



AAZK Resources: Presenting at an AAZK National Conference

This document is intended to provide guidance on the submission process for papers and posters and presentation guidelines for AAZK National Conferences.

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General Format of an AAZK National Conference

Note: specific schedules and program offerings may change from year to year. This is only a general guideline of what to expect.

Duration

- AAZK National Conferences span four days of programming. Additional events outside of programming may include opportunities for Pre and/or Post trips, an Icebreaker the evening before the first day of programming, and a final banquet the last night of programming.

Format

- Three days of “classroom” programming, to last no more than 8 hours each day (not including breaks)
- One “Zoo Day” where attendees visit the Conference Host Facility
- Evening events such as Poster Author Session, Silent Auction, Conservation Rally, Awards Ceremony, and the Q & AAZK session
- Classroom Programming takes place in the hotel’s large event space (Ballroom) and in several smaller meeting rooms (Breakout Rooms)

Schedule

- Classroom Programming Days are generally broken up into Morning Sessions and Afternoon Sessions. Each Session usually has a break in the middle, and there is a meal break between the Morning and Afternoon sessions
- Morning Sessions are designated to Paper Sessions in the main ballroom. There may also be concurrent papers in the breakout rooms.
- Afternoon Sessions are designated for Workshop Sessions. There is usually one workshop scheduled in the Ballroom for general attendance, and smaller workshops taking place concurrently in the breakout rooms.

Notes for Presenters

- Paper presentations almost always happen in the Morning Sessions. If you are presenting a Paper, your scheduled time will be in the morning.
- Workshops are almost always scheduled for the Afternoon Sessions. If you are a Workshop presenter, you will be scheduled for the afternoon.
- If you are presenting a poster, it will be displayed throughout the conference. The Poster Author Session is a time for authors to be present at their poster and answer questions from conference attendees. The timing of the Poster Session varies according to the conference schedule and available space.
- Depending on the number of submissions and available space, it is possible that there may be some papers in the afternoon and some workshops in the morning. This will be discussed between authors and the PDCM (Professional Development and Conference Manager) prior to a finalized schedule.

Types of Presentations

Paper Manuscript and Paper Presentation

- Description
 - Scientific paper outlining a specific study, husbandry procedure, conservation initiative, or other topic relevant to the animal care industry or AAZK.
 - Verbal presentation on the paper topic with visual aides such as PowerPoint.

What to Expect *See section Presenting at a Conference for further details*

- Paper abstracts are submitted to PDCM by the deadline
 - Upon acceptance, full manuscript is submitted to PDCM by the deadline
 - Conference schedule is created and authors notified of presentation time
 - Presentations are 15 minutes with 5 minutes for questions
 - Presentation files are due to the conference host/hotel AV at conference registration
 - At the presentation time, a host will introduce each presenter, and a moderator will help keep time and assist with audience questions. The host and moderator may be the same person or different people.
 - There is a Paper of the Year Award given at the conference. Conference attendees will vote on their favorite paper. Award will be given at the closing banquet.
- Requirements
 - Abstracts are no more than 250 words
 - The full manuscript must be provided to PDCM for the Conference Proceedings
 - Presentations must have a digital visual element such as PowerPoint, Google Slides, Canva, etc.

Topical Workshop

- Description
 - Workshops are in-depth explorations of a specific topic relating to the animal care field.
 - Each workshop is 2 hours in length. If more time is required, a second 2 hour time slot can be requested.
- Open Attendance
 - Workshop will be held in the main ballroom, with unlimited attendance. This works best for lecture style workshops or panel discussions with multiple presenters.
- Limited Attendance
 - Workshop will be held in a smaller breakout room. Participation is limited to 50-60 people. This format is best for workshops with interactive components and small-group activities.
- What to Expect

