



Top Teaching Tips for Faculty Success

Creating Memorable, Engaging, and Impactful Learning Experiences

Welcome

Thank you for serving as faculty at ACR Convergence!

Every year, attendees come to ACR Convergence to learn from leaders in rheumatology, gain practical insights they can apply to their work, and engage in meaningful discussions with colleagues. As faculty, your role extends beyond presenting information. You are creating a learning experience that can influence clinical practice, research, education, and patient care.

The most highly rated sessions are not necessarily those with the most slides, the most data, or the most complicated graphics. They are the sessions that help attendees understand key concepts, engage with the material, participate in meaningful discussions, and leave with practical ideas they can apply after the meeting.

The following tips reflect educational best practices and strategies consistently associated with successful Convergence presentations.

Tip #1: Start with Clear Learning Objectives and End with Key Takeaways

One of the simplest and most effective ways to improve learning is to clearly communicate what attendees should learn and then reinforce those lessons before they leave.

Begin with Learning Objectives

Include a dedicated learning objectives slide near the beginning of your presentation.

Effective learning objectives help attendees:

- Understand the purpose of the session.
- Focus on the most important concepts.

- Recognize what knowledge or skills they should gain.
- Monitor their own learning throughout the presentation.

Examples of Strong Learning Objectives

- ✓ Apply evidence-based treatment strategies for patients with early rheumatoid arthritis.
- ✓ Identify common barriers to timely diagnosis.
- ✓ Compare benefits and limitations of emerging therapeutic approaches.

Strong objectives generally focus on actions attendees can perform after participating in the session.

End with Key Takeaways

Conclude your presentation with a dedicated Key Takeaways slide.

Your takeaways should answer:

What do I most want attendees to remember and potentially incorporate into their practice?

Limit yourself to approximately three to five key messages. These should represent the most important concepts from your presentation.

Faculty Success Tip

If attendees remember only three things six months from now, those three things should appear on your Key Takeaways slide.

Tip #2: Keep Slides Simple, Clear, and Focused

Slides should support learning, not compete with it.

One of the most common challenges in educational presentations is attempting to communicate too much information on a single slide.

One Slide = One Main Message

Every slide should communicate one primary idea.

Ask yourself:

What is the single most important message on this slide?

If there are multiple answers, consider splitting the content into multiple slides.

Explicitly State the Main Point

Don't make attendees guess what matters.

Instead of a slide title such as:

"Results"

Consider:

"Early treatment was associated with significantly improved outcomes."

This immediately directs attention to the most important finding.

Helpful Rule

Attendees should be able to identify the major point of the slide within a few seconds.

Use Readable Formatting

Recommended:

- ✓ Sans-serif fonts such as Calibri or Arial
- ✓ Minimum 32-point font size
- ✓ High contrast between text and background
- ✓ Consistent formatting
- ✓ Plenty of white space

These practices help ensure readability in large meeting rooms and virtual environments.

Simplify Graphics and Tables

Overly complicated graphics often create confusion rather than clarity.

Instead:

- Highlight the specific finding you want attendees to notice.
- Remove unnecessary detail.

- Use callouts and arrows when appropriate.
- Break large tables across multiple slides.
- Present complicated concepts in stages.

Faculty Success Tip

If you need several minutes to explain how to read a graphic, the visual is probably too complicated.

Consider Professional Visual Resources

Well-designed visuals can often communicate information more efficiently than text-heavy slides.

Examples include:

- Scientific and medical image libraries
- NIH image collections
- The Noun Project
- Professionally licensed medical illustrations

These types of resources can improve clarity and learner engagement.

Tip #3: Use Patient Cases and Clinical Scenarios

Clinical cases provide context and relevance.

They help learners connect evidence to real-world situations and are among the most effective educational tools available.

Introduce Cases Before Teaching

Consider opening a section with a patient scenario.

Example:

A 42-year-old patient presents with inflammatory back pain that has been present for three years. What would you do next?

This creates curiosity and gives attendees a reason to engage with the upcoming content.

Return to Cases After Teaching

After presenting evidence, revisit the case.

Ask attendees:

Based on what we've discussed, would you manage this patient differently?

This helps reinforce learning and encourages application of new knowledge.

Why Cases Work

Cases help learners:

- Apply evidence
- Practice decision-making
- Recognize knowledge gaps
- Explore different approaches
- Transfer learning into practice

Cases are especially effective when combined with audience polling and discussion.

Tip #4: Incorporate Active Learning Throughout Your Presentation

People learn best when they actively engage with information.

Research consistently demonstrates that learners retain information more effectively when they have opportunities to think, discuss, analyze, and apply concepts rather than simply listening to a lecture.

What Is Active Learning?

Active learning occurs whenever participants do something with the information they are receiving.

Instead of asking:

What do I want to tell attendees?

Consider asking:

What do I want attendees to do with this information?

Examples include:

- Reflection
 - Discussion
 - Decision-making
 - Problem-solving
 - Case analysis
 - Polling
 - Knowledge checks
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A Simple Active Learning Framework

Absorb

Present new information.

Examples:

- Lecture content
- Research findings
- Evidence reviews

Reflect

Give learners time to process information.

