

# Some Important Guidelines for Preparing and Delivering a Talk

Summarized by:

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## The Basics

### 1- Define your message:

- Write down a short list of important points (not more 3 or 4) i.e. "Take-away message".
- Note that your entire presentation should focus on presenting the take-away message in a clear way.
- Try not to make the "Take-away message" overly complex.

### 2- Know your audience:

- To be effective, your presentation must be delivered at a level that is suitable for your audience.
- You must analyze the background and the expectation of the audience.
- Decide how much background material is needed to deliver your take-away message effectively.

### 3- Prepare well:

- Know what you are talking about.
- There is no shame in answering, "I do not know" to a question that is asked.
- You must know when and where your presentation to be held.
- Discover that your pens are dried out before your presentation.
- You should find out how long you are required to speak (you may count slides or one simple slide per a minute).
- It is a good idea to keep your slides well organized in a folder or a notebook during your presentation.
- You might want to practice your presentation at least by a friendly audience a couple of days before your presentation (talking to a mirror can also help, but even better is a tape recorder, since you can play it back and hear yourself as other will hear).

## Delivering Your Presentation

### 1- Tell'em what you are going to say:

- A typical outline for the presentation take looks like this:

- Introduction
- Point1
- Point2
- Point3
- Conclusion

Where points 1 to 3 represent the take-away message.

- Note that, the audiences need an introduction to your topic.
- Review some background material (history, terminology, and notation)
- For non-specialists, the introduction may take up as much as halftime of the talk.
- Always start with what you know the audiences know.
- The points of the outline should be organized in a logical fashion (i.e. point 2 follows logically from point 1, and 3 follows 2,...etc)
- Avoid trying to dazzle your audience with impressive looking equations or complicated lines of reasoning.

### 2- Say it:

- It is the time to convey the essence of each point in your take-away message in an effective manner.

### 3- Tell'em what you have said:

- In the thesis presentations, you should talk about some suggestions for the future work.

## Preparing Slides

### 1- One Slide- one simple idea:

- No many ideas in the same slide.
- Use point form on your slides.
- Try summarizing each slide on a single line (like putting a simple question at the top of each slide.

### 2- Use lots of pictures, few equations:

- Pictures are worth thousands of words – the pictures you have, the better.
- Do not make your diagram complicated.
- Use simple block diagrams.
- Briefly show an equation.
- Graph numerical data rather than presenting numbers in tables.
- Avoid graphs with many different curves.
- Use contrasting colors to separate curves.

### 3- The mechanics of slide presentation:

- You may make use of hand-printed slides (may be they give an effective presentation).
- Use word processing (large font- 14 point size, and avoid too many font changes).

- Figures can be hand-printed or computer generated.
- Do not forget that you can always "cut – and – paste" the different elements in a slide (i.e. easy way).

### Other Useful Tips

- Relax; try not to be nervous by your audience.
- At the start, determine the best place to stand so that not blocking the projection or somebody's view.
- Remember to focus on your audience, not on the projector.
- Interact with the audience.
- Ask them if they are following you or ask them simple questions to see if they are.
- Take control of the questions, during or after the talk.
- Try to steer the topic back on track, otherwise audience participation can drive things far away from the main points of the talk.
- Cartoons can be an effective way to draw parallel with points you are trying to make.
- Your easy expression will keep up audience interest.
- Learn by Observation, in the university you are in a good position to observe other giving presentations.
- Take the opportunity to learn from mistakes that others make.
- Borrow (steal) techniques that you find effective.
- Watch carefully for the methods used by your lecturers that improve your understanding.
- Further Reading, that covers effective oral communication.
- You must list the references that you have used.

### Conclusions

- Last piece of advice, giving a successful talk takes a lot of effort.
- Take seriously the suggestions made by your audience and try to improve for the next time.
- Soon, you will be an expert in the preparation and presentation of technical seminars.

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#### About this document

This summary was created based on a permission from Prof. **Frank R. Kschischang**:

*Dear Mr. Tahoun,*

*Thank you for your kind wishes. Please go ahead and use the material that you have prepared based on my notes\*. Best wishes.*

**Frank R. Kschischang**

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\* *Giving a Talk: Guidelines for the Preparation and Presentation of Technical Seminars*  
[www.comm.utoronto.ca/frank/guide/guide0.html](http://www.comm.utoronto.ca/frank/guide/guide0.html)