

Student Recommendations for Better REACH Projects and Presentations

In May 2019, on their end-of-year surveys, students were asked ““If you were to give your presentation or poster in public in the future, how would you make it better?” Five themes emerged from the 170 comments students wrote about how their research projects and presentations could have been improved. Students working on their spring 2022 REACH research might want to take advantage of these great ideas stated here as recommendations for new students:

- Choose a topic and question you find truly interesting and important – this will make the time and effort you spend on the research project more fun and more personally valuable and fulfilling.
- Begin by finding and reading more background information on your chosen topic, to become well informed about what is already known while designing, conducting and presenting your own new research.
- Collect more data in your research project – plenty of trials and data points! – in order to have more detailed and reliable findings to analyze, interpret and report.
- Put serious time and effort into polishing the mechanics (spelling, grammar, etc.) and visual appeal of your poster or presentation – make something you are proud to present!
- Practice giving your presentation (and/or gain other public speaking experience) before the event in order to become more relaxed and confident about presenting in public.

On choosing a good topic and starting out by understanding what is already known about it, typical student comments were “I would spend more time on it and do an experiment I care about;” “I would do a different experiment that is actually a health problem the world faces;” “I would go further into depth on research before and after the studies to find out what was important;” and “I would research my topic more before making up the experiment.”

The single most common student recommendation (from 42 students) was to gather more data: “I would do more data points and I definitely would add more days to the research,” “I would run the test for longer” and “I would run more trials to collect more data” were typical comments. One student offered several of these ideas at once: “I would spend more time on data collection and being more thoughtful towards the procedure. Doing this would ensure more conclusive and reliable results.”

Hopefully these ideas from past students will be useful as 2022 students design, conduct and present their own REACH research projects.