

The AOTA Presenter’s Handbook

Updated: December 2024

This handbook has been prepared to help you develop and present a successful presentation at AOTA INSPIRE | Annual Conference & Expo. The contents should assist you in providing participants with a positive, practical, educational experience and ensuring that your professionalism and expertise are appropriately presented.

Introduction

AOTA INSPIRE | Annual Conference & Expo offers learning and networking opportunities for occupational therapist practitioners and students. The sessions have been selected to represent current issues and to share best practices. The mix of general sessions and educational breakout sessions will allow attendees to customize their own experience and to leave the conference with knowledge and tools they can use immediately.

This handbook has been prepared to help you develop and present a successful presentation at AOTA INSPIRE | Annual Conference & Expo. The contents should assist you in meeting these goals:

- Provide participants with a positive, practical, education experience.
- Ensure that your professionalism and expertise are appropriately presented.

We strive for excellence in each of our programs, and we know you will too. Our staff is on hand to assist you in any way through all phases of program planning and implementation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call on us.

AOTA Conference Team

conference@aota.org

301-652-6611

<https://inspire.aota.org/>

Important Dates and Deadlines

Please send your questions to conference@aota.org. Include your session number and title in all e-mail inquiries. Regular updates to Primary Speakers will be provided over the next several months. Primary Speakers are responsible for forwarding the updates to any Additional Speakers in the session.

As a reminder from the Call for Papers instructions – all emails come from conference@aota.org. To ensure you receive all communication, please be sure to add this email to your approved senders list or have your IT department add it.

Important Dates to Remember

Week of December 16	Speaker Update Email on Registration and Hotels
Week of December 16	PowerPoint Template sent to all Institute, Short Course, Student, Workshop, & Clinical Application of Research Panel presenters
Week of January 13	Speaker Update Email on Conference Mobile App & Handouts
Week of January 20	Industry Partner Presentation upload email will be sent to all didactic sessions
February 3	Early Registration Ends
Week of February 10	Speaker Update Email on Room Setup & Presentations (different versions will be sent based on your type of session)
February 20	Presentations Upload Deadline on Industry Partner Site for all didactic sessions
February 27	Housing deadline

March 3	Accessibility services request due. Send email to conference@aota.org
March 3	Advance Registration Ends
March 7	Handouts Due
March 27	Speaker Update Email on Onsite Resources

Presentation Guidelines – All Session Types

Plan & Prepare

Know how much time you have for your presentation and plan accordingly. At AOTA INSPIRE | Annual Conference & Expo, sessions range from 20 minutes to a full day. The length of each session type is listed below:

- Institute – 6 hours (with a few requested exceptions)
- Workshop – 3 hours
- Posters – 2-hour block (see Poster Presenter Handbook)
- Short Course – 1 hour
- Clinical Application of Research Panel – 20 minutes with 10-minute Q&A session
- Student Sessions – 50 minutes
- Tech Labs – 1 hour

Be sure your presentation covers what your accepted abstract describes and that you address all your stated learning objectives. This information is in the app and what attendees are expecting when they arrive at your session.

Gear your presentation to the level (introductory, intermediate, or advanced) you identified in your proposal. However, don't EVER "speak down" to your audience. You are the identified expert, but your audience will listen more intently if they feel a collegial connection with you.

State your objectives in the beginning of your presentation and prepare concluding points for the end before questions and discussion.

The Message

Decide what your major point is and describe it in the first 2 to 3 minutes of your presentation. This is your essential message that will help your audience understand your presentation in terms of their own setting, patient population, or research interest.

The Context

Ground your message. Set your major point within a context by explaining where you work, your population-clients, literature review, or data collection procedures. Rather than giving detailed explanations, summarize the important variables you have used that help explain how you arrived at your major point.

Group your facts or points in small bundles with headings that can easily be understood and remembered. Turn a fact into a picture (with either a verbal description or a visual aid) to help the audience visualize what you are saying. Enumerate your points as you make them.

