

# Oral Presentations

An oral presentation is not just salad dressing; it is not just the press conference where you announce your brilliant discovery to the rest of the world. Rather, you will have to communicate orally with others (talk to your sponsors (boss)) at regular intervals throughout your project and convince them of the utility, economy, and timeliness of your work. Even if the convincing is done informally, many facets of the formal oral presentation will serve you well in the informal situations. Oral communication skills will shape the course of any project.

The same principles that guide documents, paragraphs, and graphics guide oral presentations: structure, detail, beginning/middle/end, unity, transition, and development.

As with the other topics covered in these notes, the two important issues are structure and delivery. These issues are addressed at three levels:

- the mechanics of giving a good presentation: using the tools
- what makes a good presentation: craft
- what makes an excellent presentation: art

## 20 DOS AND DON'TS -- MECHANICS

- Never apologize
- Speak at a sane rate. Don't say, " We have a lot of material to cover, so I'm going to have to talk fast..."
- Overheads:
  - Check your projection
  - Shun a cluttered overhead
  - Check your projection
  - Don't stand in front of your overhead
  - 10/12 views for a 10=>15 minute presentation
  - Embellish and fill in your overheads
  - Don't cover up parts of the overhead
  - Bring key equations forward on several graphs
  - If you use an overhead twice, have two of them
- Time:
  - Don't run overtime
  - Focus on just one result
  - Don't run overtime
  - Don't derive unless the derivation is important
  - Don't run overtime
  - Detail can kill you
  - Don't run overtime
- body stuff:
  - Control your hands -- use them to focus attention on the screen
  - Don't be a stone/don't be a fidget

- Speaking:
  - Talk so you can be heard
  - Don't talk to the wall
  - Don't read from notes -- if you must, start with something else.
- questions:
  - Repeat questions
  - Don't get bogged down in them

As George Orwell suggests, "Break any of these rules rather than say anything outright barbarous."

## **WHAT MAKES A GOOD TALK? CRAFT**

A good talk conveys information efficiently. The same expository issues that work for text and graphics work for oral presentations:

- Audience
- Problem and purpose
- Focus
- Structure
- Unity
- Transition
- Development

Delivery:

- Use stage fright
- Practice
- Know who you are and make the best of it

Graphics in oral presentations:

- Legible
- Decipherable
- Comprehensible

## **WHAT MAKES AN EXCELLENT TALK? ART**

- Discovery
  - Metaphor
  - Something for everyone, always
  - Personality -- humor and enthusiasm
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## **PRACTICE :: TEACH**

### **21w783 Presentation Expectations**

- Deliver an oral presentation based on your written work.
- You need only attend the session in which you present.
- Your audience is ten 21w783 students.
- Plan on 8 minutes for the presentation; shorter is OK, longer is not. 2 minutes Q&A.
- I encourage power point (get the file to me early if you expect to use my laptop) or overhead slides. Extensive use of the blackboard is too time consuming.
- Sign up for a time slot.

Let me know via e-mail when you would like to present.

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