particularly important if you have not used Zoom much in the past. To do this, go to https://zoom.us/test and then click "Join." Familiarize yourself with the controls for audio and video. Practice muting and unmuting yourself, and turning on and off your video. Add a virtual background (see official NAOC backgrounds below). Make sure that your headset speakers/microphone are connected properly. In general, make sure that you are comfortable with running Zoom.

Guidelines for effective slides for online oral presentations

If you are giving an oral presentation, it is important to keep in mind several guidelines aimed at giving an effective presentation. Many of these guidelines are relevant to any presentation, but

become particularly important for online presentations. An example slide illustrating most of the points below can be found here. Note that, due to technical needs (in particular, the need to prepare a "slide show" with timed transitions between slides), *all lightning talks must be prepared in PowerPoint rather than some alternative* (e.g., Google Slides).

- *Key points (detailed below)*: Your presentation will be 3 minutes in length; having key text on slides in two languages is recommended but not required; use a 16:9 aspect ratio; use a helpful color scheme; keep the top right corner of each slide empty; avoid videos and animations; use closed captioning if possible.

- *Languages for text*. To facilitate understanding by most or all participants, *we are strongly encouraging (but not requiring) that all slides present key text in two languages: English and one other* (likely Spanish, but could be Portuguese or French). This will help facilitate understanding by those who are not fluent in whichever language you give your presentation. To help with this, NAOC has bilingual volunteers who can also help with translations (information can be found here).

- *Aspect ratio*. You are not restricted in the aspect ratio you use for online oral presentations. However, we strongly recommend an aspect ratio of 16:9, as this nicely matches the dimensions of many computer monitors.

- *Colors*. Please use a color palette that will facilitate comprehension by people who have some form of color blindness. Recommended palettes and other tips can be found here, here, and here, as well as at other sites. Note also that black/dark text on a white/light background is easier to read than light text on a dark background.

- *Avoid having too much content on each slide*. Spread content over several slides where possible or needed. Conversely, don't spend too little time on each slide, or you risk losing the audience. A good rule of thumb is to spend approximately 1 minute on each slide. For a lightning talk, you should probably aim for 6 or fewer slides (unless there are some slides with little written content that you will move through quickly). Also limit the amount of text on each slide; use just enough words to make the key points, and avoid whole sentences. Use graphics rather than text where possible. Also, many participants will watch your presentation on a small screen, so use large fonts (18-24 point is good). Keeping the amount of text to a minimum will help facilitate the use of two languages.

- *Plan a talk understandable in multiple modalities*. Some audience members with sensory impairments will only be able to see your slides, but not to hear you. Some audience members will only be able to hear you (or to read the transcript afterwards, potentially with the help of Google Translate), but not to see your slides. Make sure your talk is as understandable as possible to folks who can only see you or only hear you.

- *Keep the top right corner of each slide empty*. Zoom displays a small window that shows the speaker (you) while screen sharing, and this small window is sometimes displayed in the upper right corner, and so may cover up any text/info you have there. It also might be good to leave a small margin on the bottom and top of the slide to accommodate possible positions of the Zoom ribbon.

- *Avoid videos and PowerPoint animations*. Videos embedded in PowerPoint slides, particularly those with a lot of action and movement, tend not to play well over Zoom.

We recommend against using them unless absolutely necessary. Always avoid videos and GIFs with strobes or flashing lights. Sound files seem to play OK over Zoom. Similarly, animations (especially those with a lot of movement) and complex slide transitions tend to not play well over Zoom and should be avoided. However, we have found that GIF animations play OK over Zoom and might be a good alternative to embedded videos, if possible.

- *Closed Captioning*. Unfortunately, due to technological limitations, closed captioning will not be possible for lightning talks.

Practicing your presentation

Possibly even more so than for a traditional presentation in front of a live audience, *practice is critical to giving a good online presentation*. After you've created your presentation, run through it several times, on Zoom, to make sure that you can deliver it smoothly and also manage the technical aspects. If you have the Zoom app installed, you can start a new meeting, with just you as the single participant, to practice. The tips below will help you prepare to give a smooth presentation. You can also get some good advice from the online video "Deadly Sins of Online Presentations" from EventPilot, available [here](), as well as from several of the other helpful websites found in the appendix.

