

# How to Give Presentations



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First things first:

- never check your presentation with your luggage
- check out media long before the talk starts
- make sure all audience can see projected image
  - walk around
  - 2 projectors
  - wall vs. screen
- focus
- know equipment: switches, bulbs
- light and glare: media tradeoff
- backup media should always be available

This slide: intro slide

introduce self, where from, and topic

## The Message

### Prepare yourself

- know your message
- know your audience & venue
- practice, practice, practice

### Typical presentations

- top-down structure
- keep it simple
- use media effectively

### Style

- stay in control
- use body language
- let your enthusiasm show!

I always write out what the goal of the talk is, that is, the main message that I want people to remember from the presentation

The entire talk should be crafted to deliver this message

## Outline

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Why present?

Presentations you may give

Presentation structure

Presentation tips

The use of media

Handling questions and discussions

The thesis oral

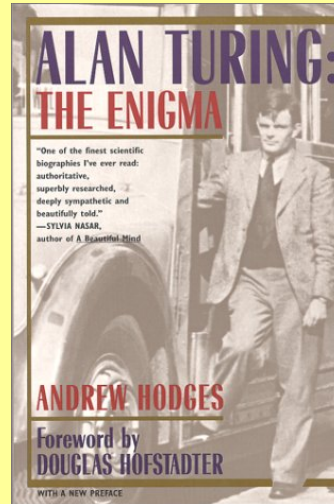
The outline provides a road map, and should relate back to the message

Motivation

## **Why present?**

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Science includes the dissemination of knowledge



Dissemination:

- papers
- presentations
- posters
- demonstrations
- videos
- WWW
- system / software releases ...

## Why present?

Audiences are an opportunity

- to get people interested in your work
- for them to associate of a “face” with the work
- for encouraging discussion/feedback

The downside:

- risky!



Dissemination:

Audience:

-is this the audience I want e.g., good conference?  
A write only paper?

-are there people I want to hear me in this audience?

-will the work be remembered afterwards  
surprises, skits, this intro!!!

Risks:

-people remember bombs and bad talks  
-hard to recover

-risk worth it: eg, live demo implies faith in the software

-possible to produce a paper which sounds ok in writing but may seem stupidifying or trivial as a presentation

## **Presentations you may give**

### Research papers

- seminar/conferences, workshops

### Surveys / topic introductions

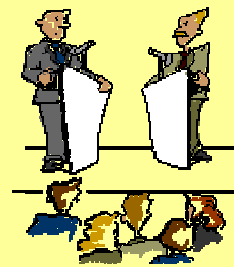
- tutorials/conferences/class

### Discussions / points of view

- seminars, workshops
- panels

### Defense of known subject matter

- Thesis, proposals



Your minimum presentations:

You are required to give at least one departmental seminar to your peers (other grads) and faculty

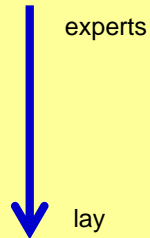
You should try to publish and present at least one paper and/or outside presentation

You have to give a Thesis Oral, where orals are public.

## Presentations you may give

### Audiences

- topic specialists
- area specialists
- computer scientists
- scientists
- academics
- public



### Audience:

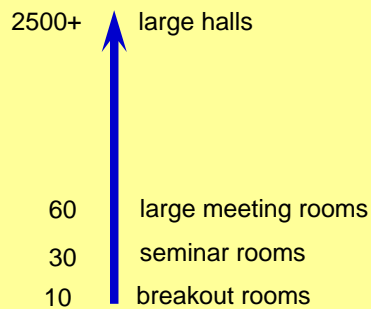
- your talk must be prepared at the right level for your audience.
- A great talk for one audience may bomb with another.
- the audience determines the amount of detail you can get into

## Presentations you may give

As room size increase, so does:

formality

inability of audience to cope with detail



Larger audience:

- broader interests
- less overall knowledge of your area
- less able to cope with detail

Exception: thesis oral

- small but formal



## **Presentation structure**

The Opening: 1

*1-2 minutes*

- Introduce yourself and co-authors
- Tell them what you are going to tell them
- Define the problem
- Provide a road map (outline)

Give the chair notes to introduce you,  
and discuss it with them  
so you get a good intro!

