



# How to give a good research talk

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# How to give a research talk

## Research Talks

Peter  
Schachte

### Overview

Consider your  
audience

Organise

Present Well

Conclusion

- ▶ Consider your audience
- ▶ Organise
- ▶ Present Well

# Consider your audience

Research  
Talks

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Overview

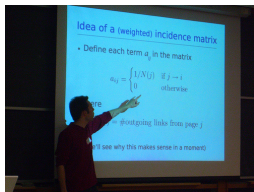
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- Pitch to the majority of your audience



—Oliver Mayor



—Diamond Geyser

- Consider their background knowledge
- Consider their interests
- Avoid jargon and acronyms they may not know
- You may not be able to cover some important stuff

# Organise

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- ▶ What can you get across in the time available?
- ▶ Better to cover something well than everything poorly
- ▶ Audience won't remember everything you cover
- ▶ Pick a few (3–5) key points
- ▶ Organise material to serve those points
- ▶ Have a clear narrative structure, a flow of ideas
- ▶ Link ideas; guide audience through your talk

# Prepare your slides

- ▶ Just cover important and interesting points
- ▶ Don't crowd your slides

Don't feel like you need to put everything on your slides. If you write too much, people won't be able to read it. And anyway, you want them looking at you and listening to you, not trying to read a bunch of detail from the slides. People may be impressed by big slabs of text, but they won't have time to read them. And if they do, that means they're not listening to you. So really, just keep your slides brief. Otherwise you'll just alienate your audience and make them feel exhausted every time you move to the next slide. People should feel relaxed when they attend a talk, not like they have to practice their speed-reading skills. And don't put lots of stuff on your slides so you can read it while you're talking. It would be better to have paper notes with you. You're not still reading this, are you? This is just here to give an example of what not to do. So, having read this far, do you think you've gotten more from reading this than from listening to me? OK, I want this to be longer, so I'm just going to keep writing nonsense now. This shouldn't matter, because I really don't expect you to have read this far. Really. Stop reading now.

- ▶ Don't have too many slides
  - ▶ Figure roughly 1–2 minutes per slide
- ▶ Don't include stuff people can't read
- ▶ Make them easy and quick to read
  - ▶ Use short sentences or fragments

# What to cover

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- ▶ Cover enough background for audience to understand your points
- ▶ Motivate your research
- ▶ Examples are clearer than abstract principles
- ▶ Look for effective ways to communicate your points
- ▶ Draw attention to main points and changes of topic
- ▶ Distill *conclusions*, not just a *summary*
- ▶ Talk about future work

# What to put on slides

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- ▶ Make each slide cover one topic
- ▶ Slide titles make good signposts
- ▶ Pictures, diagrams, and graphs can be the best way to present information
- ▶ Don't use too many **fonts**, **sizes**, or **colours**
- ▶ Clip art is usually just distracting

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# Presentation

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- ▶ Stand straight and face the audience
- ▶ Speak clearly and audibly
- ▶ Use inflection and pauses to punctuate
- ▶ Make eye contact, glance from person to person
- ▶ Be confident
  - ▶ You probably know more about your topic than most people present
- ▶ Speak naturally and casually
- ▶ Keep to the time allocated

# Suggestions

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## Some tips:

- ▶ Memorise the first couple sentences, to start smoothly
- ▶ Practice giving your talk several times
- ▶ ... but don't memorise or read it
  - ▶ it's a *talk*, not a *speech*
- ▶ Explain each slide; give background and detail
  - ▶ but don't just read out what's on the slides
- ▶ Attend other people's talks and notice what works well
- ▶ Visit venue ahead and check that the technology works
- ▶ Arrive early for your talk to get the technology set up

# Nerves

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- ▶ Most people get nervous giving a talk
- ▶ Good preparation and practice can help
- ▶ A bit of adrenalin makes you sharper
- ▶ Many people talk faster when nervous
  - ▶ If you do, consciously slow yourself
- ▶ It gets easier with practice

# Summing up

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- ▶ Work out what to cover based on
  - ▶ time available
  - ▶ audience background and interests
  - ▶ what you can get across
  - ▶ importance
- ▶ Organise it into a logical flow
- ▶ Prepare a simple, effective presentation
- ▶ Deliver it smoothly and clearly