- *Use your computer*. Use the same computer that you will be using for the actual presentation. If possible, do not use a phone or tablet or other mobile device. Make sure that you are using a modern browser that has been updated to the current version.

- *Position yourself*. Your screen should be at eye level so that you are not looking down at it (if necessary, raise the computer using a stand or books). Your face should be well centered, and you should be standing just a tad further from the screen than you normally would so that your arms can be seen. Make sure that you are not backlit by a bright light (e.g., open window) behind you, and in fact it is good to have a source of light near the computer shining onto your face (if possible, natural light or light that is not too harsh is best).

- *Pay attention to your background*. It is best to have an uncluttered background that won't be distracting, preferably a blank wall. Consider using a very simple virtual background. NAOC is recommending that you use the virtual background that can be downloaded [here](). Additional info about virtual backgrounds, including computer system requirements for using a virtual background, can be found [here]().

- *Dress appropriately*. During your presentation you will be visible to the audience; please wear something that you would be comfortable wearing in front of an in-person audience at an NAOC meeting or equivalent. If you will be using a virtual background, it is best to wear clothing that is high contrast against your real background; this will allow the virtual background to look its best throughout the presentation.

- *Look directly into the camera as much as possible during your presentation*. If you use notes or a script, make sure that they are positioned near the computer camera so that

you can read them without looking away. One handy trick is to place your notes directly behind your computer on, for example, a music stand or white board.

- *If possible, use a headset*. The audio for audience members is far better if you use a headset with a microphone.

- *Use a timer*. Timing is critical for an online presentation. Use a timer (e.g., on your mobile device) to be absolutely certain that you can give your presentation in the allotted time (3 minutes for Lightning Talks). During the actual presentation, your slides will end and you will be muted after 3 minutes (see below).

- *Don't rely too heavily on notes*. Practice enough that you don't need to read your notes, or at least enough that you don't seem like you're reading! It is far more engaging for the audience if they feel like you are talking, rather than reading, to them. Keep in mind that when you are presenting, the Technical Support Specialist will be showing your slide show and you will not be sharing your screen. Thus, you can use presenter mode on your screen so that you can have access to your notes.

- *Practice speaking slowly and clearly*. Remember that you don't need to cram in every single detail, but rather focus on presenting the key points. This will help the audience follow your presentation. This also will facilitate closed captioning and make your presentation more accessible to participants who are hard-of-hearing, and to those whose first language is not the same as that being used during the presentation.

Record a slide show of your presentation ahead of time

You will be giving your presentation during a session with several other presenters, but you will not be controlling the slides during your presentation. Instead, the session hosts will play a pre-recorded slide show of your presentation, with slide-transition timings that you set ahead of time. You will provide the "live" narration of the slides as they are playing.

After you have prepared the PowerPoint for your presentation (above), you will create/record a slide show that automatically advances the slides. The brief outline below explains how to do that, and additional info (if needed) can be found with some online googling.

- Go to the "Slide Show" menus and select "Set Up Show." This will open a small window with several options. You should select the following:

  o *Show Type:* Presented by a speaker (full screen)

  o *Show Options:* Show without narration

  o *Slides:* All

  o *Advance Slides:* Using timings

  o *Monitors:* Automatic

  o On some versions of PowerPoint you can also open the "Slide Show" ribbon at top of the window, and then check settings above.

- *Practice your talk several times to get the timings right.* Your talk can be no longer than three minutes! PowerPoint has a practice mode.

- *Record your slide show.* You can start recording from the "Slide Show" menu or ribbon. When you are done and have saved the changes, play the show from the beginning to make sure you are happy with it. If not, re-record. If you are happy with the recording, you can upload it (next step). *Please make sure that the show is three minutes or less in length, and that there is no audio narration* (uncheck the "play narration" box).

- *Upload your slide show.* For information on how to do this, please go here.

Giving your presentation (live)

You will be giving your presentation during a session with several other presenters. Be sure to log into that session 10-15 minutes early. The session will be run by a Moderator and Technical Support Specialist.

