

# How to Give a <sup>reasonably</sup> Good Presentation



**Roger K. Moore**

*Chair of Spoken Language Processing*  
Dept. Computer Science, The University of Sheffield



The University Of Sheffield.

How to Give a Good Presentation: PhD Seminar Series - slide 1 of 26



## Overview

- Motivation
  - why give a good talk?
- Preparation
  - content & timing
  - style
  - technology & logistics
- Delivery
  - what to do with parts of your anatomy
  - style
  - technology & timing
  - handling questions
- Postmortem
  - learning from your successes/mistakes

Only really useful on long talks, but can help orient the audience



The University Of Sheffield.

How to Give a Good Presentation: PhD Seminar Series - slide 2 of 26



## Why Give a Good Talk?

*It's more fun than a bad talk!*

“Average talks are forgotten quickly”

“Great talks are remembered for years”

“Terrible talks are remembered *forever!*”

After: D. Evans, 'How to give a talk so good there will be pizza left for you', *UVa Theory Lunch*, 25 January 2007.  
(<http://www.cs.virginia.edu/evans/talks/talktalk/>)

Neat way of  
including  
references



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

How to Give a Good Presentation: PhD Seminar Series - slide 3 of 26



## What's Your Main Goal?

- Get to the end without passing out!
- Sell something
  - yourself, your group, your institution, your field
  - an idea, an approach, a direction
- It depends on the audience ...
  - conference talk: *paper is worth reading*
  - lecture: *understand something interesting*
  - invited seminar: *believe something they didn't before*

D. Evans, 'How to give a talk so good there will be pizza left for you', *UVa Theory Lunch*, 25 January 2007.  
(<http://www.cs.virginia.edu/evans/talks/talktalk/>)



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

How to Give a Good Presentation: PhD Seminar Series - slide 4 of 26



# The Audience

*Your goal is to wake them up and make them glad they came!*

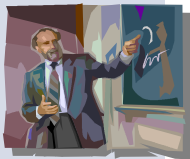
- Will have read all your previous papers
- Thoroughly understand the background
- Can't wait to hear your latest research results
- Are fully alert and ready to listen
- Have never heard of you or your work
- Vaguely remember reading something once
- Have mistakenly ended up in the wrong session
- Have just had lunch and are now ready to snooze



S. Peyton Jones, J. Launchbury, J. Hughes, 'How to give a good research talk', *SIGPLAN Notices* 28(11), Nov. 1993.



# Preparation: *content*



- What to include
  - tell a story with a beginning, middle & end
  - cover a few key points well (*rather than everything poorly*)
  - overview (*say what you're going to say*)
  - summary (*say what you've said*)
  - sufficient introductory material for non-experts
  - sufficient detailed material for experts
- What **not** to include
  - unnecessary detail (*people will ask if they need more*)
  - too many/any equations
- Ask yourself "*what's my main message?*"



## Preparation: *content*

For a scientific talk ...

- introduce the **problem** that you are working on
- explain **why this** is an **interesting** or important problem
- describe what **previous work** has told us
- describe the **specific** problem that you are going to solve
- explain **how you solved** this problem
- explain how your work **pushes** forward **our understanding**
- discuss what are the **remaining open problems**

H Farid, 'How to give a good talk',  
<http://www.cs.dartmouth.edu/farid/tutorials/goodtalk.html>



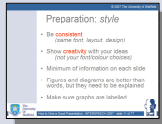
## Preparation: *timing*



- Each slide will take 1½-2 minutes
  - i.e. 30 min. talk should have no more than ~20 content slides
- Use “*slide n of m*” so you’ll know where you are
- Contingencies
  - slides that can be skipped
  - slides that can be included



## Preparation: *style*



- Aim for a consistent 'look & feel'  
*(same font, layout, design)*
- Show creativity with your ideas  
*(not your font/colour choices)*
- Minimum of information on each slide
- Figures and diagrams are better than words  
*(but they need to be explained)*
- Make sure graphs are labelled



## Preparation: *technology*



- Will you be able to use your own PC?
- If you're using another machine and you have media files, use PPT 'pack and go'/'package for CD'
- Prepare a backup (e.g. on a memory stick)
- Arrange for any media to play automatically on the next 'click'  
*(don't rely on using the cursor)*
- Familiarise yourself with how to change the resolution of the display
- Consider recording yourself



## PowerPoint: *use & abuse*



- Do's
  - make sure each line carries a single point
  - use large fonts ( $\geq 18pt$ )
  - use/adapt a design template
  - use animations wisely
  - choose colour schemes carefully

Use dark colours on light backgrounds ...

... and light colours on dark backgrounds.

