



AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

AAS Press Conferences in a Nutshell

1. Make sure your institutional public-information officer (PIO) knows that you're participating in a briefing at the AAS meeting. They will likely offer to help you prepare your presentation, appropriate graphics and other supporting materials, and a press release. (If they don't offer such help, ask for it!)
2. Please email your mobile phone number to press@aaas.org at your earliest convenience.
3. We use the same Speaker Ready system for briefings that we use for regular oral sessions, so you should upload your briefing presentation following the instructions on the meeting website or bring your presentation on a USB thumb drive to the Speaker Ready room at least an hour before the briefing.
4. Plan to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the scheduled start time of your briefing to accommodate our AV technicians and our AAS photographer, who will shoot a group photo before the briefing begins.
5. The purpose of a press conference is to get journalists interested in writing a story — it isn't to tell them the whole story. We'll have X (3 to 5) presenters, and each should speak for at most 30/X minutes (e.g., 7 or 8 minutes for 4 presenters). The briefings should take less than 30 minutes, followed by up to 30 minutes of Q&A, for a total briefing time of no more than 1 hour.
6. All presenters will sit at a table (usually on a raised platform) at the front of the room; in front of each seat will be a tent card giving that speaker's name and affiliation. There will be several microphones on the table to be shared among the speakers during the Q&A, and another on a podium equipped with a laptop computer loaded with the presentations. Slides will appear on large TVs or a projector screen.
7. You should encapsulate your presentation in no more than 6 to 8 PowerPoint or Keynote slides — 1 for the background, 2 or 3 for the results, 2 or 3 for the implications (as appropriate), and 1 with a recap/summary of your results and conclusions. Slides should be formatted 16:9, not 4:3.
 - Don't use the same slides for the briefing that you're using in your scientific talk or on your poster — the audience is different (journalists, not specialists in your area of research).
 - Please put your name, affiliation, and a title for your presentation on the first slide. It's OK to list a few key collaborators, but don't list a large team. At the bottom of that first slide, please also give your email address and, if willing, your cell-phone number.
 - Because some reporters may arrive late or may not copy the info from your first slide, it's a good idea to repeat your contact info at the end of your final slide.
8. The AAS Press Officer, AAS Deputy Press Officer, or AAS Media Fellow will open and moderate the briefing, perhaps make some announcements, and introduce the topic and speakers. Then each speaker will give their presentation, one after the other, at the podium, advancing the slides themselves. After the last presentation the moderator will call for questions from the in-room and online audiences.
9. Off-site reporters will participate remotely via a live streaming webcast. It is thus essential that you always speak into a microphone. Similarly, you must NOT use a laser pointer, because remote participants can't see it. To refer to a particular feature on one of your slides, point with the computer's cursor (if it shows on the screen; sometimes it doesn't) or describe the feature's location and appearance in words, e.g., "The new planet is the faint yellow dot at lower right."

Nutshell document prepared by former AAS Press Officer Rick Fienberg.

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