How to Give Better Presentations

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Why are you giving a Presentation?

• Important to think clearly about why you are giving a presentation.

• Principally the point is to raise your profile with the audience by showing the importance of your work to others.

• Your collaborators already know all about you. They will not change their opinion much of you or your work.

• Target your talk at the people in the audience that you want to recognise you and your work in future.

• Helps to be recognised as somebody that people have heard of or seen talking or heard other people discussing.
Why are you giving a Presentation?

• Recognition is the key to future funding, future jobs, advancement in every sense.

• Poor presentation skills can seriously damage an otherwise promising future.

• Above all, a presentation must be interesting, stimulating, amusing and memorable.

• The audience must go away feeling that your work is much more interesting than they ever imagined and that you are the right person to be doing it.
Making Excellent Presentations.

• Any presentation is telling the story and that must be communicated as directly and simply as possible.

• If you have friends in the audience you can trust ask them for candid and focus criticism of any presentation.

• Nobody gets this right spontaneously, and good feedback is invaluable (only if you consequently change your presentation style)!

• Seeing a video of your presentation can be deeply shocking, but very useful!
Presentation Strategies.

• Any complication or confusion damages and harms the message.

• Avoid using unnecessary text: few can read text and listen to you.

• Do not use it as a crib sheet: if you need that then make notes and use those. Do not read from slides!

• Think about how you speak. Avoid “urs”, “ums”, “ers” by speaking more slowly, and in short sentences.

• Do not start every sentence with “So”!

• Avoid saying “Like” frequently!
Get Your Timing Right!

• Never ever go over time!

• Finishing a few minutes early is wonderful, finishing on time requires skill and experience but is ideal, but going late annoys everybody and suggests incompetence.

• Conference presentations are usually relatively short.

• It is critical to have a trial run of your talk to check the timing in advance.

• People are much more likely to go over time with short presentations and often chairman are completely unforgiving about going over time.

• That final punch-line may be snapped out just like that!
Making Excellent Presentations.

• Be careful with presentation file format from programmes such as Powerpoint. They are nearly, but not always compatible.

• Fonts are unreliable, and can destroy careful formatting.

• PowerPoint has the capacity to pack a presentation in its entirety.

• Do not simply make a copy of the PowerPoint file unless it simply contains text and simple images.

• Movies are never packaged in without special effort.

• Once you have a copy on CD or USB stick, then check it plays properly independently of the original version on the computer.
The Technology Used for Your Presentation Is Critical.

• Make sure that your computer talks to the projector properly.

• Does the image fill the screen (Windows PCs good, Macs poorer at this).

• If you are using movies, check that they also show on the screen as well as on your laptop.

• Many computers do not have the power to drive both. Set your machine to display on the projector only if that is a problem.

• Make sure your computer does not go into hibernate/screensaver/shutdown mode during a talk by disabling these facilities.
The Technology Used for Your Presentation Is Critical.

• Unless you are absolutely certain that you have a vast amount of battery power make sure your computer is connected to the mains.

• Disable wireless access: it is annoying to be offered a Windows update during a presentation, particularly if it starts to install itself and force a reboot!

• Disable any speech recognition software. It can do crazy things after several incorrectly recognised words!

• Also can be embarrassing to find a personal or intimate email subject line appearing during your talk.
The Technology Used for Your Presentation Is Critical.

- Ideally, run through the slides before your talk starts to check that all looks visible and understandable.

- If you do identify a problem at this stage then you are warned in advance and can talk around it in your presentation.

- Ideally, use your own laser pointer/wireless remote control.

- Preferably purchase a green laser with reasonably high power.

- Laser spots look much brighter to the presenter (because of back scatter from the screen structure) than they do from the audience.

- Red laser spots are much harder to see particularly if using a good high power projector.
The Technology Used for Your Presentation Is Critical.

- In conferences always check during the coffee/tea/lunch intervals that your computer can talk to the projector properly and that you know how to set it up quickly.

- Always mute the sound:
  - An unexpected reboot, even while sitting in the audience, it is very distracting.
  - Everyone will hear the jolly Windows start-up music playing.
  - Puts you on the back foot even before you start the presentation.

- Conferences increasingly want you to use their computers. If you use animation, videos, movies remember these are not part of the *.ppt or *.pptx files!
The Technology Used for Your Presentation Is Critical.

- A high resolution, high quality computer screen in a darkened office is not where you will give a presentation.

- Try out your presentation on a less good projector in a less helpful environment.

- Sackler Lecture Theatre fabulously good, great projector, easily darkened. Very few are that good.

- Some need the projectionist to advance to the next slide.

- It may not be possible to darken the room very well.
The Technology Used for Your Presentation Is Critical.

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• Enough charge to finish presentation?
• Could you give your talk if the power went off?
• Turn off your mobile phone. Bad enough if a member of the audience gets a call, dreadful if it is you.
Other Considerations!

• Always make absolutely sure you finish in the time allocated.

• Leave enough time for questions.

• If you give a short talk, have your slides from a longer talk attached after the conclusions so you can use them if a question arises.

• Dress a little bit tidier than normal. Shows you value the opportunity, and value the attendance of everyone.

• Think carefully about what you are wearing. Giving a talk can get the adrenaline flowing making you hot. Can you strip off safely?