See section Presenting at a Conference for further details

 - Abstracts are submitted to PDCM by the deadline. Presenters should request Open or Limited Attendance.
 - Conference schedule is created and presenters notified of workshop time slot
 - Presentation files should be given to conference host/hotel AV at conference registration
 - There will be a moderator for each workshop. Duties include keeping time, assisting the presenters, assisting with audience questions, and taking attendance in Limited workshops.
- Requirements
 - Abstracts are no more than 250 words, and should indicate Open or Limited Attendance requests
 - Final presentation slides are due to PDCM by deadline, for inclusion in the conference proceedings

Posters

- Description
 - A scientific poster outlining a specific study, husbandry procedure, conservation initiative, or other topic relevant to the animal care industry or AAZK.
- What to Expect

See section Poster Author Session for further details

 - Abstract submission to PDCM by the deadline
 - Upon acceptance, a digital copy of the poster due to PDCM by the deadline
 - Poster session will be scheduled and communicated to all poster presenters
 - Poster will be turned in to conference host at the Registration table for display
 - At the poster session, authors will stand by their poster and answer attendee questions
 - There is a Poster of the Year Award given at the conference. In order to be eligible for the award, posters must be displayed by a designated time before the Poster Author Session, so that they can be scored by the conference attendees. Award will be given at the closing banquet.
- Requirements
 - Abstracts no more than 250 words
 - Digital copy of poster must be provided to PDCM for the conference proceedings
 - Hard copy of the poster must be provided for the Poster Session. Poster guidelines for size will be provided by PDCM.
 - Poster authors must be present at the Poster Author Session.

Submission Process

Check Abstract Submission Dates

All dates are 11:59 Eastern Standard Time (EST). Adjust accordingly for other timezones.

- Workshops
 - January 15th of the Conference Year
- Papers and Posters
 - May 1st of the Conference Year

Submit Title and Abstract

- Send your completed Title and Abstract to pdcaazk.org by the deadline. It is suggested to send in the document at least a week in advance, to account for additional information that may be requested.
- Upon submission of the abstract, you should receive an email confirming your submission was received and giving additional information, including the date which you should expect to hear about acceptance.
- Note: all submissions to AAZK should go through your facility's approval procedure for publication. This includes photos or other proprietary information.

Confirm Acceptance and Scheduled Time

- Once the deadline has passed, abstracts will be reviewed and scored
- If your abstract is accepted, you will receive a digital letter indicating your acceptance.
- If your abstract is declined, you will also receive a digital letter confirmation
- You will receive additional information via email regarding the date and time of your presentation.

Submit Final Materials

As an accepted paper/poster/workshop author, you will receive detailed instructions from the PDCM (Professional Development and Conference Manager) about materials submission. Please follow those instructions. This is only a general overview of what can be expected.

- Conference Program Materials

The Conference Proceedings is a digital document that contains full paper manuscript, final poster PDFs and all Topical Workshop slides presented at the conference. This document is intended to be a reference for all conference attendees to take back to their institutions. In order for it to be available to conference attendees at the conference, it needs to be created and edited ahead of time. This is why the submission deadline is 4-8 weeks before the actual conference.

 - Papers
 - Digital copy of the paper due by *August 1st* of Conference Year.
 - Posters
 - Digital copy of poster due by *August 1st* of the Conference Year
 - Workshop
 - Presentation slides due by *August 1st* of the Conference Year
- At the Conference
 - Papers/Workshops
 - Presentation materials for Papers and Topical Workshops will need to be submitted to the Host Chapter at check in at registration for the conference. You may be asked to submit your presentation materials directly to the hotel IT staff or media company that is running AV for the conference.
 - Please submit via a USB drive. It is recommended that the drive contains only your presentation materials on it, to make it easier for the IT person to find the correct file/s, and to avoid losing other important information that may be stored on the drive.
 - Make sure that the copy you submit is the most updated file, and bring a backup if possible.
 - While all graphics and videos should be embedded into your presentation, it is also a good idea to save them as a separate file on the same drive, in case they do not work during the presentation.
 - Posters
 - A printed copy of your poster must be submitted to the Host Chapter at the registration table prior to the opening session of the conference. Posters will be mounted and displayed throughout the conference.

