

How to give an excellent presentation

*** *Speaking***

- 1) Think about what you want to say, and what you DON'T want to say. Saying certain things may lead you down a path you don't want to go during your presentation. You can always answer questions in the end.
- 2) A good talk starts with the premise that your audience is ignorant but smart, so if you provide a clear general introduction and lucid slides, they will understand what you are trying to do.
- 3) Don't be afraid to give away the punch line early, and then repeat it several times to make sure they "got it".
- 4) It's okay to repeat your important points over and over. Have slides w/ statements in between data slides. It's easier for people to remember the facts that way.
- 5) The bottom-feeder talk will start with the speaker saying "the title of my talk is XXX". The audience already saw that on your title slide; engage your audience with something more direct!
- 6) Avoid using the same "filling words" over and over. A good example is the word "actually", which is used way too often by many people for no reason. "So" to start a sentence is another one. Personally, if I catch someone using the same word over and over, I end up fixating on that and not pay attention to the seminar anymore.
- 7) Try to tell a story, connect the slides by building up to the next piece of data you want to present.
- 8) Establish eye contact with your audience, and keep it. Only look at your slides when pointing, and point precisely, don't wave it around.
- 9) Look at specific people in the audience when you make points. Ignore the ones who fell asleep; they were up too late or are narcoleptics and it's not a reflection on you.
- 10) Use your pointer effectively; hold it steady and point it at a particular point, or make a small circular motion to draw attention to a word or object. Do not slash about like Zorro.
- 11) Modulate your voice and pace of speaking to emphasize the Big Points.
- 12) Communicate your excitement to the audience. Be animated. No monotones or your audience will be bored!
- 13) Describe what is on the slide before discussing the conclusions of the experiment -- how the experiment was set up, and even what experiment it was.
- 14) Practice the talk in front of peers at least a week ahead of the presentation, and be prepared to radically modify slides and discussion to improve the talk.
- 15) Practice, practice, and practice more!

*** *Slide design***

- 1) Don't read your slides. If you do, they have too much writing on them. Use minimal phrases to prompt you about the topic, and fill in with your own words - that way people will pay attention to you and what you are saying.

- 2) Slides SHOULD use a figure/diagram in place of words whenever possible. No slides full of words, ever!
- 3) Always have a title for each slide. We all get nervous. It helps both the speaker and the audience if each slide contains a title and a conclusion (when fits).
- 4) Give the figure a title: e.g. "Histone ChIP" (even in addition to the slide title). Whenever an experimental result is shown, first tell your audience first what that experiment is -- Western blot, genomic PCR, etc.
- 5) Add a label to the curves you are describing.
- 6) Decide exactly where to direct the attention of the audience for each slide – I call these the focal points of the slide. Know how you want to lead the audience through each slide, one focal point at a time.
- 7) Obey the 1 slide/1-2 min rule. 1 min for simple slides, 2 min for complicated ones.
- 8) Try to use the same font throughout the presentation. Use font size that's readable, even for graph axes and things like that.
- 9) Don't stuff -- this includes using as FEW slides as possible, and presenting only information NEEDED and TO BE explained during the talk. One of the worst things is to show a busy slide and tell your audience "don't worry about this...", or "today I only have time to walk you through this part of the slide..."
- 10) Only include the relevant data - think "minimalist", what do you really need to make your point?
- 11) If you get questions that bring you to discuss something that is not in your presentation, have a few extra slides ready for that possibility
- 12) Slides should not be cluttered with background patterns, slide numbers, institutional affiliations (except for intro and acknowledgments), and colors that are not carrying a meaning.
- 13) If you have several topics in your presentation, it can be nice to label them on the side (written sideways) or bottom with the name of the topic, so someone who lost track for a minute can refocus right away.
- 14) Don't overestimate the eyesight or intelligence of your audience -- they need to see and need your explanation. Use bullets, large, and bold fonts. Do not waste the space of the slide. If you can further stress your points by filling the blank space with larger fonts, do it.
- 15) Animations can be very useful, but try to avoid fancy flying objects.
- 16) If you have a slide with a list of bullets, show them all at once, do not make them appear one after the other. It is cute, but useless, and often people forget to advance the presentation to the next bullet.

** Some people are funny, some are formal, some are ironic. There are many effective styles, so be yourself. If you follow the points above, you can be effective with your own personality.*

- We appreciate BMB faculty who gave us above advice.