## **Presentation structure**

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The Opening: 2

*~5 minutes*

- Tell them why they should listen
- Motivate the audience
  - define the problem in greater detail
  - emphasize your goal and contributions within that context
- Remind audience of background/terminology they need
  - avoid or explain jargon
  - relate to earlier work

Example:

- Apply theoretical aspects to real world problems and applications
- how it fits in
- why it is useful
- Gives background to understand your talk
- Avoid or explain jargon / acronyms

## **Presentation structure**

### The Body

- Tell them
- Describe what you did, and how you did it without excessive detail
- Explain its significance

-Avoid excessive details:

Refer to paper for details

-Significance

Tell audience why they were there

## **Presentation structure**

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### The Conclusions

*2-3 minutes*

- Tell them what you have told them
- Summarize purpose and main point(s)
- Discuss current work/open problems
- Indicate that your talk is over

-Mention gaps that weren't covered in the talk or the paper (avoids awkward questions)

-Be open and honest  
increases credibility

## Presentation tips

I can't overemphasize the importance of being clear in your own mind what you want the audience to get from your presentation.

Only then can you really concentrate on doing a good job of getting it across.



Bruce  
MacDonald

Your message should permeate your talk

- the intro, the contributions, the conclusions

- all points should re-enforce it

- it should be the single thing the audience takes away with them

## **Presentation tips**

I can't overemphasize the importance of being clear in your own mind what you want the audience to get from your presentation.

Only then can you really concentrate on doing a good job of getting it across.

## **Know your message**



Bruce  
MacDonald

Your message should permeate your talk

- the intro, the contributions, the conclusions

- all points should re-enforce it

- it should be the single thing the audience takes away with them

## **Presentation tips**

Don't get bogged down in details

- will lose people and never get them back
- main point forgotten by audience
- fit details to your audience

## **Keep it simple**

Details:

- You know too much, and can get bogged down / over-run time
- Shorter talks are harder!
- Decide what you want to include and leave out while still communicating the main message is hard work

Audience

- Different audiences require different styles / terminology / detail

## **Presentation tips**

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### Good body language

- maintain eye contact
- speak clearly and audibly
- be enthusiastic
- don't read from a script



‘Sell’ your ideas.

Much of message comes from body language and voice

Scripts: reading from them puts people to sleep.



## Presentation tips

Watch the time!



Time:

Conferences - strict time

people hate missing coffee  
breaks / lunch

you may lose your question  
period

avoid going faster: trim instead

## **Presentation tips**

Prepare, practice, revise, practice

- get talk to match slides
- know your notes, but don't rely on them
- get feedback
  - friendly but critical audience

Practice is the most important single thing you can do to improve your presentation!!!

## Use of media

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### None

- practiced speakers are best at this



### Whiteboard

- best for small rooms/groups
- best for developing examples
- very slow



Avoid no media

Whiteboard:

-can use with other media

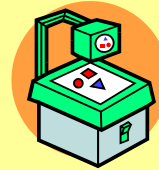
eg for recording static list of  
points during presentation

## Use of media

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### Transparencies

- must be legible by all (assume the worst!)
- typeset
- don't prepare too many
- prefer pictures/figures/tables over words



### Computers

- less text / slide
- expect poor lighting
- best for animations and demonstrations



## Overhead

- always reliable
- bright, easy to see
- limits talk (no demo, animation etc)
- once standard, but now the presentation bar is much higher
- falling out of favor!

