

How to Give a Good Presentation

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¹I am referring to presentations in the field of economics, so these suggestions may not apply to other fields.

Motivation

- ▷ I made lots of mistakes in my previous presentations.
- ▷ I learned some experience.
- ▷ I have also observed some poorly delivered presentations.
- ▷ I feel that many people have not considered this question.
- ▷ This question is important.

What is a Good Presentation?

- ▷ You know what you are talking about.
 - You may not know because:
 - You did not prepare well.
 - You are not confident so the audience thinks that you do not know.
- ▷ Your audience can understand what you are talking about.
 - They may not understand because:
 - You do not explain well.
- ▷ They think what you are talking about makes sense.
 - They may not think so because:
 - You do not explain well.

What Does a Bad Presentation Look Like?

- ▷ Your audience cannot understand what you are talking about.
 - You are just reading the slides.
 - We do not call this “presentation”.
 - You do not explain.
 - You talk about too many technical details when no one asks.
 - Like doing unnecessary mathematical derivation - this is awful!
 - You ignore the audience's reaction.
 - You go through the slides too fast.
 - Probably you do not allocate the time wisely.
- ▷ You try to show off.
 - It aims to show how smart you are, but in a foolish way.
- ▷ You cannot answer the audience's questions effectively.
 - You did not prepare for those questions or even consider them.

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How to Give a Good Presentation

- ▷ The first principle is to make your audience understand.
 - If they cannot understand, you are doing a bad job no matter how excellent your work is.
- ▷ How to make them understand?
 - You explain.
 - One trick to explain is asking “why” questions all the time.
 - Every “why” question naturally leads to an answer or explanation.
 - Ask the audience if they have any questions.
 - Leave necessary pauses for the audience to digest.

Structure of the Presentation

- ▶ Consider the structure of the presentation when preparing the slides.
- ▶ Typically, the slides may include the following components:
 - Title
 - Motivation
 - Question
 - Literature
 - Model
 - Results

Title

- ▶ The title page does not just give the title of the paper.
- ▶ You can
 - Introduce yourself.
 - Briefly introduce the paper.
 - What is the story or main focus?
 - Present this page like giving a pitch to the audience.
 - Explain uncommon terminology.
 - Spend 1-2 minutes on the title page.
- ▶ But do not
 - Switch to the next slide right after reading the title.
 - Spend less than 10 seconds on the first slide.

Motivation

- ▷ Motivation is about “why”.
 - Why are you interested in this problem?
 - Is this problem important, either in theory or in practice?
 - Are there any interesting stylized facts?
 - Are there limitations in the previous studies?
 - Why should the audience be interested in your work?
 - Use the title and motivation section to attract your audience.
 - Try to achieve this within the first 5 minutes.
 - People may lose patience if they do not get it after 5 minutes.
 - Why should they invest the next 30 or 60 minutes on something uninteresting?

Question

- ▷ “Question” in this circumstance means the research question.
- ▷ It should end with a question mark.
 - It could start with how, what, or does?
 - It should be specific (to your research topic).
 - There could be multiple questions.
- ▷ Provide your answer(s) to the research question.
 - Do not build suspense.
 - Do not leave the most exciting content until the end.
 - Briefly discuss mechanisms (if any).

Literature

- ▷ Literature is used to summarize previous research.
- ▷ Then naturally lead to your own work.
- ▷ You can
 - Summarize using keywords.
 - Highlight the key points.
 - Discuss limitations.
 - Highlight your contribution.

Model

- ▷ This is the place where you **tell the story** as an economist would.
- ▷ If it is a reduced-form paper,
 - Show your regression model.
 - Discuss your identification strategy.
 - What are the identification assumptions?
- ▷ If you have a model,
 - Show the environment (model settings).
 - What is your assumption on preference? Why?
 - What is your assumption on market structure? Why?
 - Functional forms. Why?
 - ...
 - Show key results.
 - Discuss mechanisms.
 - Explain the intuition.
 - That is, thinking like an economist.

Results

- ▶ This is the place to show what you get.
- ▶ Do not show too much information.
 - Too much information means there is no focus.
 - If you would not explain a point, do not include it in the slides.
- ▶ Highlight the key points (with color or bold them).
- ▶ Explain the results in English.
 - Translate those numbers.
 - What do they mean?

Tips and Advice

- ▶ Keep your slides clean.
 - Do not use long paragraphs.
 - Do not let bullet points exceed two lines.
 - Show graphs when possible.
- ▶ Keep asking “why” questions.
- ▶ Be confident.
 - Believe that you are one of the most knowledgeable about this paper.
- ▶ Use body language if you like (I recommend).
- ▶ Your job is to make the audience understand and believe the story.
 - The above slides mentioned some repeated things.
 - This is to make a strong impression on the audience.
- ▶ Learn and practice.