

**International Geographical Union Commission for Geographical Education  
2007 Regional Conference – Lucerne Switzerland  
29-31 July 2007**

## **How to Make a Good Presentation**

### **Things to Think About**

#### **1. Oral Communication is different from written communication**

Listeners have one chance to hear your talk and can't "re-read" when they get confused. In many situations, they have or will hear several talks on the same day. Being clear is particularly important if the audience can't ask questions during the talk. There are two well-known ways to communicate your points effectively. The first is to K.I.S.S. (keep it simple stupid). Focus on getting one to three key points across. Think about how much you remember from a talk last week. Second, repeat key insights: tell them what you're going to tell them (Forecast), tell them, and tell them what you told them (Summary).

#### **2. Think about your audience**

Most audiences should be addressed in layers: some are experts in your sub-area, some are experts in the general area, and others know little or nothing. Who is most important to you? Can you still leave others with something? For example, pitch the body to experts, but make the forecast and summary accessible to all.

#### **3. Think about your rhetorical goals**

For conference talks, for example, I recommend two rhetorical goals: leave your audience with a clear picture of the gist of your contribution, and make them want to read your paper. Your presentation should not replace your paper, but rather whet the audience appetite for it. Thus, it is commonly useful to allude to information in the paper that can't be covered adequately in the presentation. Below I consider goals for academic interview talks and class presentations.

#### **4. Practice your talk before the conference**

At the Symposium you have **20 minutes for your presentation and 10 minutes for discussion**. It is hard to distill one's work down to 20 minutes. Therefore we strongly recommend you to practice your presentation and check the time you need for it.

#### **5. Prepare**

This conference talk outline is a starting point, not a rigid template. Most good speakers average two minutes per slide (not counting title and outline slides), and thus use about a dozen slides for a 20 minute presentation.

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**\* Title/author/affiliation (1 slide)**

**\* Forecast (1 slide)**

Give gist of problem attacked and insight found (What is the one idea you want people to leave with? This is the "abstract" of an oral presentation.)

**\* Outline (1 slide)**

Give talk structure. Some speakers prefer to put this at the bottom of their title slide. (Audiences like predictability.)

**\* Background (2-4 slides)**

o Motivation and Problem Statement (1-2 slides)

(Why should anyone care? Most researchers overestimate how much the audience knows about the problem they are attacking.)

o Related Work (0-1 slides)

Cover superficially or omit; refer people to your paper.

O Methods (1 slide)

Cover quickly in short talks; refer people to your paper.

**\* Results (4-6 slides)**

Present key results and key insights. This is the main body of the talk. Its internal structure varies greatly as a function of the researcher's contribution.

(Do not superficially cover all results; cover key result well. Do not just present numbers; interpret them to give insights. Do not put up large tables of numbers.)

**\* Summary (1 slide)**

**\* Future Work (0-1 slides)**

Optionally give problems this research opens up.

**\* Backup Slides (0-3 slides)**

Optionally have a few slides ready (not counted in your talk total) to answer expected questions. (Likely question areas: ideas glossed over, shortcomings of methods or results, and future work.)

(Source: <http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~markhill/conference-talk.html>; contents slightly changed by S. Reinfried)