



## Tips for delivering a good academic presentation

Dr. Behrooz Mansouri, University of Southern Maine, Fall 2022

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- To prepare your talk, think of your audience and aim to put yourself in their shoe! Know who they are and prepare your talk accordingly. Are they general computer scientists? Are they researchers in your field?
- Within a given time (usually 15-20 minutes) aim to deliver **three main** vital points that you prefer the audience to remember after your presentation. Try to have a narrative (story). It is as if you are making a movie! How can you keep your audience on the edge of their seats? (But also remember that this is an academic presentation, do not overdo it!)
- At all costs, avoid having heavy text slides! Use images, diagrams, and tables whenever possible. Usually, your point should be delivered in one short sentence. If you need word wrapping, that is perhaps a good sign that you have done it wrong! You need to summarize the message (Do not use complete sentences)
  - e.g., “We used mode A and observed value X was improved” → “Method A increases X”
- This is very different from one person to another, but I never liked the content slide where you explain what will be seen in your presentation. Nobody will remember it! Just as mentioned, have the story in your talk and that would be enough
- Walk your audience through your slides. To do this, using animation is essential. If there is something in your slides that you want the audience to pay attention to, explicitly put a circle or use arrows to point to it
- Check colors! Having different colors with different meanings is confusing. For example, if you use blue to emphasize, in all your slides blue should mean that. Also, make sure to check your color scheme! For instance, using a white font with a pink background does not sound like a good idea!
- *Check the quality of your slides!* Make sure, if you are using screenshots, the quality of your images does not drop
- The audience gets distracted easily. When they want to bring attention back to your talk, they need to know where you are in your talk. Use a list that let them know which part you are at. For example, on the bottom part of the slides, you can have a list: Introduction, Related work, Method, Experiment, and Conclusion. Then, in each related slide, highlight the related section
- In many of the talks, the audience should ask questions only at the end of the presentation. Therefore, having a slide number is very important for referring back to a specific slide
- After you are done with your slides, check them several times in **presentation mode** to make sure there are no errors
- Whatever you put in your slides, you need to discuss it. If you do not want to talk about it, then remove it

- Use bullet points when you need to enumerate (showing related subsections of a subject). If there is an order, then use numbers for enumeration, not bullet points
- Simple things matter! When reviewing slides, make sure slides are easy to follow. For example, if you want to make comparisons between two things, make sure they can be easily seen and compared. Alignment plays an important role
- Do not change the presentation style. Keep the same font and formatting on different slides. For this, you can choose and build a theme
- **References.** Having a slide at the end of your talk showing references is a terrible idea! Nobody will remember that. Just in each slide, if you are referencing someone else work, cite it in small font at the bottom of the slide
- **Responding to questions.** As a presenter, it is completely normal if you do not know the answer to a question. You can respectfully explain that you do not know the answer and get back to the person later with an answer, or simply say “I have not thought of that!”. Note that for all the questions, you need to respect your audience. Many people start their answer by saying, “That’s a very good question!”. If you do not understand the question, make sure to clarify it. It is a good strategy to always start answering by repeating the question so that the audience gets to understand it, and also you can be corrected if you did not understand it
- Avoid having a long discussion on one question. If you need more time, you can say “we can discuss it later”
- **Last slide matters!** Note that the last slide is what will be up when you move to the QA part of your talk. You may choose wisely what you want to be shown to the audience during this part of your talk. Perhaps you do not want this slide to be just a big “Thanks for your attention!”
- **Anticipate questions.** You should always have plans for expected questions. This goes to your backup slides where you have the information for the things you could not mention in the presentation, mostly due to time limitations or if it was making your story and main messages unclear
- **Rehearse your presentation.** After your final slide deck is ready, it is time to practice. You should do this several times. When doing this, use a timer to make sure you are going over time. It is usually expected that you spend a minute on a slide (if it is more than that, perhaps you need to break the slide)
- When practicing, you may find that you need to change the order of your slides to make the narrative clear. Also, if you are running out of time, you can move some of the unnecessary slides (those that will not hurt your narrative) to your backup slides. Note that some of the details that can confuse the audience should be moved to the backup slides and if the audience wants to know the detail they can ask for it, or you can refer them to a resource
- **Practice with someone.** Rehearsing a talk is very important, but having someone listen to your talk (someone who is not familiar with your work) can help you to understand what is not clear in your presentation and needs more details
- **Delivering the talk.** It is okay to be nervous! Everyone gets nervous when presenting, even the most experienced speakers! Do not apologize for being nervous! Speak enthusiastically about your work. Make eye contact with the audience. And finally, be on time and dressed appropriately