Creating an Abstract

How to Write an Abstract

An effective abstract has several parts:

- The title should be simple and instantly deliver the main theme of the submission
- The first sentence announces the topic and implies the question/s underlying the submission
- A few sentences describe historical or current practices and knowledge
- A few sentences that outline the procedures and goals of the submission
- The last sentence indicates the overall “take home” lesson

Abstracts should be a very concise summary of the main points of the material for submission. Some topics to cover include:

- How the topic fits into the broader knowledge base
- The contribution to the field
- Research strategy, especially if innovative
- Key findings
- Broader implications and/or future investigation

Your abstract will help the Scoring Committee determine how relevant, valuable, and interesting the material will be to conference attendees. It needs to cover all the information necessary to make these decisions.

Scoring Criteria

- Topic relevance to the animal care field and AAZK
- Innovation or unique applications
- Problem-solving- addresses an industry challenge
- “Take-home value” - information applicable to other institutions

Workshop Organization

Define Your Audience

- Who is going to find this information useful?
 - Keepers of specific taxa
 - AAZK Chapter leaders and members
 - Larger or smaller facilities
 - Zoo specialties such as education, behavioral, nutrition, vet tech, etc.
- What level of previous knowledge do they need?
 - Beginner/new keepers/non-keepers
 - Advanced/experienced keepers
- How large is the audience?
 - Limited Attendance (50-60)
 - Open Attendance (unlimited)

Define Your Goals

- Disseminate Information
- Networking and discussion opportunities
- Create physical objects
- Teach techniques and/or action steps for attendees to use at their own facilities

Create an Outline

Provide descriptions of activities, discussions, and visual aids needed under each main topic or sub-topic heading

- Main topics – list 3-5 main topic headings
 - List out sub-topics that fall under each heading
 - Estimate the time each topic will take
- Activities and Discussions
 - Description of each activity
 - Group size
 - Materials needed
 - Expected outcomes
- Supplemental Materials
 - Paper handouts
 - Whiteboards or large pads of paper
 - Example objects

Visual Presentation

- Presentation or similar presentation program
- See Digital Presentation Organization for more tips on creating an effective presentation
- When there are multiple authors in a workshop, they should collaborate on a single PPT presentation whenever possible to avoid time spent on transitioning from one PPT to another.
- If separate Presentations are ideal, make sure all presenters have their material in to the AV person and that this person understands that these presentations are batched together.

Writing a Paper

For an additional resource on writing papers, visit the AAZK website for the [AKF Submission Guidelines](#). If you follow this format, your paper will also be ready for submission to the Animal Keeper's Forum!

Formatting

- Voice
 - The general advice for a scientific paper is to avoid using first person language. "Enrichment was given daily at 9 A.M." vs "We gave enrichment daily at 9 A.M."
- Manuscript guidelines (*from the AAZK Paper Submission Guidelines document*)
 - Use a clear, clean typeface. Suggested type fonts are 12-point Times New Roman.
 - Body of the manuscript should be single-spaced.
 - Do not indent paragraphs.
 - Double space between paragraphs.
 - Use a 1-inch margin setting on top, bottom and sides of your manuscript.
 - **Boldface** or underline subheadings within the text (i.e., Introduction, Materials, Methods, Discussion, etc.) Do not use all caps for these headings.
 - Manuscript should include all tables, graphs, and illustrations within the text; not as separate attachments.
- File format
 - Preferred format is a PDF file, but a Microsoft Word file can also be used.
- Use of scientific names
 - Should be included with their common names when first mentioned, and only the common name thereafter.
 - When both the common and scientific name are given as a paragraph heading, put the common name first.
- Use of specific products
 - Identify Registered or Trademark products by ® or ™ symbols respectively.
 - If there is a Products Mentioned in the Text section, please include the full name and address of the manufacturer of the product, including website or email address if available.