Expanding the Message

Describe your intervention, research project, or topic area in depth. What were its unique components or procedures? Don't "tell" the audience all about your topic; rather, think about what they would like to hear. The average conference attendee has 6 to 10 years of professional experience and wants to know about interventions that work or what is new on the horizon in terms of professional issues, assessment, intervention, and research.

Impact and Application

Use your last 5 minutes to emphasize how your procedures, data, or issues will influence the profession. If you have presented preliminary research data, tell the audience what comes next. This is your time to draw conclusions or speculate about what you did, analyzed, read, or experienced.

Because your goal is to interest your audience in your topic, be prepared for questions during the discussion period at the close of the presentations. Since these presentations often leave the audience “wanting more,” we suggest that you use the handouts to provide references with full citations and details on how you can be contacted for further information. Please see the section on handouts for the full requirements.

Involving the Audience

Although it is not realistic – nor is it expected – that all presentations be hands-on in nature, we recommend that you include some type of interactive component in your session. Our attendees tell us repeatedly that their preferred learning style is interactive. Some of our best, non-hands-on sessions are those in which participants are asked to take responsibility for some portion of their learning.

Involving the audience can be accomplished by providing participants with an opportunity to directly apply some of the principles they have been learning throughout the presentation to get immediate feedback from faculty and peers. A few examples include group discussion, case studies, demonstrations, simulation, role play, or a structured experiential learning activity. It is important for the presenter to determine the most appropriate methods for his or her session on the basis of material being presented and the size of the audience. A simple “show of hands” only takes 10 seconds and can connect you with your audience.

Large Groups

The large group is appropriate for guided group interaction, question-and-answer periods, feedback sessions, demonstrations, and audiovisual materials. When leading a guided discussion, the presenter should develop a list of questions or points that will stimulate the discussion of a specific topic.

Enriching information can be added to the session when participants are encouraged to share resources and experiences from their individual work environments. It is important to avoid recognizing the same individuals over and over and to encourage participation by as many people as possible. If the discussion begins to wander from the topic, you must redirect it. This is your responsibility.

As with other educational approaches, the discussion that follows should help participants integrate the exercise with the theme of the presentation. Large-group discussions should be guided with lead questions presented by the faculty.

Small Groups

Small-group sessions have proven to be highly successful in occupational therapy continuing education, and it is strongly suggested that the small-group size be 6 to 8 people. For these activities, it will be helpful to assign a group facilitator to foster the discussion and coordinate the report of the small group in the large-group format. It is helpful to describe the facilitator’s role to the entire group before the participants break into small groups.

Simulation Methods

When using audience participation in role-playing, games, or simulation exercises, it may take several forms – an activity done in groups or a demonstration in front of the audience, for example. Whatever form it takes, a good simulation experience requires that the purpose of the exercise be clear, the rules be defined, and the players be well versed on their contributions to the scene.

Case Studies

Case studies are very effective in highlighting, reinforcing, and integrating information that is being presented. They can be presented as either information verbal “examples” or more formal written scenarios of a particular case. Case studies can also be used to facilitate either small or large-group discussions or activities.

Questions and Answers

An easy and effective way to involve the audience is to open the dialogue between presenters and participants. Ask the group at the beginning of the presentation what they hope to gain from their attendance. Establish whether you will take questions spontaneously throughout the presentation or whether there will be a question-and-answer period at specific junctions. Make sure, however, that you build in time for questions and try incorporating some of the following techniques:

- Before your presentation, think about what questions might be asked; formulate brief, clear answers to each question and rehearse those answers.
- Develop some questions of your own to ask the audience in case the question-and-answer period begins slowly.
- Throughout your presentation ask questions of the group, even if they are only answering the questions in their minds as they listen to you. Ask questions like “Has anyone done this? How did it work for you?”
- During your presentation, answer questions to clarify ambiguities immediately. Postpone questions related to resolving individual or specific problems to the end of the session or to a private discussion later.
- Do not become involved in an extended dialogue with one person; take as many questions from as many listeners as possible.
- If someone asks a question that you cannot answer, you have several options:
 - Say that you will locate the answer and get back to them.
 - Suggest appropriate resources that will provide the answer.
 - Ask for suggestions from other members of the audience.

