

# Giving a Talk

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# Key Points

- **Know your audience:** What do they know? What do they want to know?
- **Figure out what they will learn and why they want to learn it**
- **Be professional:** Organise yourself, your materials, and your time

# What to say and how to say it

Three main components to a presentation:

- Introduction: tell them what you are going to say.
- The Body: tell them.
- Conclusion: tell them what you have said.

# Introduction

- Define the problem.
- Motivate the audience.
- Discuss earlier work.
- Introduce terminology
- Remind, do not assume
- Emphasize the contributions of your paper
- Provide a roadmap

# The Body

The body contains the meat of the presentation. If you mess up the introduction the attention of the audience will start to wander.

- Perhaps a motivating example: motivate with applications, philosophy, history, predictions, dollars
- Be concrete, not abstract
- Do not present too much maths – avoid detailed proofs.
- Flesh out details incrementally, cover background only where necessary for understanding or for motivation
- Explain the significance of the current work
- Results: describe where and how the results may be difficult.
- If presenting to a technical audience, provide some more detail toward the end of the Body.
- Ensure the details relates directly to the contribution of the current work.

# The Details

- Present one key result which is:
  - Important
  - Non-trivial
  - Representative
- Now give details:
  - But this is the part of the talk that is least important, and should be first to be cut
  - Refer them to your paper, thesis or notes
  - If necessary, or to later discussion

# Conclusion

Discussion of results in retrospect.

- Put your results back in context: once again motivate the problem and make clear your contribution
- It is clear in hindsight: what is clear now, may not have been in the introduction.
- Tie together the pieces
- Discuss any limitations
- Present ideas for future work
- Conclude: Let them know you have finished! Thank the audience and invite questions and comments.

# Handling Questions

- Always allow time for questions
- Allow and encourage questions during the talk, if you are confident enough
- Try to anticipate likely questions
- Try to learn from the questions (make some notes straight after your talk)



# Visual Aids

Latex has a powerful presentation tool called Beamer. Use the following format:

```
\documentclass{beamer}
\beamertemplateshadingbackground{red!10}{blue!10}
\begin{document}
\frame{
blah blah blah
}
\end{document}
```

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beamer\\_\(LaTeX\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beamer_(LaTeX)) for useful links and tutorials.

You can also use PowerPoint or the visualiser or the white board. A mixed approach can work well (especially in longer talks such as lectures).

# General Points

- use large font sizes
- write points, not sentences
- don't put too much on a single page
- make the medium invisible

# Your presence

Obviously is a speaker shuffles into the lecture theatre, hanging his head, shoulders slumped, mumbling at the speed of light, the audience will not believe that he wants to be there, or that he is very competent.

She may be a brilliant Computer Scientist, but you will not know this from his presentation.

How can we avoid this?

# Successful communication

includes the right combination of tone of voice, body language, eye contact and pace of speech.

# Handling Nerves

- *Everyone* gets nervous
- Make your nerves work for you : be animated, show them you care!
- But be prepared too:
  - deep breathing,
  - know your introductory “speech” ,
  - use written reminders if needed,
  - bring water, so you can pause and regroup if necessary
  - practice giving your talk first (in front of a mirror, or to your family)

# Vocal Variety

- A monotone voice can hide or change the meaning of words.
- Our voice needs to change to portray the intended meaning.
- Voice intonations can make the presentation more inspiring.
- The speaker can show his/her enthusiasm with proper use of voice.
- Skillful use of the voice can keep the audience spellbound!

# Rate

The **rate** refers to the speed at which we speak.

- Usually new speaker speak too fast.
- But there are some people who speak too slowly.
- Both types of speakers will lose their audience for different reasons.

It is important to incorporate **pauses** into our speech.

- Pauses take on the role that punctuation has in writing.
- Pauses can highlight an important point.
- Pauses can give the audience time to digest a difficult idea.
- Pauses can give the speaker thinking time!
- Well timed pauses can create an atmosphere of anticipation!
- Often a pause for the speaker is not a pause for the audience



## Loudness of voice

The volume we need to speak at depends on the environment and audience. We would speak more softly to one person alone than to 10 or 30 or a lecture room full.

A common problem with new speakers is that they speak too softly — this is interpreted by the audience as a of lack of confidence.

- Speaking in front of an audience takes practice.
- Speak so that the whole audience can hear you. Imagine your voice is a ball – you should be able to throw the ball at everyone in the room.
- Consider the people at the back of the room and imagine you are speaking with them.

# Variety

A talk that lacks vocal variety and intonation is monotone and boring. The audience is led to believe that the speaker does not want to be there. It is important to convey your own fascination and enthusiasm about the subject you are talking about – otherwise the audience will also think your subject is boring!!

# Body Language

This is a very important aspect of communication. General demeanour, facial expression hand movements are all part of the communication experience.

# Eye-contact

- Generally eye-contact signifies honesty and sincerity.
- It allows the speaker to relate to and connect with the audience.
- It allows the audience to relate to the speaker.
- No eye contact can be very disconcerting, and signal that the speaker is not interested in the audience.
- The speaker and audience need to form a relationship for the message to be understood. Eye-contact is an important aspect of forming such a relationship.

We want the audience to feel some empathy with us!

# Movements and Gestures

Avoid:

- nervous twitches
- “washing your hands”
- playing with your clothes
- pacing up and down or moving around too much
- twiddling or crossing-uncrossing your feet
- holding onto the lectern - this may show insecurity

- Do you lock your hands behind your back?
- Do you stand to attention or with legs crossed?
- Do you keep your hands in your pockets?

Bad body language grabs more attention than words and you can lose your message.

No movement at all communicates a lack of enthusiasm.

- Stand with both feet firmly on the ground.
- Keep body relaxed and hands by your side.
- Gestures are important, but do not gesticulate wildly! Use normal, meaningful gestures and then let your hands rest again.
- Take a few deliberate steps occasionally.

Watch politicians being interviewed and observe their annoying habits and nuances.



# Personal appearance

It is important to present yourself appropriately at the seminar - it can underline your message.

- Dress in comfortable clothes in which you feel good.
- Don't overdress - no point putting on a suit and the feeling like a penguin among swans!
- A little formal than usual can indicate that your message is important and that you have respect and esteem for the audience, and that you also take the talk seriously.

# Practice

Practice is the key to success! It is very difficult to relax in front of an audience without being put in that situation often enough. The audience will easily be able to tell if a speaker is nervous and unsettled — the audience may focus on this and this can detract from the talk. Such a speaker will choke up and can easily forget important points. Certainly such a speaker will not be able to deliver the full message across.

## Exercise

Take a few minutes to prepare, then stand up, introduce yourself and give a short introduction to your thesis topic and its significance.

Homework: Look at the resources for the UWA three minute thesis competition at

<http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/3mt>

# Thank you

Any questions ?