Organization

- Title
 - Should be brief and descriptive.
 - Center the title on the first page of the paper directly before the introduction and text. Type size for title should be no larger than 16-point.
 - Follow the title with author name, position, facility, city and state as shown below:
Jane Smith, Keeper II
Best Zoological Park
Anywhere, Allstates
 - Author information should be in 14-point type, Italics.
- Abstract
- Introduction
 - Introduce facility and relevant participants (people and animal)
 - History of the program or target animal
 - Previous research and background knowledge that readers need to have to understand the overall process.
 - State the problem or challenge to be solved

- Methods
 - Summarize the methods and procedures used in paragraph form
 - Pictures and tables can be used if part of the “how to”
- Results
 - Chose the most appropriate method for reporting your results
 - Charts, graphs, tables
 - Pictures
 - Paragraphs
- Discussion/Conclusions
 - Restate the original problem or challenge
 - Discuss the results
 - Provide an explanation for results, referencing past knowledge and background, new lessons learned, and how the methods lead to the outcomes
 - State the ways in which the process could have gone more smoothly, or possible additions or subtractions for the future
 - State direction for further study, or next steps in the procedure
 - Identify how this information fits into the general body of knowledge

Citing Sources

- There should be a “References” or “Sources Cited” section at the end of the paper
- There is no AAZK requirement for format used for source citing. The recommended format is to use MLA for References, and to use the (Author, Year) format in the body of the text. The format used is not as important as being consistent across all references.
- Cite all background information that is not “common knowledge”. Common knowledge in this case refers to what the general public would know, not what it considered “common knowledge” for industry peers.
- Both paraphrases and direct quotes must be cited
- Cite all graphics used as resources

Charts, Graphs, and Images

- Must have a 1-2 sentence caption beneath each item
- Label charts, graphs, and images in a consistent way.
 - Table - list of numbers or text in columns
 - Figure - visual representation of results (charts, graphs, pictures)
 - Use “Figure 1,2,3...” for all figures, or use “Graph 4” “Image 2” to differentiate different kinds of figures. Be consistent!
- Figures should be inserted into the manuscript so they are on the same page as the written text where they are referenced, ideally at the end of the sentence or paragraph
- Double check that all tables and figures included with your manuscript are properly referenced within the manuscript text.

Creating a Poster

For an excellent resource on Scientific Poster creation, please visit the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#).

Poster authors will also receive detailed guidelines on poster size and content upon abstract acceptance.

Distillation of Information

- What is the most important or fascinating thing about the information I'm presenting?
- Who is my audience, and what do they want to know?
- How is this relevant to the field?
- Can my audience get all relevant information from just the poster, without the author being present?

Visual Basics

- Important information should be readable from about 10 feet away
- All information should be readable from 3 feet away
- Use lists, tables, and bullets instead of blocks of text whenever possible
- Use graphics, pictures, and graphs whenever possible
- Consistent and clean layout, using color to create visual interest

Content

- Title is short and draws interest
- 1-2 sentence abstract; not the whole thing!
- Word count of about 300 to 800 words
- Text is clear and to the point
- Includes acknowledgments, your name and institutional affiliation

Design and Printing

- What to use
 - Microsoft PowerPoint®
 - Adobe Acrobat®
 - Canva®
 - Other
- Save the file as a PDF for submission and printing
- Where to print
 - Your facility's graphics department
 - Office supply stores (Office Max, Staples, etc)
 - Photo Print departments (Walgreens, etc)
 - Shipping Stores (UPS, FedEx, etc)
 - Local Print Shops
- Don't forget a tube for storage and transport

Poster Awards

- Conference delegates will vote to select the Poster of the Year using the conference app
- Posters that do not meet size requirements or submission deadlines will not be eligible for voting
- Posters will be reviewed and voted on based on the following suggested criteria:
 - Overall organization
 - Graphics
 - Readability
 - Innovation
 - Problem solving
 - Education and “take home value”
- Poster of the Year Award will be announced during the Conference Banquet on the final evening of the conference, posted on AAZK Social Media, and published in the AKF

Poster Author Session

The poster author session is generally held in the evening, prior to or concurrent with other evening programming. All poster authors are required to attend this session. The poster session allows authors and delegates to discuss ideas, content, and experiences. Poster authors will be introduced by the AAZK PDCM at the beginning of the session.