There are floor microphones in all the session rooms for attendees to ask questions as the facilitator you need to make sure they are being used. Always repeat the question, so that the entire audience hears and understands it; this also serves to refocus attention on you, the presenter. This is particularly important if there are people in the audience using augmented communication devices.

Presentation Tips

The average 8.5 x 11-inch page, typed, double-spaced with 1-inch margins contains 250 words. The average presenter can present approximately six of these pages in 12 minutes. Have text that is highly legible (double-spacing helps) with well-marked cues for visuals; number the pages to maintain your sequence while speaking.

So that everyone can benefit from your presentation, be sure to speak loudly and clearly into the microphone but not too fast. Describe visuals and always repeat all comments and questions into the microphone. The audience will appreciate if you look at them rather than at the screen or your paper. Shift your gaze to include everyone. Keep your hands away from your mouth so that people who speech-read can understand you. Use active words and short sentences. Words should reinforce visual material.

Preparing a PowerPoint Presentation

Slides are used for emphasizing key points simply and clearly in a presentation. They are not appropriate for detailed information. Your verbal explanation or additional resources should provide the detail.

General Guidelines

- The [AOTA PowerPoint template](#) is required for cohesion and accessibility for those with low vision. Do not make any changes to the pre-set font settings.
- Title slide should only include the number and title of your session. Presenter names should be on the second slide, we encourage you to include a photo for each presenter.
- Slide presentations should be well laid out and formatted, be visually appealing with the use of color, and present a professional image.

- Keep in mind that your information must be concise focus on summarizing the most notable aspects of the information for your presentation.
- Organize your presentation using headings followed by “bulleted” or numbered sub-points. Avoid using a narrative format for sub-points as this is difficult and lengthy to read.
- Create multiple slides for a section to keep the correct font size instead of shrinking the font to keep it on one slide.
- Limit each slide to one idea
- Bullets should be brief rather than a sentence (e.g., no more than 8 words). Go image heavy. It looks great and helps jolt your memory.
- Font size 36+: audience members will thank you.

Making Your Presentation Accessible

The most important aspect of an “accessible session” is a presenter who is responsive to the needs to each participant and takes the lead in creating a receptive and accommodating atmosphere. All participants should be afforded the same opportunities to benefit from the session and experiential activities.

AOTA has created an [INSPIRE 2025 Power Point template](#) that all speakers will be **REQUIRED** to use for their presentation for cohesion and accessibility for those with low vision.

Consider the following suggestions:

- Be aware of the audience. Be considerate of all participants and particularly aware of any people with disabilities in the audience and be responsive to their needs. Take time to observe the needs of your audience, and feel free to ask how you can best meet the needs of individual members of the audience as well as the audience as a whole.
- Be aware of the lighting. Make sure lights are not completely turned off, particularly if your session includes participants who use interpreters or have limited or low vision. Use dimmers or spotlighting, when possible, to adjust lighting and ensure that pathways and exits remain well lit.
- Be aware of the seating. AOTA ensures that designated seating is available for persons with hearing, vision, and mobility needs. Make sure participants who use interpreters can sit facing the presenter as well as the interpreter. Make sure participants who use recorders are near an electrical outlet. Allow adequate space for people in wheelchairs, scooters, or those using ambulatory aids. Ensure full access of all persons to the degree they wish to participate.
- Be aware of your presentation skills.
 - Speak clearly and at a moderate pace. This practice promotes understanding in the audience and allows sign language interpreters time to translate what you are saying.
 - Face the audience as much as possible. Avoid standing with your back to the audience or source of light. Speak directly into the microphone. Do not cover your mouth when speaking.
 - Clearly describe visual aids, including writing on slides, boards, and flipcharts. Be specific when referring to chart, numbers, demonstrations materials, and chalkboard or flipchart writing. Provide a verbal explanation of all visual materials used to illustrate the lecture. For example: “This slide covers these three key points...” “This graph illustrates these key points.”
 - Whenever possible, use captioned films or videotapes.
 - Repeat the questions and the comments of members of the audience in the session.
 - If present, make sure that sign language interpreters have a copy of your presentation before you begin. Always speak to the participants, not the interpreter.
- Be aware of written information. Consider bringing a few large-print copies of materials you plan to distribute for participants with visual impairments.