- Don'ts
  - don't use long paragraphs which spell out every last detail of a point even though you believe everything in there needs to be said and you feel that you might forget to make the point properly during your talk
  - don't use tiny fonts: no-one can read em
  - don't go **overboard** with **colour** schemes
  - don't use sound effects  
(they're very annoying!)



## PowerPoint: *use & abuse*



- Research indicates that it is better to display all lines at once
- This has been shown to be better than revealing them one at a time
- Mahar et al (2009) found a significant difference between the means of overall student performance after viewing lectures with non-animated and animated slides
- The presentations differed only in the presence of animation to incrementally present information
- The study suggested that static slides allow the retention of more information than their dynamic counterparts

Mahar, S., Yaylacicegi, U., & Janicki, T. (2009). The dark side of custom animation. *International Journal of Innovation and Learning*, 6(6), 581-592.



## PowerPoint: *use & abuse*



After: D. Evans, *How to Give a Talk So Good There Will Be Pizza Left for You*, UVa Theory Lunch, 25 January 2007 (<http://www.cs.virginia.edu/evans/talks/talktalk/>)

### Don't go overboard with animations



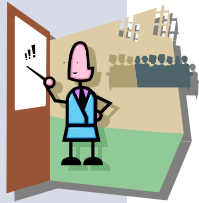
## Preparation: *logistics*



- Before the day ...
  - don't prepare too far ahead (*it needs to be fresh*)
  - rehearse
    - in private (*in front of a mirror*)
    - in public (*with a friendlyish audience*)
  - fine tune before the main event
  - sleep well the night before
- On the day ...
  - know when & where your talk takes place
  - arrive in good time
  - familiarise yourself with the setup
  - test the presentation (*especially any embedded sound & video*)
  - make sure you have your backup copy with you
  - nervousness beforehand is good!
  - go to the loo



# Overview



- Motivation
- Preparation
  - content & timing
  - style
  - technology & logistics
- **Delivery**
  - what to do with parts of your anatomy
  - style
  - technology & timing
  - handling questions
- Postmortem

Good technique to use in a long talk



- What to do with your **Body**:
  - don't stand in front of the screen
  - move about (*but don't pace around unnecessarily*)
- What to do with your **Hands**:
  - don't point with the cursor (*you may trigger other events*)
  - point at the projection screen (*not your laptop*)
  - use a stick or laser pointer (*but don't wave it around*)
- What to do with your **Face**:
  - smile
  - be visible (*lip reading gives ~12dB SNR benefit*)
- What to do with your **Eyes**:
  - maintain eye contact (*with everyone!*)
  - don't concentrate on one person (*esp. someone at the front*)
- What to do with your **Voice**:
  - speak loudly and clearly (*but don't shout!*)
  - speak to the audience (*not the screen!*)
  - don't talk too fast (*esp. if non-native audience*)
  - be lively (*don't talk on a monotone*)



## Delivery: *style*



- Read vs. spontaneous speech
  - it's better to talk than to read
  - don't read out the slides, use them as prompts
  - memorise the opening and closing sentences
  - if you must have fully scripted notes, write them in a spoken style (*complete with "OKs", "so", etc.*)
- What not to say ...
  - don't apologise for anything  
(*e.g. "my experiments didn't go as well as I'd hoped"*)
  - don't improvise (*it'll take time you haven't allowed for*)
  - don't make private remarks/jokes
  - avoid mannerisms (*e.g. "you know", "I mean", "actually"*)
- Don't overrun  
(*it's selfish and rude*)
- Say "thank you" at the end  
(*so people know that you've finished*)



## Delivery: *technology*



- How are you going to change the slides?
  - be familiar with the relevant keypresses  
(*especially how to go backwards*)
  - is there a remote control?  
(*make sure you know how to operate it*)
- Is there a microphone?
  - it can boost self confidence
  - fixed, worn, handheld?
  - don't bellow into it
  - if it's handheld, don't wave it around
  - if it's fixed, make sure you talk into it



## Delivery: *timing*

- Remember each slide is supposed to take 1.5-2 minutes ... but each minute will appear to pass in ~10 secs!
- Keep track of the time
  - locate the room clock and note when you started
  - take off your watch and place it where you can see it
  - keep an eye on the slide number (*so you know where you are*)
  - keep an eye on the chairperson (*they may be waving a red flag!*)
- Contingencies
  - if time is running out, anticipate skipping some slides (*don't talk faster*)
  - if you're going too fast, slow down



The University Of Sheffield.