Poster Presentation Tips

- What to Expect
 - Posters will be mounted on a wall or displayed on an easel (provided). Room organization and flow will be determined by the space
 - Authors will stand off to the side of their posters to allow viewers access to them
 - Viewers generally stand 3 feet away from a poster to read it
- Preparation
 - Print out a few copies of the poster and any supplemental information or references
 - Carry contact information or business cards
 - Dress to impress, business casual recommended
 - Arrive early, and plan to stay for the whole session
- Engagement
 - Greet all viewers as they approach
 - Prepare a one or two sentence “pitch” about your poster topic
 - Allow viewers time to read your entire poster before further engagement; silence is OK!
 - Don’t be discouraged if viewers walk away without further engagement; not every poster subject is relevant or interesting to every viewer
 - If you are in conversation with a viewer, it’s fine to make eye contact or briefly greet new viewers to acknowledge their presence. Poster Author Sessions are designed to be quick conversations with a way to follow up with authors if more in-depth discussions are desired.

Digital Presentation Organization

Visual Basics

- Use a consistent design template. Slide organization can change for visual interest, but colors and background designs should be the same throughout the presentation
- Choose a simple and clear font
 - Select a single sans-serif font such as Arial or Helvetica, as they are easier to read.
 - Use no font size smaller than 24 point
- Use solid background colors. Patterns or pictures in the background produce visual confusion
- Make sure there is high contrast between the background color and the words
- Use as few words as possible to get the point across
- Make sure figures and images are as clear as possible, and sized appropriately

Transitions and Effects

- Minimize slide transitions that “fade” or “fly” in.
- Overuse of sounds or animations may appear “cutesy” or “gimmicky”
- If you use builds (lines of text appearing each time you click the mouse), have content appear on the screen in a consistent, simple manner; from the top or left is best.

Slide Content

- Avoid paragraphs and complete sentences. Use words and phrases to make your points
- Use tables, graphs, and pictures when possible to portray information
- Limit your slides to five lines of text
- Don't use your slides as speaker's notes
- Put contact information on the last slide of the presentation. This will be the slide that remains up as you answer questions, which gives audience members time to note it if they'd like more information. This slide can also contain Thank You's and Acknowledgements.

Video and Other Media

- Embed the video into the Presentation file. If done correctly, the video will be “saved” in the presentation and should work with a simple click. There are many online tutorials available to guide you through this process.
- Save a copy of the video onto the same USB as your presentation file. If the embedded video doesn't work, you will still be able to play it from the file.
- Videos embedded from YouTube or another online source will need the internet to play in your presentation. It is not guaranteed that the conference room will have the appropriate internet speeds to connect, so consider downloading and saving the video.

Presenting at Conference - What to Expect

Paper Session

- Each paper session may have 4-6 presenters in 20 minute slots
- The session host will announce each presenter by their name and institution, and read the title of the presentation
- The IT tech should have your presentation pulled up on the screen and ready to start
- There will be a podium with a microphone, which should be On.
- There may be a remote control for the slide presentation, or you may have to use the computer to advance your slides.
- There will be a time-keeper in the front row of the audience. This person will flash cards to let you know how much time has passed.
- The presentation time should be 15 minutes, followed by 5 minutes for audience questions
- During the question and answer portion, session moderators will assist with audience members with questions
- Paper presenters are encouraged to remain in the ballroom after the session, or in the break area, so that people who have additional questions can find them to network.

Workshop Session

Open Attendance Workshops

- Held in the Ballroom - microphone and remote set-up will be the same as paper sessions
- The main Ballroom will usually have a dedicated IT person to cue up PPTs and deal with sound issues
- There will be a moderator in the room. They will assist with audience questions during Q&A sessions and keep track of time so that the session ends on time. There will not be a timekeeper for each individual presentation if there are multiple authors.
- There may be a session host who will introduce the workshop and the authors.