- Be aware of experiential activities. Make sure that everyone has a congenial partner or group and the opportunity to participate fully. Announce and provide a quiet area away from the large group or in the corner of the room for persons who have difficulties hearing within noisy environments or increased background noise.
- Be aware of the language. When speaking about people with disabilities, put the person first, not the disability (i.e., a child with hearing impairment rather than a deaf child or young man with T-1/2 spinal cord injury).

Handout Guidelines and Instructions

Please note: this information does not apply to Institute Presenters. You will receive additional guidance from AOTA in February 2025.

Every presenter is required to provide a handout to all conference attendees and still “go green”. Handouts are not provided on site; they will be uploaded through the submission platform and available for all attendees in the [Conference App](#).

Over 90% of the 2024 Conference survey respondents rated handouts as an important part of their overall Conference experience. We encourage you to provide the handout(s) before the March 7, 2025, deadline to allow attendees time to review them as they build their conference schedule. Please note: you can still upload handouts after the deadline.

Guidelines

- Only PDF files are accepted. Maximum of 3 files per presentation.
- File size should not exceed 5MB (Many factors contribute to file size such as image size, formatting, embedded media files).
- If you are providing your PowerPoint slides as the handout, please save them with **TWO** slides per page when converting the file to a PDF format. This reduces the number of printed pages but still allows the attendees to read the information on the slides.
- A session handout can be:
 - A full copy of the PowerPoint slides
 - A modified copy of the PowerPoint slides with proprietary slides removed
 - A list of resources
 - A summary of your presentation and learning objectives
 - Any helpful information that you audience can use after they leave your session
- Be sure to include your name, session number, and session title on all provided handouts.

Instructions for Uploading Your File(s)

All files will be uploaded through the [submission site](#). Only the primary speaker will have the ability to upload the handouts.

- Click on Conference Assignments under the AOTA INSPIRE 2025 section of the dashboard
- Click on the button that says “Submit Presentation”
 - First handout file you upload the button will be to the right of the session information box
 - Second and third handout file you upload the button will be at the bottom of the session information box
- If you need to edit or remove an uploaded handout, click on the Edit/Remove File hyper link next to the file name
 - Handouts are approved weekly.
 - If your handout has been approved you will not be able to edit. Email conference@aota.org to request the change.

Creating Your Handout

Use your best judgement, and whatever you decide to provide as the handout, use it to reinforce the information you present in a program. Handouts should supply the attendees with an outline of your salient points so they can follow the progression of your presentation.

Conference sessions are much different than classroom lectures or workshop presentations. Attendees are participating in a number of sessions over several days and are not able to delve into the material with the depth expected of single-topic presentations. Provide in the handout what is needed to clarify your presentation and perhaps resources for further discovery and your contact information in case someone desires more in-depth material(s) after the presentation.

Attendees are often looking for a copy of the presentation file in the handouts and it will require no additional work for you. Session handouts do not have to be your presentation file but do need to provide information that attendees can use when they return to their work setting. Informative handouts, uploaded early, can also boost your session attendance. Here are some ideas if you do not provide the presentation file:

- Presentation file with proprietary slides removed, such as ongoing data collection, forms you have created, etc.
- Synopsis or outline of your session
- List of resources, supporting documents or references
- Key points of your presentation
- List of action items to do before or after your session
- Get creative!

Some examples of information that might be appropriate for a handout include the following:

- Drawings, diagrams, or charts (Use only if unable to reproduce as an audiovisual.)
- Forms, checklists, or samples (Use if an audiovisual would be too detailed.)
- Glossaries or statistics (Use only if this information is critical in following your presentation.)
- Article reprints (Rarely necessary; interested persons can find this information from a reference.)
- Worksheets (If participants are asked to complete a worksheet, then provide it.)
- Bibliographies (These can be made available to those interested but are not necessary for all participants. Instruct attendees to contact you after the presentation for a Bibliography, if interested.)

