

Oral Presentations

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Purpose of this presentation

- To explain doing an 'effective presentation.'
- reasons
 - methods

Reasons to do effective presentation

- is fundamental academic skill.
- requires you to understand what you think
 - useful to develop new project
 - useful to evolve project (e.g., results, interpretation)
- requires communicating clearly and succinctly
 - helps reach academic goals
 - is rewarded in itself
 - advertises your work; translates to jobs, invitations,| advancement
 - is academic and professional fun.

Method: learn to do effective presentation

- Didactics
- Rehearse others
- Rehearse yourself (*most important*)
 - Do a 10-minute talk for major national meeting (provides *motivation*).**
 - Use a formula:
 - 3 rehearsals (60, 45, 45 min), with friendly audience
 - start 4-6 wks before presentation

***Listen to what others say, and revise.
This is not rocket science.
Just do it; it works.***

Method- learn to do effective presentation: Didactics

- forest topics (big picture)
- tree topics (more detail)
- [c. twig, leaf, chlorophyll (even *more* detail)]

Forest

- Usefulness (of writing talk):
- hour-for-hour, writing 10-minute talk is most efficient way to advance your ideas
 - is like abstract, or sp. aims, but more detailed; deadline
 - limited size means: prioritize, identify 'essence'

Process of rehearsing teaches fundamental professional principle: learn from criticism of others. You will know when you have learned that principle when you crave others' criticism.

Forest

How a talk evolves:

- a. Decide *what you want to say*; this evolves.
- b. After (a), decide *how to say it clearly*.

Clarity is:

- *creative act (you get 'credit')*
- *end in itself*

*So if you can't solve research problem,
at least explain it clearly!*

Trees

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- e. rehearse rehearse rehearse rehearse
 - write talk word for word and read it, so you can learn what they didn't understand.
- f. start rehearsing early (4-6 weeks in advance)
 - give yourself time to reflect, revise
 - make it fun, creative, learning

I am 100% serious

Trees

- e. realize you can't say everything; don't try

Trees: Structure of a 10-minute talk

background (1-2 slides)
 purpose (1)
 method (2-4)
 results (3-5)
 (summary (1) optional; usually not necessary)
 limitations (1)
 conclusion (1-2)
 (implications (1-2) optional)

Trees: Making slides

number:
 1 slide per minute (2, if short slides)
 format:
 be simple, clear
 avoid distracting background/frills (see Tufte)
 focus:
 content and clarity
 form:
 outline ... phrases... be telegraphic
 Use sentences in intro, conclusion, some other..

Long talk is different from short

- don't need to write out word for word
- organization
 consider 'purpose of presentation' slide
 (e.g., different from purpose of research)
- can be much more extemporaneous

Presentation techniques

- a. read every word; don't memorize
 - avoid STD
 - you don't need to be spontaneous
 - you do need to be engaging, enthusiastic, and to appear spontaneous
- b. Reading talk is easy; there are no surprises; it isn't a 'performance'. You are reading a text!
- c. pointer technique: use on-off
- d. to avoid surprises: write text; check podium, light, slide advance, mikes, pointer, timer/clock, where to place text... check how you 'sound'

Question period

- Is the only 'unscripted' part of talk.
- be prepared; you can anticipate 90% of questions; rehearse crisp, clean answers
 - recognize how to handle 3 types of questions:
 - question (answer them)
 - statements (say thank you)
 - confused questions (handle them)
 - have fun
 - audience may ask good questions; you may learn something!

Common mistakes

- a. Clarity
 You haven't decided what you want to say.
 Remember, deciding what you want to say is a (creative) part of process.. and a reason you are doing a talk in the first place! I.e. Don't be defensive/embarassed; use the process.
 Solution:
 1. write, listen, revise
 2. repeat (1); repeat (1); repeat (1)

Common mistakes

- b. Too many slides
- c. Too much data
- d. STD

Conclusions

1. Doing a good talk can be a very productive and gratifying scientific and professional activity.
2. Learning to do a good talk is relatively simple, but few people fully value this activity, acquire the skills, and benefit from the results.
3. Put 'doing a talk' high on your professional development plan; see the results, and learn the benefit.

'one-minute paper'

- a. What is main point?
- b. What is main unanswered question?
- c. What is muddiest point?

SUGGESTED READING:

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