HOW TO PRESENT

(SOME IDEAS ACCUMULATED OVER TIME)

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Starting point: preparations

- ❑ Overheads are important: spend ample time to prepare them

- ❑ Rehearse repeatedly and aloud before presentation (possibly, with somebody)

- ❑ Practice names of cited references

- ❑ Check English spelling/grammar if not mother tongue

- ❑ Check timing when rehearsing (you should not go too quick, nor too slow)

- ❑ Allow for "buffer time": questions and discussions might take a lot of precious time

- ❑ Bring a watch with you (and ask chair to warn you five minutes before end)

- ❑ Inquire what the knowledge of your audience is (economics faculty, students, political science etc.)

The audience

- ❑ Recall that people in the audience are often impatient and not interested

- ❑ They will fall asleep within 5 minutes if you do not catch their interest

- ❑ They can only remember a few things: let them exit the seminar remembering punch-line of the paper

- ❑ Check everybody is in condition to follow: does slide image fit the screen?

- ❑ Can everybody in the room hear you?

- ❑ Can everybody in the room see your slides?

Appearance of speaker

- ✓ dress nice to signal that you are making an effort (one cannot overdress)

- ✓ do not walk around all the time

- ✓ do not turn to blackboard

- ✓ use hands but do not wave wildly

- ✓ keep track of look on faces of some listeners

- ✓ change who you look at – do not focus on advisor/friend

- ✓ try to avoid putting your hands in your pocket

- ✓ Avoid "tics" (e.g. playing with keys/pens/change in your pockets)

Speak

- ✓ thank for invitation /opportunity to talk

- ✓ slow, loud and clear (if time is running out try to speak even slower)

- ✓ stop briefly between slides or different sections

- ✓ make occasional long stops

- ✓ audience if there are questions (e.g., before a new section: "it is now a good moment to ask questions if you have any")

- ✓ pause to give examples and intuition

- ✓ do not rush through the presentation (make sure people follow you)

Slides

- max 12 for 1h (max 15 for 1:15h) (each counts, long ones count double)
- prepare additional slides for questions
- make short-cuts in case you run out of time (e.g., use post-it notes to remember where to cut)
- anticipate going to blackboard (prepare; count time as showing a slide)
- do not flash slides (even when citing previous)
- Try to link different slides (e.g., "I am now going to show the implication of my results"...)
- follow the order in the slides (confusing if you first mention line 4, then line 1, and then do not mention at all line 2 and 3)

Individual slide

- text font 24 or larger (not much smaller in figures)
- max 15 lines (few concepts in each page) (or else spend more time and count as double)
- colors help but do not overdo
- do not mix too many styles/ fonts/ font sizes
- use bullets, stars or other signs to get attention
- use figures and graphs: they are often useful (but must be legible!)
- beware of large tables: audience will look at all entries (mark in colour or circle where to focus)
- think about whether landscape format would be better than portrait
- possibly avoid borders (as in business environment presentations)

More on individual slide

❖ avoid complete sentences

❖ citations only if very short

❖ do not use abbreviations unless standard

❖ additional heading?

❖ use italics and special symbols wisely

❖ avoid using sophisticated technology (laser pointer, PC projection) unless VERY confident on how to use it

❖ complement with handout if useful (but use consistent notations between handouts and slides)

Contents

❖ cover: title, author(s), affiliation(s), date

❖ introduction, motivation, anticipation of results (punch-line of paper)

❖ plan of the presentation

❖ literature: only relevant pieces; explain similarities/differences with your work (avoid spending hours on previous literature)

❖ the model

❖ main results

❖ policy implications / examples

❖ conclusion (punch-line = take home, max 4 results)

❖ future research

Some details, I

→ People should walk out of the room understanding what is new/original in your paper

→ Do not overestimate audience: if you are too technical, you might lose 90% of audience from minute 1...

→ ...but also avoid being too loose: people should understand that you use the right techniques and you know your business

→ ... so may want to choose various levels of presentation so that both types of listeners will profit

→ if "applied paper" give policy implications (or tentative general conclusions) if any, but do not make them up at all cost, if model not general/robust enough

→ if theory paper, help audience understand by means of examples or specific cases they are likely to know

→ mention stylised facts/examples which might support your thesis, if any

Some Details, II

The model:

→ brand new? mention if follows/departs from other models

→ do not forget timing and information

→ introduce definitions and notation formally correct when possible

→ justify assumptions if needed (do not invite all possible generalizations)

Main results: first state results in formal way; then explain intuitions behind them
Proofs:
→ give some intuition and mention techniques
→ explicit proofs are almost never important

Dealing with questions, I

♦ try to anticipate questions when practising (as you will be asking for them between sections)

♦ few questions during talk = bad sign

♦ listen carefully

♦ may repeat question in own words

♦ give short answers

♦ answer those concerning understanding immediately

♦ defer those not immediately relevant (e.g. those concerning extensions, those only of interest to few listeners)

♦ do not talk about non proven results unless you state it that way

Dealing with questions, II

♦ be polite but firm: if somebody asks questions beyond scope of presentation, either defer to the discussion it at the end or say you are glad to talk about after the talk or over coffee

♦ (same if somebody insists on points which are not of general interest)

♦ if you do not know answers, say so (then maybe try to reason aloud what the answer might be)

♦ avoid saying "nice question" and then referring to own work

♦ avoid spending time on questions which deal with previous literature (and which do not shed light on your paper)

Hints and helpful tricks

$\Rightarrow$ present special case and state that paper includes more general setting

$\Rightarrow$ mostly too much knowledge of listeners assumed

$\Rightarrow$ avoid assuming listeners stupid by explaining indirectly (e.g., as we know)

$\Rightarrow$ no miracle results

$\Rightarrow$ take advantage of your own strong points

$\Rightarrow$ impress listeners by take home message and how clear you present, not on how complicated issue is

$\Rightarrow$ find out how you did by asking others (difficult to evaluate yourself), but never look anxious and ask your interviewers "so, how did I go?", "will you offer me a job then?"