Presenting your research: Giving talks

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CS224u: Natural language understanding
Basic structure
Mirrors paper structure, but **must be simpler**.

**Beginning**
- What problem are you solving?
- Why is it important?
- What approaches have been tried, and why have they not fully solved the problem?

**Middle**
- What data?
- What approach? (model type, feature representations)
- How to evaluate success?

**End**
- Quantitative results, graphs.
- Which features/techniques/resources contributed most?
- Overall, what happened and why?
Patrick Blackburn’s fundamental insight

Where do good talks come from?

Honesty.

“A good talk should never stray far from simple, honest communication.”

PowerPoint used for evil (not inevitable!)

http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/powerpoint

Peter Norvig: Gettysburg Address as PowerPoint

http://norvig.com/Gettysburg/
Slide design: two schools of thought

**Minimalist**

1. Your slides should be as spare as possible.
2. The audience should spend most of the time listening to and looking at you.
3. Individual slides do not stay up for long or get used in more than one way.

**Comparative**

1. Your slides should be as full as possible without sacrificing clarity.
2. Your talk should make it easy for people to spend time studying your slides.
3. Individual slides stay up for a long time and get used to make multiple comparisons and establish numerous connections.
Slide design: two schools of thought

A personal matter
Slide design: two schools of thought

A personal matter

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Slide design: two schools of thought

A personal matter

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- The comparative view seems right for teaching; it’s the closest slides come to a full, well-organized chalkboard.
A personal matter

- The minimalist view seems right for telling a story – often the best mode when time is of the essence and the audience is mainly there to learn about what your paper contains.
- The comparative view seems right for teaching; it’s the closest slides come to a full, well-organized chalkboard.
- Find the style that works for you. As long as you think long and hard about what it will be like to listen to your talk, and adjust accordingly, you’ll shine.
Guiding audience attention
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Guiding audience attention

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2. Color used *systematically* to create distinctions.

3. **Size** to draw attention to things.

4. **Boxes**, arrows ←, and other devices to help people navigate plots, model diagrams, and long prose statements.
Guiding audience attention

Overlays
Guiding audience attention

Color
Guiding audience attention

Size
Guiding audience attention

Boxes
Guiding audience attention

Boxes
More mundane things

- Turn off any notifications that might appear on the screen.
- Make sure your computer is out of power-saver mode so that the screen doesn’t shut off while you’re talking.
- Shut down running applications that might get in your way.
- Make sure your desktop is clear of files and notes that you wouldn’t want the world to see.
- If using PowerPoint / Keynote / Google Slides, have a PDF back-up just in case.
- Projectors can fail; always be prepared to give the talk without slides.
The discussion period

1. This is an important part of the presentation.
2. It should be a chance for the audience to gain a deeper understanding of your ideas. When the entire discussion period has this aim, it is a joy.
4. Try to pause for one second before answering each question.
5. Avoid saying “I have no idea” and leave it at that. When floored, say: “I have no idea, but let’s think about . . .”
6. Most questions won’t make total sense to you. Your questioner doesn’t know the work all that well.
7. You’ll be a hit if you can warp every question you get into one that makes sense and leaves everyone with the impression that the questioner raised an important issue.
I HAVE A QUESTION.

WELL, LESS OF A QUESTION AND MORE OF A COMMENT.

I GUESS IT’S LESS OF A COMMENT AND MORE OF AN UTTERANCE.

REALLY IT’S LESS AN UTTERANCE, MORE AN AIR PRESSURE WAVE.

IT’S LESS AN AIR PRESSURE WAVE AND MORE A FRIENDLY HAND WAVE.

I GUESS IT’S LESS A FRIENDLY WAVE THAN IT IS A FRIENDLY BUG.

I FOUND THIS BUG AND NOW WE'RE FRIENDS. DO YOU WANT TO MEET IT?

https://xkcd.com/2191/