





The Research Talk

How to Give a Good Research Talk



What is a Research Talk?

- Usually lasts 30 – 60 minutes
- Audience is assumed to have knowledge of general area but not experts in specific topic
- Presents (sells) your research findings
 - Talks \leq 30 mins = advertisement for paper
 - Talks $>$ 30 mins usually go into technical details of the work
- Need balance
 - Too much detail  audience lost
 - Too little detail  audience thinks work is insignificant (or incomplete)

Sequence of the Talk

- Title/Author Affiliation (1 slide)
- Sales Slide: brief motivation/intro – abstract (1 slide)
- Talk outline (1 slide)
- Motivation (1 – 2 slides)
- Background/Related Work (1 – 2 slides)
- Method/Key insight (2 – 3 slides)
- Results/Analysis (4 – 6 slides)
- Summary (1 slide)
- Future Work (1 slide)
- Backup (not shown but ready (4 – 6 slides)

The Mile-High View

- Old communication adage holds true:
 - Say what you are going to say
 - Let your audience know what the talk is about
 - Say it
 - This is the talk!
 - Say what you just said
 - Summarize what you just presented
- This process promotes understanding of your message

Three Rules Never to Violate

- Never exceed allotted time
- Never go into a talk “cold”: practice beforehand!
- Always be prepared for technology to fail



Dress for Success

- Wear clothing that fits in with audience
 - Don't be too flashy or revealing
 - Don't be too casual or formal
 - May need to clip on a microphone
 - Varies by discipline & conference! Ask!!!
- Wear clothing you feel comfortable in (within constraints above)

Bad Mannerisms

- Don't!
 - Wander around the room
 - Talk with your hands
 - Jingle change/keys in pockets (empty them!)
 - Read from your slides
 - Read from your notes
 - Avoid eye contact with audience
 - Use off-color humor
 - Use filler words (silence can be golden!)
 - Speak too quickly/slowly



Questions!

- Rephrase the question
 - Helps all to hear
 - Confirms you're answering the same question
- Thank questioners for their question (they showed interest!)
- Don't fight/argue with questioner
- Never fake answers – say you don't know & will get back

The Slide: Your Canvass

- Use graphics where appropriate
 - Don't over use graphics that have no content
 - Diagrams/charts = 100 words!
- Don't overuse animations or sounds
- Use sans-serif fonts
- Use large font (may be in large venue)
- Plan on 90 – 120 seconds of talking per slide
- Don't be overly verbose with the text on your slide. It makes it very difficult to pay attention to the speaker and the talk. Your audience will zone out in front of a wall of text... words, words, words...

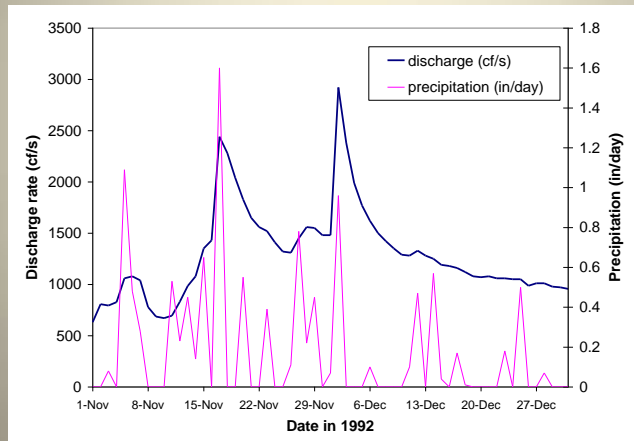
Data!

- Tables are good for small amounts of data

date	discharge (cf/s)	precipitation (in/day)	date	discharge (cf/s)	precipitation (in/day)
1-Nov	631	0	1-Dec	1480	0.07
2-Nov	808	0	2-Dec	2920	0.96
3-Nov	794	0.08	3-Dec	2380	0
4-Nov	826	0	4-Dec	1990	0
5-Nov	1060	1.09	5-Dec	1770	0
6-Nov	1080	0.48	6-Dec	1620	0.1
7-Nov	1040	0.28	7-Dec	1500	0
8-Nov	779	0	8-Dec	1420	0
9-Nov	686	0	9-Dec	1350	0
10-Nov	670	0	10-Dec	1290	0
11-Nov	696	0.53	11-Dec	1280	0.1
12-Nov	831	0.23	12-Dec	1330	0.47
13-Nov	985	0.45	13-Dec	1280	0
14-Nov	1080	0.14	14-Dec	1250	0.57
15-Nov	1350	0.65	15-Dec	1190	0.04
16-Nov	1430	0	16-Dec	1180	0
17-Nov	2440	1.6	17-Dec	1160	0.17
18-Nov	2280	0	18-Dec	1120	0.01
19-Nov	2040	0	19-Dec	1080	0
20-Nov	1830	0.55	20-Dec	1070	0
21-Nov	1650	0	21-Dec	1080	0
22-Nov	1560	0	22-Dec	1060	0
23-Nov	1520	0.39	23-Dec	1060	0.18
24-Nov	1410	0	24-Dec	1050	0
25-Nov	1320	0	25-Dec	1050	0.5
26-Nov	1310	0.11	26-Dec	986	0
27-Nov	1450	0.78	27-Dec	1010	0
28-Nov	1560	0.22	28-Dec	1010	0.07
29-Nov	1550	0.45	29-Dec	977	0
30-Nov	1480	0	30-Dec	972	0
			31-Dec	957	0

Better Data

- Charts Do a much better job!



What to Present

- A sales pitch for your work (paper)
- Motivation of the problem
- Key insights to your approach
- Results & Analysis
- Summary

Final Thoughts

- You are telling a story
- Keep it interesting
- Transitions between slides should flow smoothly
- Gauge your audience & adjust appropriately
- Don't overestimate the knowledge of your audience!!

Summary

- Told you what I was going to tell you
- Told you have to give a good talk
- Know telling you what I told you!



References

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