

Some Hints for Preparing and Giving an Effective Talk

(mostly taken from various resources on the web)

1. **Prepare your visuals to ADD to your presentation – not distract from it, or worse, be a negative. Poor presentations often originate in badly constructed overheads.**

- a. **Use a large font size on visual aids.** A font size of 28 or higher will ensure that the audience will be able to read your slides. Use a large font size for mathematical notation and empirical results, as well as for text.
- b. **Never cut and paste a table from your paper onto a slide.** These tables are never readable – or interesting – and they only irritate your audience. Instead, choose a few results that you want to highlight and present them on a slide in no smaller than 28 font.
- c. **Never use the words “I know you can’t read this, but...”. Never.** If you have a slide that begs you to say this, delete it! Figure out the one or two key points from the slide and make a new slide with only those points.
- d. **Do not put too much information on any one slide.** A good rule of thumb is that you should not have more than 1 slide per minute that you speak. If you have a 20 minute talk – that means 20 slides, max. Some references suggest as little as one slide for every 5 minutes that you are speaking...
- e. **Use bullet points instead of complete sentences on your slides.** Do not write out everything that you will say and then read them to your audience.
- f. **Do not include information on visual aids that you do not intend to discuss.** Extra information on visual aids distracts the audience from your message.

2. **Speak clearly and loudly.**

Use the microphone, even if you have a loud voice. Even if you start loud, people soften their voices as they continue speaking. You don’t want your audience straining to hear you. You want it to be effortless for the audience to “be present” with you – otherwise, they will check-out and your opportunity to communicate with them and make an impression is lost.

3. **Do not show your back.**

Never turn your back to the audience and talk to the screen.

4. **Stick to your time limit.**

You have one shot to make a great impression. Going over your time or rushing to finish leaves an impression that you are either unpolished or unprepared (or worse, both).

- a. If you do not have enough time to get through all your slides, skip enough so that you do not have to rush through them.
- b. Limit the time you spend talking about other’s research. Focus on your own contribution.

5. **Identify your main point (finding, opinion, etc.) and state it succinctly up front.**

A conference presentation is an opportunity to sell your work and entice others to follow-up by reading your work or speaking with you after your session is over. Get people interested right off the bat by telling folks (1) what your question is, (2) why it’s important and (3) what you’ve found.

6. **Practice before you present!**

Never give a presentation without practicing at least once to be sure that it will fit into the time frame and that you know how to move from one point to the next. Include your visual aids in your practice.