Final Presentation Recommendations

1 Purpose of the Talk

The main goals of your talk are as follows:

1. Motivate your work – Convince your audience that the area you have chosen is interesting and that there is, in fact, a problem that needs to be solved.

2. Summarize your solution – Describe the key points of your solution. Note that your goal is not to give the audience every detail of the work you have done. Rather, your goal is to summarize the important components of your work.

3. Summarize your results – Again, you need not describe every experiment you ran. Rather, you should summarize the main results you have discovered.

4. Improve your communication skills – It is absolutely essential that you be able to communicate the results of your work to others. *Everyone* can use improvement in this area. Use this as an opportunity to improve your communication skills.

Your grade will be based primarily on the following components: (1) your clarity of presentation; (2) the quality of the content you present; and (3) your preparation including your slides and any demonstration.

2 Suggested Format

Following is a suggested format for a 30 minute talk. This format would be very appropriate for a group of two students. However, your format may vary significantly based on the structure of your project and the number of people in your group. Keep in mind that every group member will be expected to participate equally. Therefore, you will need to carefully consider how to divide material.

1. Introduction – Begin by telling your audience what you plan to discuss. (1 slide – 1-2 minutes)

2. Motivation and Goals – Motivate your problem by introducing the area and summarizing the related work. Describe why the related work does not provide a solution to the problem you are trying to solve. You should assume your audience is technically savvy, but does not have expertise in your particular area. Also, you should assume that your audience has no prior knowledge of the problem you are solving. (4-5 slides – 5-7 minutes)

3. Design and Implementation – Outline the design of your solution. Describe the main components of your design and any unique or interesting features of your implementation. You should provide enough detail to communicate how your design achieves your goals, but do not overload your audience with detail. (4-5 slides – 10 minutes)

4. Results – Report your results. First, describe the set up of your experiments including the metrics you tested and the parameters you varied. Also, include a description of the testbed environment (e.g., the specs of the machines you used). Show your graphs and discuss the impact of the results. Don't simply report numbers, describe what the numbers mean with respect to the problem you are solving.. (3-4 slides – 10 minutes)

5. Conclusion – Wrap-up and summarize your take-home message. (1-2 slides – 2 minutes)

3   General Recommendations

1. Read David Patterson's guide to giving a bad talk.

2. Practice – One practice talk is not enough! Practice in front of your friends, in the shower, while walking home.

3. 2 minutes per slide – Keep the number of slides to a minimum. Plan to spend about 2 minutes on each slide.

4. Use pictures – Your slides are not there to help you remember what you want to say. If you read from your slides, you might as well just sit down. Your slides should illustrate the points you are trying to make.

5. Convey your message – Have a clear and concise message that you want to convey. If all else fails, fall back on your message. Repeat that message early and often.

6. Have a summary for each slide – For every slide, identify a one-sentence message that you want to communicate. If you find yourself losing track of what you want to say, say your one-sentence message and move on.

7. Practice transitions – For every slide, identify a one-sentence transition that will get you to the next slide. A good way to do clarify the flow of your talk is to practice just your one-sentence message and transition for every slide. This is also a good way to do a speed practice when you don't have time to practice the whole talk.

8. Avoid too much detail – Remember, your talk is an advertisement. You should not even attempt to try to tell your audience everything you've done. You want to give them only enough information to convince them that the problem is interesting and that the solution works.

How to Give a Bad Talk

by David Patterson

I   Thou shalt not be neat

Why waste research time preparing slides? Ignore spelling, grammar and legibility. Who cares what 50 people think?

II   Thou shalt not waste space

Transparencies are expensive. If you can save five slides in each of four talks per year, you save $7.00/year!

III   Thou shalt not covet brevity

Do you want to continue the stereotype that engineers can't write? Always use complete sentences, never just key words. If possible, use whole paragraphs and read every word.

IV   Thou shalt cover thy naked slides

You need the suspense! Overlays are too flashy.

V   Thou shalt not write large

Be humble – use a small font. Important people sit in front. Who cares about the riff-raff?

VI   Thou shalt not use color

Flagrant use of color indicates uncareful research. It's also unfair to emphasize some words over others.

VII   Thou shalt not illustrate

Confucius says "A picture = 10K words," but Dijkstra says "Pictures are for weak minds." Who are you going to believe? Wisdom from the ages or the person who first counted goto's?

VIII   Thou shalt not make eye contact

You should avert eyes to show respect. Blocking screen can also add mystery.

IX   Thou shalt not skip slides in a long talk

You prepared the slides; people came for your whole talk; so just talk faster. Skip your summary and conclusions if necessary.

X   Thou shalt not practice

Why waste research time practicing a talk? It could take several hours out of your two years of research. How can you appear spontaneous if you practice? If you do practice, argue with any suggestions you get and make sure your talk is longer than the time you have to present it.