- *Record and upload a slide show of your presentation ahead of time.* See above for how to do this. It is critical that you upload your slide show well in advance of the conference.

- *Preparing for the presentation during your session*. If possible, make sure that others in your location aren't using the internet during your session, and turn off wifi on all devices other than those you will be using for your presentation, and/or plug your computer into the ethernet with a cable. If possible, it is best to keep other human beings and pets out of the room during your session to minimize distractions. Similarly, it is best to have a simple, uncluttered background behind you, or a very simple virtual background (if your computer supports it). NAOC is recommending that you use the virtual background that can be found here. Turn off the computer notifications that might pop up on your screen, and also set it to "Do Not Disturb" if your computer supports that (for Mac users, you can get info here). In fact, it is best to only have the bare minimum number of apps open on your computer (usually just PowerPoint, browser and Zoom), so turn off email and other things that may pop up during the presentation. Make sure you have an uncluttered background (or virtual background), keep yourself centered on screen with camera at eye level, dress professionally, etc.

- *Signing in for your session*. Your session will be a Zoom Webinar, and as a presenter you will technically be a "panelist" in the webinar (the Session Moderator will be the Host, and the Technical Support Specialist will be the Co-Host). As a presenter/panelist, you will receive two emails prior to your presentation: one from Zoom and one from ATIV Software (EventPilot). The email from Zoom will have a personalized link that allows you to join the session as a panelist. *It is critically important that you join the session using this link*; do not join through EventPilot, as you would then be a participant (audience member) and will not be able to present. Open the email on the computer that you will use for your presentation and click the link to join. This will open a browser window that will allow you to join the session as a panelist. You should plan to join the session 10-15 minutes before the actual start of the session; the Host/Co-host will already have the session up and running at that time and the Technical Support Specialist will make sure your audio is working properly.

- *Giving your presentation during the session*. When the time comes for your presentation, the Moderator will introduce you and the Technical Support Specialist will then start your slide show. You should start narrating the slides immediately (again, this is why it is important to practice many times ahead!). The slides will change automatically using the timings you recorded into your slide show. At the end of three minutes, your presentation will be over, your audio should be muted, and the session will switch to the next speaker. But stay online for the Q&A (next point).

- *Q&A*. We will be running Q&A for the Lightning Talks via the Chat function in Zoom. Q&A will come at the end of the session, after all talks have been given. Audience members will type a question into the Chat window. The session moderator will keep an eye on these and will select questions to ask you verbally.

- *Good luck, and have fun with it!*

Appendix: Online Resources

There are a number of online resources that provide input on how to give effective online presentations. Here are just a few.

EventPilot and Zoom Guides

Zoom Support: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/201137166

Zoom session virtual participant guide: https://ativ.freshdesk.com/support/solutions/articles/24000053016-zoom-virtual-session-participant-guide

Zoom tricks to give a better presentation: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/10-best-zoom-tricks-being-better-virtual-meeting-silke/

How to record a presentation ahead of time: https://ativ.freshdesk.com/support/solutions/articles/24000054732

Guide for introductions: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/professional-keynote-intros-your-virtual-events-3-silke/?trackingId=z0RA4mph8ZJbOFaSC6b%2F4Q%3D%3D

Optimizing PDFs for online use (relevant for posters): https://ativ.freshdesk.com/support/solutions/articles/14475-optimizing-pdfs-for-mobile-use

Speaker setup video: https://vimeo.com/426002984/d562552461

Speaker training - Deadly Sins: https://vimeo.com/426034969/aaa7f983b1

Other Guides and Resources

Best Practices For Virtual Presentations: 15 Expert Tips That Work For Everyone: https://www.forbes.com/sites/maryabbajay/2020/04/20/best-practices-for-virtual-presentations-15-expert-tips-that-work-for-everyone/#42415f733d19

Virtual Presentation Tips: https://www.duarte.com/virtual-presentation-tips/

10 Tips For Giving Effective Virtual Presentations: https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/10-tips-giving-effective-virtual-presentations

9 Tips For Giving Engaging Virtual Presentations: https://pantheon.io/blog/tips-for-virtual-presentations

Tips for Creating a Virtual Presentation: https://www.stinsondesign.com/blog/virtual-presentation-tips