• Go to the toilet before the talks session starts!
Making Presentation Slides

• Most people will use Microsoft Powerpoint or some kind of (apparently) equivalent package. Most of them are nearly PowerPoint compatible.

• However certain standard components such as unusual fonts are not included in the PowerPoint file.

• Be cautious using other packages such as Prezi (whizzy dynamic graphics, but will it run elsewhere?).

• PDF presentations are less standard, and Adobe versions can be inconsistent, though better than they used to be.
Choose a clean, clear template.

- If you see a presentation that you like, ask the presenter about it and try to acquire the template.

- Clean, clear uncluttered presentations can be very effective, very easy to follow and give an impression of simplicity and clear explanation.

- Look on the web at the Talks Archive at the IoA website for many examples of different layouts.

- Never forget that humans see light, not darkness. A black background with light font is much harder to see especially if the room is not very dark.
Talk Structure

- Audience attention span is limited, so keep working to keep them engaged.
Outline

• Make your 1st or 2nd slide an outline of your presentation
  – Ex: next slide

• Follow the order of your outline for the rest of the presentation

• Only place main points on the outline slide
  – Ex: Use the titles of each slide as main points
Topics to be Covered

• Outlines
• Slide Structure
• Fonts
• Colour
• Background
• Graphs
• Conclusions
• Questions
Slide Structure – Good

• Show one point at a time:
  – Will help audience concentrate on what you are saying
  – Will prevent audience from reading ahead
  – Will help you keep your presentation focused
Slide Structure – Good

• Use 1-2 slides per minute of your presentation

• Write in point form, not complete sentences

• Include 4-5 points per slide

• Avoid wordiness: use key words and phrases only
Slide Structure - Bad

- This page contains too many words for a presentation slide. It is not written in point form, making it difficult both for your audience to read and for you to present each point. Although there are a similar number of points on this slide as the previous slide, it looks much more complicated. In short, your audience will spend too much time trying to read this paragraph instead of listening to you.
Slide Structure - Bad

- Do not use distracting animation.
- Do not go overboard with the animation.
- Be consistent with the animation that you use.
- View every equation in your presentation as a defeat unless it is very simple and really essential.
Slide Structure – Bad: Far too much info!!!

Sloppy layout!

Part III Astrophysics: 28, Feb, 2017
The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)
The mission in a nutshell

http://jwst.nasa.gov/videos_deploy.html
Fonts - Good

- Use at least an 18-point font

- Use different size fonts for main points and secondary points
  - this font is 20-point, the main point font is 24-point, and the title font is **28-point bold**.

- Use a standard font like Times New Roman or Arial.

- Remember a *.ppt or *.pptx files may not have the font packed into it.
Fonts - Bad

- If you use a small font, your audience won’t be able to read what you have written

- CAPITALIZE ONLY WHEN NECESSARY. IT IS DIFFICULT TO READ

- Don’t use a complicated font
  - Don’t use a complicated font
  - Don’t use a complicated font
  - Don’t use a complicated font
  - Don’t use a complicated font

- \( \oplus \sim \nabla, \exists \cup \times \downarrow \to \times \subseteq \subset \bigcap \nabla \notin \)
Colour - Good

• Use a font colour that contrasts sharply with the background
  – Ex: black or dark blue font on white background

• Use colour to reinforce the logic of your structure
  – Ex: light blue title and dark blue text

• Use colour to emphasize a point
  – But only use this occasionally
• Use a colour of font that contrasts sharply with the background

• Use colour to reinforce the logic of your structure

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Colour - Bad

- Using a font colour that does not contrast with the background colour is hard to read
- Using colour for decoration is *distracting* and *annoying*.
- Using a different colour for each point is unnecessary
  - Using a different colour for secondary points is also unnecessary
- **Trying to be creative can also be bad**

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- **Trying to be creative can also be bad**
• Graphs in the wrong colours can be hard to see.

• Graphs too small can be impossible to read or follow.

• Don’t be lazy: cut out any extraneous information or colour.
Colour - Bad

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- Don’t be lazy: cut out any extraneous information or colour.

- Check image resolution. Cutting from pdfs must be done full screen.
Background - Good

• Use backgrounds such as this one that are attractive but simple

• Use backgrounds which are light

• Use the same background consistently throughout your presentation
Background – Bad

- Avoid backgrounds that are distracting or difficult to read from.
- Always be consistent with the background that you use.
- Avoid annoying graphics, especially moving ones.
Graphs - Good

• Use graphs rather than just charts and words
  – Data in graphs are easier to comprehend & retain than are raw data
  – Trends are easier to visualize in graph form

• Always title your graphs
## Data Presentation- Bad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Balls</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Balls</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graphs - Good

Items Sold in First Quarter of 2002

January  February  March  April

Blue Balls
Red Balls
• Minor gridlines are unnecessary
• Font is too small
• Colours are illogical
• Title is missing
• Shading is distracting
Presentation Conclusions

• Use an effective and strong closing
  – Your audience is likely to remember your last words

• Use a conclusion slide to:
  – Summarize the main points of your presentation
  – Suggest future avenues of research

• Good idea to have basic contact info on your last slide.

• If you are running out of time it is better to show your conclusion slide and skip one or 2 just before it.
So, GOOD LUCK!