Always number your handout pages for easy reference during your presentation and include your session name and number on all handouts.

All handouts will be posted to the AOTA Conference App and attendees will be able to access the handouts prior to and after the event. This way, all attendees will have access to all handouts. AOTA does not reimburse presenters for printing expenses.

Handout Accessibility

*If you provide a copy of the presentation file, the AOTA template already has set font sizes to help low vision attendees.

Individuals who are blind or have low vision may not be able to read standard sized print on your handouts. As your handouts are provided electronically in PDF format, attendees will not be able to make changes on an individual basis.

If you are providing an alternative handout:

- Print on single-sided 8.5 x 11" paper and stapled at the top left corner
- Use letter orientation, unless a visual element requires landscape orientation, to achieve maximum visibility

- Left justify all paragraphs and do not use columns
- Keep a one-inch margin on all sides
- Use 18-point font for all text, including body text, footers, page numbers, references, disclaimers, and labels on charts and graphs. Larger fonts may be used for headings.
- Use a bold serif font (such as Times New Roman) for body text and a bold simple sans-serif font (such as Arial) for headings and other information that is set apart from body text. Do not use any compressed fonts. Make lines heavy/thick in charts and graphs.
- Use a minimum of 1.5 line spacing; use double spacing when possible
- Do not use small caps, italics, or all caps for text. Use initial caps and lower case for titles and text
- Use underlining for emphasis instead of italics
- Delete decorative graphics that do not contribute to the meaning of the information being presented.

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Audio/Visual Equipment

AOTA offers a full complement of audiovisual equipment to session presenters. Each presentation room will be preset theater style with the following equipment:

- 1-LCD projector and screen
- 1-Laptop with DVD drive, Microsoft Office, audio, and hard-wired Internet
- 1-Handheld wireless podium microphone
- 1-Wired floor microphone
- 1-Wired head table microphone

Tech Lab Stations will be equipped with the following:

- 1-65" monitor on Floor Stand with Shelf and HDMI input
- 1-Laptop Computer connected to dedicated wireless network

Video

Be sure to preview the videos, set up any additional AV equipment, move the video to the starting point, and prepare to troubleshoot or move into another form of presenting the material if the video or link to video should malfunction. AV equipment is available in the Speakers' Concierge.

When using video, if sound quality is poor, be prepared to mute the sound and provide a narration of what participants are viewing.

After the audiovisual piece, move right into audience reaction/participation to integrate the content with other segments of the session. Help participants focus on the themes relevant to the topic at hand.

Accessible PowerPoint Presentations

PowerPoint presentations are commonly used among session presenters as an effective way to display ideas and data. Because PowerPoint is a visual media, presenters should be sure to make presentations accessible to all audience members.

Text content:

- Title and text fonts have been pre-set in the AOTA template. Please refer to the How to Use This Template slides in the download.
- Don't try to cram too many slides into your presentation. Allow your audience time to read slides.
- Place no more than 6 lines of text on a slide (excluding columns).

- Many people with disabilities use text-based screen reading software and computer devices. Note that graphics often cannot be read with screen readers and other text-based devices.

Graphic content:

- Replace graphics with text whenever possible.
- If graphics are used, include a detailed explanation of the meaning of those charts or graphic in a descriptive text-only slide included immediately after the graphic slide. Note that the meaning of the graphic is needed, not a description. For example:
 - No: “Chart with blue and red bars.”
 - Yes: “Data from this chart illustrates that people with disabilities report spending more time in the emergency room than people without disabilities.”

Avoid:

- Slide transitions
- Busy slide backgrounds
- Chart filter patterns
- Over-crowding text
- Color schemes providing low contrast
- Charts without text descriptions
- Videos that are not captioned

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Speaker Concierge Service

Prior to conference, you will upload your presentation for approval to our AV partner’s site. By uploading your file ahead of time, your presentation will be loaded onto the computer when you arrive to your session. Instructions will be emailed to all primary presenters in January. As a reminder, this is separate from the [handouts](#) that will be uploaded for the app.

The speaker concierge will be in the Pennsylvania Convention Center, the specific room will be available in the [Conference App](#). Please note the hours below. AV staff will be available if you need technical assistance with your presentation.