## Computers:

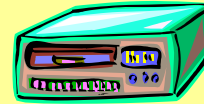
- excellent for multimedia
- but unreliable, hard to set up, projector problems, power issues, resolution dilemmas, projector brightness
- expect them to fail
- maximize font size / images / contrast due to poor lighting
- have backup media just in case

## Use of media

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### Video

- excellent for short system demonstrations
- don't let them take over!
- can talk over longer ones



### Demos

- superb at showing
- talk over them



### Microphone

- place it well



## Videos

-great, but don't let them take over

## Demos

- they see it, they believe it
- risky, but well worth it
- have backup (video) just in case!

## Microphone:

- placed too high, breathing
- too low, bad audio / feedback
- keep mouth by mike
- watch out for wires
- know where the switch is

Text description

## **GroupSketch (1991)**

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A multi user distributed drawing package

Features include:

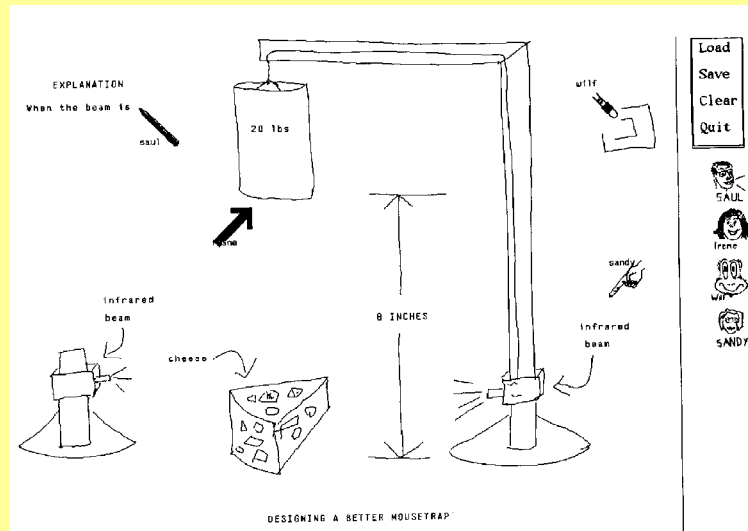
- a shared drawing surface
- multiple labeled cursors
  - one per participant
  - indicates its owner's mode
- simultaneous interaction
- fine-grained display of all people's actions
- real time response

Illustrating a system by text

-textual descriptions of visual material is hard to understand

Picture

## GroupSketch (1991)

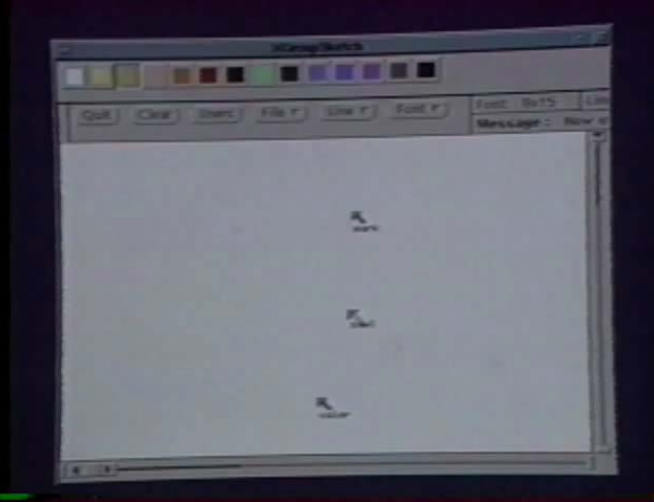


Illustrating a system by image

-weave a scenario around it so people can understand how the system works

Video

## GroupSketch (1991)



- telepointers
- fine-grained actions
- simultaneous interaction

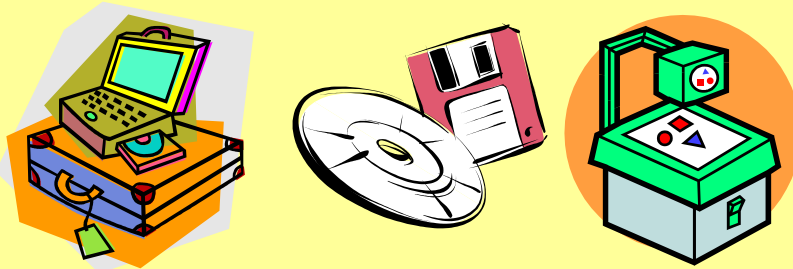
Illustrate a system by image and video

- use image as prelude to tell them what to watch for
- reduce the volume and talk over it if it's a long video so it doesn't take over



