**Guidelines for Preparing Effective Presentation**

Compiled and modified from different sources

The most important thing to consider is “how will my slides help the audience understand my talk?’’ People cannot absorb too many facts from a 15-minute talk, no matter how good a speaker you are. Concentrate on the **key points** of your paper or textbook, and create your slides to help the audience follow you. Keep your slides simple! Simple, easy to read slides are essential. Note that it’s useful to provide an outline slide of your presentation somewhere near the beginning of the talk.

Use large fonts and **don’t try to fit more than about 6 to 10 lines of text on each slide**. See Figure 1 below:



Figure 1: Good Choice of Fonts and Spacing

If you have more than 10 lines of text in a tiny font with lots of white space between them, they won’t be very readable (see figure 2).



Figure 2: Figure 1: Bad Choice of Fonts and Spacing

However, leave enough space between lines to allow easy reading (see figure 1). For overhead slides, 24-point fonts are a good choice for the main text; headings should be larger.

You might consider using a sans-serif font (such as Helvetica) instead of a serif font (such as Times Roman). This is a matter of aesthetics, but the sans-serif fonts are often more readable at a distance. Colors should only be used when they are essential to identify crucial aspects of the presentation (See figure 3).



Figure 3: Good Color Choice

If your slides include diagrams, they should use fat lines and large fonts. Thin lines disappear pretty quickly (see figure 4). You might have graphs showing how some quantity varies as a function of some other quantity. Make sure the curves use fat lines; if you have multiple curves on one graph, either use obviously distinctive line styles, or (perhaps better) clearly contrasting colors. Label the axes with large fonts, including complete scale information.

Diagram

Description automatically generated

Figure 4: Poor diagram style

Color can be helpful, if used with restraint. Try to limit the number of colors used in the text of your slides, and use color consistently. You can use color more aggressively in diagrams to categorize graphical elements. In graphs with multiple curves, contrasting colors are probably more effective than different line styles.

You should also give some thought to the flow of your talk. Start with just enough preliminary information to make it clear what you are talking about, and why. Be clear and explicit at the beginning, including a quick outline and an indication of what makes your talk interesting. **Don’t waste a lot of time on preliminaries**; you might run out of time before getting to the juicy stuff and your instructor is notoriously strict about time.

Put the interesting stuff in the middle of the talk, where it belongs. Save the “boring” stuff (apologies for unfinished implementations, long lists of related work, etc.) for the end. Don’t feel compelled to justify every minor statement during the main part of the talk. If people challenge you during the question period, you can make your justifications then. Of course, don’t leave your most important or controversial statements unjustified.

Keep your summary and conclusions brief. Don’t recapitulate all the points made in the talk; **emphasize the main concepts that you want the audience to remember**. If you run out of time, skip this slide, since it doesn’t say anything new.

Because you will only have 15 minutes to make your presentation, it is important that you organize your talk clearly and including only those facts that can be adequately presented in the time allotted. Time will be strictly controlled and I will terminate your presentation if necessary. For that reason, I encourage you to rehearse your talk to make sure you can deliver it satisfactorily in 15 minutes.

It is recommended that you organize your talk with an introduction, body, and summary or conclusion. If your presentation includes slides or other visual/audio aids, make sure these are given sufficient time for the audience to interpret them. Describe graphs and other visual aids clearly but succinctly. Remember that your audience are not familiar with your data and they need enough time to figure out the meaning. Also, remember that your slides need to be set up so that they are visible and readable even at the back of a very large room.

# Summary

**SUMMARIZE YOUR MAIN POINTS:** Your audience cannot absorb every detail of your paper or the chapter you are presenting in the 15 minutes you will have available. Stress the principal concepts and approaches rather than the details, which should be used to underscore the main ideas.

**TIME ALLOCATION:** You should spend the most time in your presentation on the most important topics.

**CONTENT:** Use abbreviations sparingly and be sure to define them during your presentation. Do not use terms that may be unfamiliar to your audience. Don’t insult your audience by reading the slide to them. You may assume that all of the attendees can read for themselves.

**QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS:** An exhaustive presentation of tables of data will not communicate your ideas as well as fully supported qualitative insights.

**AUDIENCE INTEREST:** Your audience’s interest will peak at the beginning and end of your presentation. Use this knowledge to underscore major points at the beginning of your presentation and to emphasize important points during the conclusion.

**SLIDES:** Evaluate the quality of your slides by reviewing them in sequence and determining if your major themes are covered with no spoken words. Your audience will be absorbing your presentation through both sight and sound, and neither the spoken word or slides alone will carry your message. Also, have a good reason for showing each slide. Endless streams of data on table after table is better represented on a single slide that communicates the important data values.

**READABILITY:** Normally, letters less than 20 pt are difficult to read. If you must use smaller letters to fit them on the transparency, you may be attempting to fit too much information on a single slide. Use a simple, plain background. Black letters on a white background should be the norm. Dark blue or dark red letters may be used sparingly for variety and/or emphasis.

**RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER WORK:** Credit other authors and presenters when your ideas and insights are supportive of others**.** Likewise, if your ideas differ from others, acknowledge that, too.

**PRACTICE YOUR PRESENTATION:** Practice your talk, but do not try to memorize it. If you read your presentation directly from a script, the spontaneity will be lost. Consider your presentation to be a talk with your audience, rather than a scripted oration. Again, focus on emphasizing your most important points.

**NO EXCUSES:** Excuses are a turn-off to the audience. They are not interested in why you are not well organized, or why your slides are too dark, or how sick you are today. You automatically lose credibility when you present to the audience a reason to discount your work.

**BEST WISHES:** These guidelines are meant to assist you in presenting talk in the best way. Good Luck!

# Web pages

http://www.usenix.org/events/samples/slide.guide.pdf is a web page with guidelines for

speakers from a conference

https://amia.org/education-events/presenter-and-reviewer-resources/presenter-guidelines is a special web page, which might provide you with some insight.