Limited Attendance Workshops

- Held in Breakout Rooms - there may be a microphone available but presenters may choose not to use it
- There may not be an IT person in each individual room, so tech issues may take longer to resolve
- There will be a room moderator. They will take attendance at the door, and make sure the session ends on time
- The moderator may act as a session host and make introductions, or introductions may be left to the Presenters

Presenting in Front of an Audience

Practicing Your Presentation

- Decide on paper notes or using the speaker notes feature in the presentation application
- Run through your presentation out loud a few times - reading in your head is always faster than speaking out loud
- Run through your presentation in front of a friend or coworker and ask for feedback
 - Is all the information clear?
 - Does the flow make sense?
 - Am I speaking too fast or too slow? Too quietly?
 - Is there anything missing I should add?
 - Is there anything I could cut out?
 - Do my pictures and figures make sense and are easy to read?
 - Did I make it in the time allowed?
- If you tend to run over time, note a few slides where you could shorten your notes or move through quickly in real time, in case you need to speed things up in the middle of your presentation
- If there are multiple authors, discuss transitions from author to author. Will you add a slide to introduce the new author? Do you need to switch to a completely different presentation? Can you have a Q&A session or an activity to keep the audience occupied through the transition?

Presentation Time

- Dress should be business-casual for your presentation
- Check to make sure you have all your paper notes and other relevant materials
- Arrive early to the session
 - Check in with the session moderator
 - Familiarize yourself with the microphone, computer, and all presentation tech (remotes, pointers, etc)
 - Check in with the IT person, or check to make sure that your presentation is functional on the provided computer
 - Set up any visual aids or activity stations
 - Check in with other authors if applicable
- After you are introduced, take some time to adjust your microphone to a comfortable level, and orient yourself to the computer or remote. A few seconds of orientation will save time and stumbling later as you start speaking, and allow the audience to hear you clearly
- Since you have already been introduced, you do not need to repeat that information; you can choose another greeting for your audience. It is also acceptable to re-state your paper title.
- DO NOT READ OFF THE SCREEN. There should be a laptop on the podium that will display your presentation and speaker notes. A quick glance at the screen is acceptable to make sure that your slide is accurate and matches what you are talking about, but the majority of your time should be spent looking ahead to your audience and speaking directly into the microphone.
- If you are someone who likes to move around while speaking, inquire about using a hand-held microphone instead of a static one, so that you can keep it close to your mouth during the whole presentation
- Pay attention to your pace. If you are prone to speeding up when nervous, slow down! Take a pause between slides, and don't forget to breathe
- Watch your time-keeper to make sure you are on time. If you are falling behind, you can quickly transition through slides that only contain pictures. Your graphs and charts should be in your paper manuscript in the Conference Proceedings that is available to all attendees.

- At the end of your presentation, thank your audience. Sometimes they will applaud between the presentation and the Q&A, and sometimes they will hold applause until after the Q&A
- During the Q&A, answer questions concisely as possible to allow time for all questions
 - If you don't know the answer, that is totally fine. Do not make up answers if you don't have them
 - If the answer to the question is complicated and will take a long time, offer to continue the discussion during the break, or via email, so you can move on to other questions
- After the Q&A, thank your audience again and exit the stage.
- After the session or during the break, stay in the area so that people can find you to discuss your presentation or get further contact information

Disclaimer of Liability and Endorsement:

The American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) strives to make the information on our website, website links, social media communications and publications as timely and accurate as possible. AAZK makes no claims, promises, or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the contents of said information, and expressly disclaims liability for errors and omissions in the contents of the information. No warranty of any kind, implied, expressed, or statutory, including but not limited to the warranties of non-infringement of third party rights, title, merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose or freedom from computer virus, is given with respect to the contents of this website or its links to other Internet resources.