## Use of media

Always have backups in other media forms



Expect everything to work, but  
prepare for failure

May have 2<sup>nd</sup> lower quality version,  
but still works (eg overheads)

Too much detail; cluttered

## Appearance of Media

### None

- practiced speakers are best at this, because they are comfortable talking to the audience

### Whiteboard

- this is best for small rooms, for groups and for developing examples where the example unfolds over time
- its really too slow a medium, because it takes time to write things down!
- it also puts your back to the audience

### Transparencies

- must be legible by people at back of your expected meeting room in bad lighting conditions (assume the worst!)
- of course, it should be typeset. Some good thing to remember are:
  - large, variable width fonts
  - uncluttered, with only a few easily remembered points on the slide that you can talk around
  - white space used as hints
- don't prepare too many, because people won't remember. Around 1.5-2 minutes/overhead or more is a reasonable rule of thumb
- people remember visuals, so prefer pictures/tables over words if possible

## Example of different (bad) media use

Appearance of Media (16 point courier)

None

- practiced speakers are best at this

Whiteboard

- best for small rooms/groups
- best for developing examples
- very slow

Transparencies

- must be legible by all (assume the worst!)
- typeset
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ALL CAPS

## **APPEARANCE OF MEDIA**

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### NONE

- PRACTICED SPEAKERS ARE BEST AT THIS

### WHITEBOARD:

- BEST FOR SMALL ROOMS/GROUPS
- BEST FOR DEVELOPING EXAMPLES
- VERY SLOW

### TRANSPARENCIES

- TYPESET
- DON'T PREPARE TOO MANY
- PREFER PICTURES/FIGURES/TABLES OVER WORDS

Fontitis, overdecorated

## Appearance of Media



### None

- practised speakers are *best* at this

### Whiteboard:

- best for
  - small rooms/groups
  - developing examples
- very slow

### Transparencies

- must be legible by all (assume the worst!)
- **Typeset it**
- don't prepare too many
- prefer pictures/figures/tables over words



Slide 23, copyright Saul Greenberg University of Calgary

Bad colors, contrast...

## Appearance of media

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### Computers

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Your screen may give far better contrast than the screen in the hall!!!

Gratuitous animations (not visible in handouts)

## **Appearance of Media**

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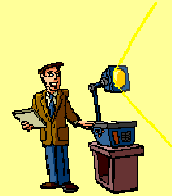
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### Transparencies

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About right

## Appearance of Media

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### Whiteboard

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### Transparencies

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## Question/Discussion

Anticipate questions ahead of time

- dry runs help

Turn “bad” questions into good ones you can answer

- always repeat the question

Maintain control

- guide discussion
- limit time on minor/irrelevant



-If you can't hear/understand the question after 2nd repeat:

-say what you think you heard and answer that

Control: don't get left out of the loop

-many prima donnas out there who want there seconds of fame

## **The Thesis Oral Presentation**

### **Why?**

- a warm-up period for you and the examiners
- reminds examiners what they have read

### **What?**

- objective of your work
- very brief overview/motivation/history
- highlights of your methodology/results
- main contributions
- future directions

### **To prepare**

- mock defense

Ask your advisor about what should be in it.

## **Summary**

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### Prepare yourself

- know your message
- know your audience & venue
- practice, practice, practice

### Typical presentations

- top-down structure
- keep it simple
- use media effectively

### Style

- stay in control
- use body language
- let your enthusiasm show!

I always write out what the goal of the talk is, that is, the main message that I want people to remember from the presentation

The entire talk should be crafted to deliver this message

... and it should end with the same message