How to Give a Good Presentation: PhD Seminar Series - slide 19 of 26

SPandH

## Delivery: *handling questions*



1. Allow interruptions (*e.g. in a seminar*)
  - interaction is good
  - don't lose control
  - helpful to have a chairperson
2. All at the end (*e.g. in a conference*)
  - leave enough time (*else none ☹*)
  - listen carefully (*some people ask several at once*)
  - check everyone has heard the question (*gives you time to think of an answer*)
  - answer truthfully (*"I don't know" is OK*)
  - don't be embarrassed to seek clarification
  - answering a different (*but related*) question can stimulate discussion



The University Of Sheffield.

How to Give a Good Presentation: PhD Seminar Series - slide 20 of 26



## From Beginning to End ...



- Remember to ...
  - smile (*but don't appear manic*)
  - stay calm (*but don't fall asleep*)
  - breath (*but don't hyperventilate*)
  - above all, enjoy it!
- Be ...
  - confident
  - enthusiastic
  - amusing
  - committed
  - honest



The University Of Sheffield.

How to Give a Good Presentation: PhD Seminar Series - slide 21 of 26



## After it's All Over



- How did it go?
  - make a note of your own impressions
  - ask a friend what they thought
  - listen to the recording (*if you have one*)
- Update the talk  
(*you may be asked to do it again!*)
- Learn from the whole experience  
(*it'll be even better next time*)
- Learn from others  
(*what to do and what not to do*)
- Congratulate yourself ... ***you survived!***

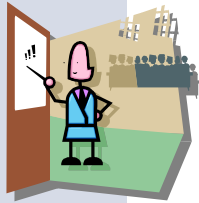


The University Of Sheffield.

How to Give a Good Presentation: PhD Seminar Series - slide 22 of 26



# Summary



- Motivation
  - why give a good talk?
- Preparation
  - content & timing
  - style
  - technology & logistics
- Delivery
  - what to do with parts of your anatomy
  - style
  - technology & timing
  - handling questions
- Postmortem
  - learning from your successes/mistakes

A reminder of what I've been talking about (in case you were asleep)

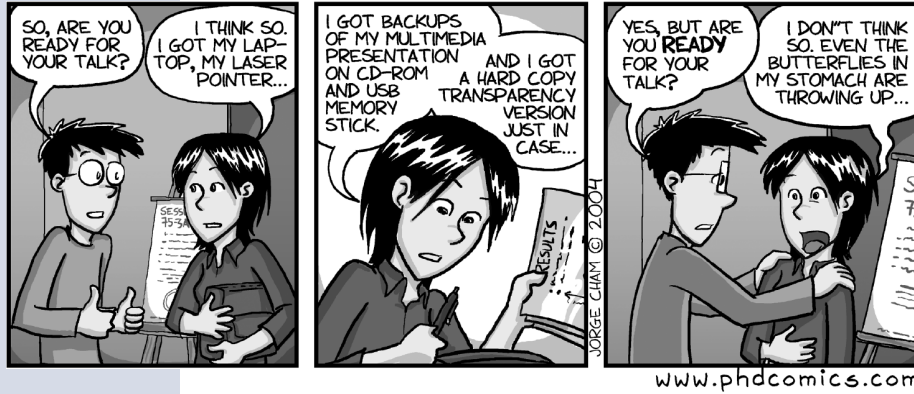


# Where to Find Out More

<http://www.d.umn.edu/~jgallian/goodPPTalk.pdf>

<http://www.si.umich.edu/~pne/PDF/howtotalk.pdf>



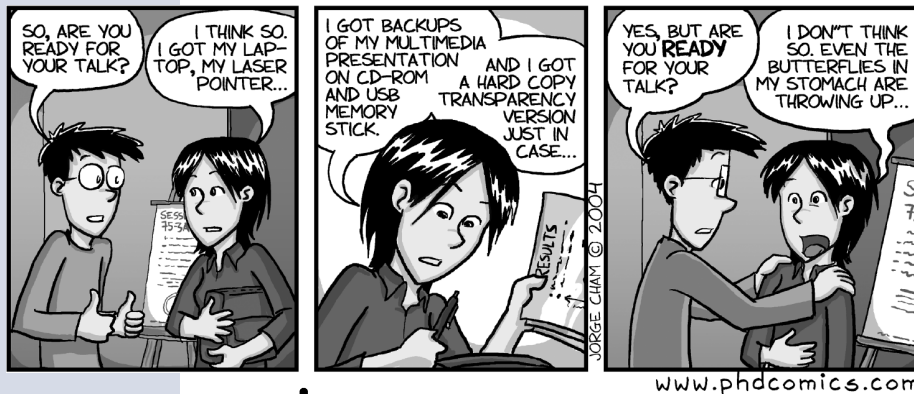


Thank you



The University Of Sheffield.

How to Give a Good Presentation: PhD Seminar Series - slide 25 of 26



Any Questions?



The University Of Sheffield.

How to Give a Good Presentation: PhD Seminar Series - slide 26 of 26