Speaker Concierge Hours

Wednesday, April 2, 2025	10:00 am-6:00 pm
Thursday, April 3, 2025	6:45 am-5:00 pm
Friday, April 4, 2025	7:00 am-5:00 pm
Saturday, April 5, 2025	7:30 am-2:00 pm

The AOTA Speaker Services team will be available for the following:

- Review your presentations with one of our technical staff to verify function and completeness prior to your session.
- Upload changes to presentations onsite: you must go to the Speaker Concierge no later than the afternoon before your scheduled morning presentation or the morning of your afternoon presentation.

Speaker Agreement

The following policies were agreed upon during the submission process under Policies Governing Accepted Proposals. Certain sections that apply to the submission process only have been removed.

Handouts

Session handouts are an important part of session attendees' overall Conference experience and serves as a resource after the participant leaves your session. If my proposal is accepted, I will make every effort to upload a handout for attendees by the suggested deadline of late-February 2025 to allow attendees time to review them as they build their conference schedule. NOTE: Handout does not need to be a copy of the session slides or actual poster.

Schedule

AOTA reserves the right to assign the day and time that accepted proposals will be scheduled. In addition, AOTA reserves the right to publish any submission, in whole or in part, in any form by any printed, visual, electronic, or auditory means.

Registration

All OT, OTA, and student speakers whose proposals are accepted for presentation must register for at least one day of the conference.

Promotion is Prohibited

The exclusive promotion or sale of goods, services, or products during educational sessions at conference is prohibited. Speakers who are found to be engaging in such practices will have their sessions halted.

Copyrights, Royalties, and Trademarks

Speaker warrants that no literary or artistic work or other property protected by copyright will be performed, reproduced, or used, nor will the name of any entity protected by trademark be reproduced or used by Speaker during your speech and presentation (including but not limited to any exhibits, movie clips, videos, graphics) unless Speaker has obtained written permission from the copyright or trademark holder. Speaker covenants to comply strictly with all laws respecting copyright, royalties, and trademarks. Speaker shall indemnify and hold AOTA, its officers, agents, and employees harmless from all claims, losses, and damages (including court costs and attorney fees) with respect to any such copyright, royalty, or trademark rights.

Audiovisual

Each presentation room will be preset with the following equipment:

- 1-Laptop with DVD drive, Microsoft Office, audio, hard-wired Internet, and audio amplified to audience
- 1-Handheld wireless podium microphone
- 1-Wired floor microphone
- 1-Wired head table microphone
- 1-LCD projector and screen

Continuing Education

All presenters will receive a CE letter for presenting. The CE letter will be sent via email after conference to all speakers and authors on the session. If you need to update the speakers/authors, email conference@aota.org.

This is a separate record from your CE transcript for the sessions you attend. You will not need to add the session(s) you present to your CE transcript. The CE letter will include the session number, title, and date/time for presenter verification.

If you have any questions regarding amount of credit earned for presentation, please contact your state licensure board.

Copyright Information

You, the presenter, are responsible for securing copyright permission for any and all copyright-protected material(s). This is not only AOTA's policy, it's the law.

Presenter warrants that no literary or artistic work or other property protected by copyright will be performed, reproduced, or used, not will the name of any entity protected by trademark be reproduced or used by Presenter during your speech and presentation (including but not limited to any exhibits, movie clips, videos, graphics) unless Presenter has obtained written permission from the copy right or trademark holder. Presenter covenants to comply strictly with all laws respecting copyright, royalties, and trademarks. Presenter shall indemnify and hold AOTA, its officers, agents, and employees harmless from all claims, losses, and damages (including court costs and attorney fees) with respect to any such copyright, royalty, or trademark rights. Visit www.copyright.com

Inclusive Language

All presenters should use person first language at all times during their presentation. This means that the person is emphasized first, and the disability noted second. For example:

- Use: person with a disability Not: disabled person
- Use: woman who is blind Not: blind woman

Presentation Resources

[AOTA Official Documents](#)

[AOTA Practice Guidelines](#)