



Research Methodology

Presenting your work

Lecture, 29. October, 2007



Why learn to give talks?

- You will need to give talks
 - Conferences, colloquiums, interviews, etc.
- You will need to give good talks
 - Presentations leave a lasting impression
- It is good for your academic career
 - More invited talks, better reputation, etc.
- It is good for any career!



Importance of good presentations

- Presents your research
 - “Advertisement” for your research paper
 - More people read if talk was interesting
- Presents you as academic
 - Good talks give good impressions
 - Basically, free “bonus points” in standings
- You have to, so it’s better to do it well
 - Also, less stressful to give good talks



Preparing a Presentation

- Identify key point to get across
 - You can't say everything
 - So “What should audience remember”
 - Pick a “punch line”
- Figure out how to present it well
 - Take audience into consideration
 - Figure out how to explain it clearly



Some key pointers

- Only get one main point across
 - Accept that not everything in your research can fit into a single talk
- Ensure your talk fits within time limits
 - Practice and time your talk
- Relate presentation to audience
 - What makes them interested?



Giving the talk

- Before talk
 - Relax and breathe
 - Make sure you are comfortable
- During talk
 - Face the audience and talk to them
 - Smile and look happy about being there
 - Be clear, even if it means slowing down
 - Better to get 1 point across well than 10 badly



Structure of a talk

- Introduction
 - What is the subject being covered
 - What will you say today
- Main part
 - Motivation, examples, contribution, etc.
- Conclusion and comments
 - Summary, future work, etc. Indicate end.
- Thanks and questions



Conference talks

- Short: 15-25 minutes + questions
- Advertisement for your paper
 - Get people interested in your work
- Education for readers of paper
 - Really explain well one key thing
- Pick one thing!
 - Yes, it is very hard to choose...



Seminar talks

- Longer: 40-60 minutes
- “Make your case”
 - Objective usually to present something
 - Use time to support your point
- Consider audience
 - Your close colleagues or different field?



Preparation is key!

- Decide what you want to accomplish
 - Lay out a storyline or key points
- Decide how to accomplish that
 - Decide on method (examples vs theory)
- Make and revise the slides
 - Practice going through them and fix issues
 - Get to where you know what comes next
- Don't practice "too much"



How to give the talk

- Talking without visual aids
 - Not recommended unless super skilled!
- Talking while writing
 - Common in math and for informal meetings
- Presentation slides
 - Most common in computer science
- Formal speech
 - Only for very formal occasions



Dos and donts of slides

- Purpose of slides
 - Support what you are saying
 - Provide illustrative information
- Pitfalls of slides
 - Too much on each slide
 - Too many slides
 - Slides look pretty but are lousy talk slides
 - Repetitive or missing information



Giving talks

- It is easier than you think
 - It is your specialty area (usually)
 - Almost everyone else is also giving talks and know what it is like
 - Think of it as your reward for doing good research work
- It is harder than you think
 - Requires work and practice to do well



Common mistakes

- Too much on each slide
 - Crowded slide or tiny fonts
- Too much text on slide
 - Complete sentences or even sections
 - And please do not read your slides
- Too many slides
 - Feeling of hurrying through talk
- Too much fun with Powerpoint



Common mistakes

- Last minute slides
 - Clear the presenter has not prepared
 - Errors on slides (big no no)
- Lack of familiarity with slides
 - Next slides throws presenter off
 - Presenter doesn't remember what is next
- Hiding and revealing information
 - Annoying!



Different techniques

- The “key point” talk
- The logical theory talk
- The illustrative (example) talk
- The overview (high level) talk

- Common: Indexed talks



Timing of talks

- Aim for hitting time exactly
 - Prepare well and practice
 - Have rule of thumb for time per slide
 - Keep track of time during talk
- If underrunning
 - Finish up in relaxed fashion and end early
- If overrunning
 - Cut talk short and adapt



The scary part: Questions

- Not really scary
 - But do be prepared to answer questions
- Answer questions nicely and clearly
 - Do not get defensive or argumentative
- Repeat questions if large group
- If no questions, no worries