

# Colloquium Tips

## Handy Dandy Presentation Tips

Here are some useful tips for your presentation:

- If something is important, it should be both said and seen (i.e. both the spoken and visual channels should be used as redundant indicators)
  - Information should be presented such that its importance corresponds with the amount of time spent presenting the information and the visual/spoken emphasis it is given.
  - Animation can be a useful tool for emphasis (and thus signaling importance of the animated information), but should usually only be used for that purpose.
  - One useful general heuristic: design your presentation so as to minimize cognitive effort by the audience
  - If you show a graph, you must explain slowly what's on the x-axis and what is on the y-axis, and then explain the trend you want the audience to see
  - Corollary: if you show a non-trivial table, explain what the rows are, then the columns, then discuss the trend
  - Humor is great and usually required, but should not take away from the message. In fact, it should support the message.
  - Grad students should never use self-detrimental humor. Try to think of alternatives, but worst comes to worst, make fun of your advisor instead. We're easy targets.
  - Try to weave a single or small number of examples throughout the presentation
  - If you present text more than a few words long as data, it should be read outloud verbatim
  - People can't read and listen at the same time
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- Use low-fidelity prototyping
  - Prior to making a single slide, I generally put together a very detailed outline of the presentation – including what slides should look like – entirely in text.
  - As is typical in low-fidelity prototyping, this allows you to make large changes with very limited cost, which is not the case when you start by making slides.
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- Do at least one practice talk, and expect to substantially alter your talk afterwards
  - Practice like crazy
  - It is easy to distinguish a well-practiced presentation from a poorly-practiced one
  - Going through your full presentation more than 15 times is not unreasonable
  - Well-practiced presentations are much more fun to give: you get to walk around the stage, etc., instead of being glued to your slide notes
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- Make back-up slides for questions

- Try to think of tough questions you'll be asked and make slides to answer them
- Google Slides seems to result in more run-time errors than other presentation software, at least as of 1/19
- And minor bugs like offset problems
- Never use any text color that remotely resembles yellow
- If you prefer to script out the talk, you need to be prepared in case you can't look at the script
- Try to make sure there's at least one graphic that communicates the basic idea of the presentation in a single slide. This is important for social media success during slide sharing and with the audience sharing info when they see it.

Source: Mattermost #thesis

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Revision #3

Created 27 April 2021 05:38:38 by Daniel Diethei

Updated 27 April 2021 07:04:50 by Daniel Diethei