Examples:

- Reflection questions
- Think-Pair-Share activities
- Pause procedures

Explore

Allow learners to work with concepts.

Examples:

- Clinical cases
- Image interpretation
- Problem-solving exercises

Apply

Ask learners to use new knowledge.

Examples:

- Treatment decisions
- Diagnostic reasoning
- Follow-up case discussions

Re-Engage Learners Every 10-15 Minutes

Attention naturally declines during long presentations.

Consider including a learning activity every 10-15 minutes, such as:

- Polling
- Case discussion
- Reflection question
- Audience question
- Clinical decision point

Even short moments of learner engagement can improve retention and attention.

Tip #5: Use Audience Response Systems Strategically

Audience Response Systems (ARS) can be powerful tools for engagement and assessment.

Faculty are encouraged to incorporate live poll questions into their presentations to boost audience interaction. This year, ACR will utilize **Poll Everywhere** as its audience response system. Poll Everywhere supports a variety of activity types, including multiple-choice questions, word clouds, clickable images, and open-ended responses. Faculty can explore available polling formats through the ACR Poll Everywhere Activity Types resource.

To participate, add your poll setup directly into your presentation slides and submit them during the **October 5-19** pre-submission period. ACR staff will coordinate poll configuration to ensure activities are properly set up for your session. Faculty planning to use polling are encouraged to visit the Speaker Ready Room to review their activities and receive assistance from the dedicated ARS Technician.

Good Uses of Polling

Use polling to:

- Assess baseline knowledge
 - Explore clinical practice patterns
 - Introduce a clinical dilemma
 - Check understanding
 - Reinforce learning
 - Stimulate discussion
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Start with a Low-Stakes Icebreaker

Examples:

- Is this your first Convergence?
- What is your primary professional role?
- How many years have you been practicing?

Simple questions help participants become comfortable with the technology and increase future participation.

Close the Learning Loop

One particularly effective strategy is to ask a question before teaching a concept and revisit a similar question afterward.

This allows attendees to evaluate what they learned and provides faculty with immediate feedback about learning outcomes.

Discuss Poll Results

The educational value lies in the discussion.

After displaying responses:

- Highlight trends.
- Explore differences.
- Address misconceptions.
- Connect responses back to the evidence.

Do not simply show the results and move on. The discussion generated by a polling activity is often where the most meaningful learning occurs

Tip #6: Use Strong Transitions Between Topics

Transitions help learners stay engaged and understand how concepts connect.

Without transitions, presentations can feel like a series of unrelated slides.

Examples:

We've discussed diagnosis. Now let's explore treatment selection.

We've reviewed the evidence. Next, we'll focus on practical implementation.

These simple statements serve as signposts and help learners follow the story of your presentation.

Faculty Success Tip

Every major section of your presentation should have a clear beginning, middle, and transition to the next topic.

Tip #7: Build Time for Questions and Discussion

Feedback from ACR Convergence attendees consistently indicates that they value opportunities to ask questions and engage in discussion.

Plan for Interaction

Avoid using every available minute for presentation content.

Instead:

- Build discussion time into your session.
 - Coordinate with your moderator.
 - Leave dedicated time for audience questions.
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Why Q&A Matters

Questions help attendees:

- Clarify concepts
- Explore special situations
- Understand practical implementation
- Connect information to their own experiences

For many attendees, the discussion period is one of the most valuable parts of a session.

Tip #8: Practice with Someone Outside Your Specialty

One of the easiest ways to improve a presentation is to rehearse with someone who is not an expert in the topic.

This can help identify:

- Unclear explanations
- Excessive jargon
- Missing context
- Overly detailed sections
- Opportunities to simplify content

After practicing, ask:

What were the three most important messages?

If their answer differs from your intended takeaways, consider revising your presentation.

Tip #9: Consider Providing a Takeaway Resource

Learning does not end when the session concludes.

Consider creating a resource attendees can use after the meeting.

Examples include:

- Key takeaway summaries
- Clinical pearls
- Algorithms
- Resource lists
- Guideline references
- Practice tools

The most useful resources are concise, practical, and easy to reference later.

Tip #10: Take Advantage of Speaker Coaching

ACR offers Speaker Coaching to help faculty create stronger, more learner-centered presentations.

Speaker Coaches can help with:

- Learning objectives
- Presentation organization
- Active learning strategies
- Audience engagement
- Polling activities
- Slide design
- Presentation delivery
- Final slide review

Many faculty wait until slides are complete before requesting feedback.

In reality, coaching is often most valuable during the planning stage when changes can have the greatest impact.

Final Thought

The most successful ACR Convergence presentations are those that help attendees **learn, engage, reflect, discuss, and apply** what they have learned.

Focus on:

- Clear objectives
- Meaningful takeaways
- Simple slides
- Patient cases
- Active learning
- Audience participation
- Strong transitions
- Practical discussion

When these elements work together, presentations become learning experiences that attendees will remember long after ACR Convergence ends.

The Faculty Success Formula

Clear Objectives + Simple Slides + Active Learning + Meaningful Discussion + Practical Takeaways = Memorable Learning.