How to Give a Good Presentation

General Presentation Pointers

Slide Design

Background:

Use font colors that contrast with your background. When in doubt, use black font on white background for a presentation with many pictures or white/yellow font on black background for a presentation with lots of words.

Slide Title:

The audience should be able to understand the basic ideas behind your talk just by reading the titles of each slide.

Slide Structure:

Spend approximately one minute per slide.

To prevent wordiness, use bullets or lists instead of paragraphs. Phrases and key words are better than sentences. Additionally, pictures are a good way to reduce the number of words you use. In general, you should not have more than 6 lines of text per slide.

Make your presentation uniform (e.g. same color scheme, punctuation, animation – everything!).

Use standard fonts (e.g. Arial, Times) that are at least size 18. Capitalize every letter only when necessary.

Using your slideshow

Aide

Your slideshow is an aide to help you communicate. Many times (outside of the titles), a good slide show is incomprehensible without the speaker's narration. Notes should not be used during a slideshow presentation.

Animation

Simplicity is key. Animation can help a crowded slide be easier to read or a complicated figure easier to understand. It can also become distracting when overdone.

Repetition

People forget what you said five minutes ago. Repeat main points by coming back to a "theme slide" (e.g. outline of talk or a figure depicting the theme).

Major points

When you want to make a major point, you are encouraged to make a slide with that one idea. This can be in the form of a figure or a statement (look at hypothesis below).

Science Presentations

In general, science presentations follow the scientific method and the format of a science paper.

Introduction

Structure

Start globally. Introduce what is known in the field. State what is unknown (sometimes you have to explain why it's pertinent to care about the unknown). Explain how you are contributing to the unknown (i.e. your problem and how you are planning on solving it). Know your audience and carry this knowledge throughout your talk – it dictates how many concepts you must define, etc.

Hypothesis

Usually your specific hypothesis can come at the end of your introduction. Sometimes it sounds better in another part of your introduction. IT MUST BE STATED CLEARLY. It is wonderful to have a slide stating your hypothesis and your hypothesis only.

Methods/Results

BRIEFLY explain your methods. Say enough so the audience understands what you did. Extreme detail (exact methods such as "I did this. Then I did that. Then I went on…") will lose your audience. When you are using a novel or unfamiliar technique, it is okay to add detail.

Focus on your results.

- Titles should summarize your results.
- For graphs and charts, make sure everything is labeled (e.g. axes, lines). Get rid of unnecessary lines (remove excess gridlines in Excel). Use white backgrounds (unless you have fluorescent pictures, in which case use black). Make sure your color scheme is consistent and readable.
- Again, your figure is an aide to what you want to communicate. YOU MUST EXPLAIN YOUR DATA.

Conclusions

Point form is great. Restate problem and hypothesis. Concisely and clearly state conclusions from results. You may add any future directions.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledge anyone who directly helped you (e.g. mentor, tutor, funding).

You can use pictures and data from others during your slideshow. However, you must give credit where needed either written or spoken. The acknowledgements section of your presentation is a good place to put this information.