Let’s Talk about Talking

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This talk was originally prepared by Daisy Fan and was used February 2001 in EWRS seminar.


Revised again by Ryan Fleming, Andrea Gruber, Neela Babu, Tom Wild (2011), and Wenqi Yi (2011).
What is your goal?

Want to win the Stockholm Water Prize?

Well, maybe just pass the final defense of your thesis with flying colors, get a great job, and win a fat contract for research?
Realistically . . . 

For an undergraduate, success is an A on the examination showing you understand the material in the course – knowledge others developed.

For an advanced graduate student or scholar, success is developing new ideas and convincing others of the merit of your findings. That involves written and oral communication.
Talking about Talking

So, making a good presentation is essential!
A good presentation needs?

A good “story”

Organization & preparation

Effective delivery
So Let's Consider –

- **Preparation**
  - Organizing the presentation
  - Creating visual aids
  - Practice
  - Challenges

- **Delivery**
  - Interacting with audience
Typical Talk Outline

Introduction & motivation
Objective of talk
Outline
Main ideas – tell the story
Summarize with conclusions
Plan the content

Think about your audience

Introduction/motivation is as important as technical content – provides big picture

Use visual aids; explain your graphics

Use mathematical equations sparingly

What story should audience remember?
Visual Aids

Be consistent
Use visual variety:

*Text, Pictures, Charts, Graphs, Eqns*
Minimize animation
Slides do not stand alone

*explain the details!*
A Bad Example

Storage in Horsetooth Reservoir 2002
Another Bad Example

- This is an example of a bad, bad slide. It has far too much text on it which makes it very very difficult to read everything, and to know what is important. There is no structure. The audience will strain to read everything on the slide instead of listening to YOU. And why is there a bullet on the slide way up there in the corner? 😊
A Better Slide

Full sentences not necessary
Avoid meaningless words or symbols
Make every word count
Omit “the” and “a” in most cases

- Bullets sometimes convenient
Preparation – Practice!

Practice, practice, practice!
Rehearse out loud with friends
If possible use actual room
Make sure equipment works
Two Challenges

1. What can you say in your allotted time that audience will appreciate learning?

2. A good picture is worth 1000 words. Create a picture or diagram that makes key concepts clear and memorable?
And you ask:

How many slides should I prepare?

Or even better ask:

How much should I try to cover and with what detail?
It's a capital crime to exceed your allotted time!
Elements of a Presentation

• Preparation
  Organizing the content/message
  Creating visual aids
  Practice
  Challenges

• Delivery
  Interacting with audience
Elements of a Presentation

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Delivering Your Talk

Speak up! Show enthusiasm
Talk to *your audience*

Eye contact – look at people, all of them
It’s natural to be nervous, but beware of nervous mannerisms
Turn cell phone off; dress appropriately
On answering questions . . .

- Let questioner finish the question
- Be prepared to rephrase question
- Express appreciation
- Control your feelings: don’t argue with an aggressive questioner
Use of Powerpoint

Focus each slide on one idea.
Use San Serif font (Arial or Helvetica).
At least 20 point. Not 18 point.

Reserve Bold for headings

Maximize contrast between text & background

==> Avoid clutter & distractions <==

Use animation sparingly
Things to Remember:

Have a message – tell the story
Be sensible about visual aids
Practice
Interact with audience
It is natural to be nervous  (Deal with it!)
Deliver message  *in your allotted time*
Thank you for listening!
And instead of calling for questions...

Please share your experiences 😊