Giving Good Presentations
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Goals of a Presentation
• Why are you presenting?
  – To communicate some idea, concept, or method to an audience
• Communication is two way
  – Speaker (giver)
  – Audience (receiver)
• Goal: Communicate a message

Importance of the Skill
• We make presentations for:
  – Thesis and Dissertation defense
  – Conference talks
  – Course lectures
  – Interview talks
  – Presentations to employer
• You will be judged by your ability to communicate
  – If they don’t get it – it’s not their fault!
The Basics

• Know your audience

• Prepare well

• Define your message

The Audience

• Listening is difficult
• Your job is to make it easier by continually asking yourself if they get it.
• As such
  – Give the audience time to think
  – Don’t talk nonstop
  – They don’t know the material as well as you
  – Figures and equations need time to digest
  – New terminology and definition need to be repeated
  – Remind the audience of key facts, definitions, etc.

Know the Audience

• Expert, knowledgeable, novice, student, general public?
• A talk to your peers should be different then talking to a more general audience
• Find out who will be in the audience
• However, do not under estimate
• An audience may have very preconceived notions about the topic (or terminology)
Engage the Audience

- Ask real and rhetorical questions to keep people's minds active and engaged
  - This is a clue to their understanding
  - What if they don't respond?
- Make eye contact
- Don't just talk to one person
- Walk towards a person who asks, or response, to a question – look at them directly
- Try to make examples interesting and compelling

Verbal Presentation Style

- Speak clearly
- Slowly and loud enough to be heard
- This is especially needed for non-native speakers
- Speak to the audience not to the screen, white board, or computer!!
- Point to the screen (NOT to the computer)
- Walk over, emphasize, and point

Slides

- Do NOT over do PowerPoint!
- Slides should be simple without distractions
- Moderate use of color
- High contrast between lettering and background
- Appropriate
- Each slide should be:
  - Tense (i.e., not verbose)
  - Highlight key points
  - Have a meaningful title - not Introduction(5)
  - Be focused
The Good

• Large simple font
• Very simple animation

Good colors

The Ugly

• Small odd font

Odd Colors

Message

• What do you want to communicate?
  – Use a top-down approach
  – Give big picture first – the what and why
  – Then go into detail – referring back to the big picture

• State the message in three levels:
  – One or two sentences
  – One or two paragraphs
  – The complete details
General Organization

1. Tell them what you are going to tell them
2. Tell them
3. Tell them what you told them

• Summarize at the beginning and end
• Use this for each major section of the presentation

Emphasize the Important

• Typically, much of the material you present is well known or obvious
• As such, the new and important material can get lost
• Clearly highlight the important part by:
  – Physical – Tone of voice, body language
  – Visual – Good sides
  – Verbal - Tell them!
  – Mental - Related it to what they already know

Repetition

• Repeat the important parts:
  – 20% or more of the audience are thinking about something else at any given time
  – Again, they have not thought about this as much as you (hopefully)
• Emphasize main message repeatedly
• Remind audience each time a new term is seen
• Again, listening is difficult
Know Your Material

- There may be someone who knows the material as well (or better) as you in the audience
- Do not include slides/material that you can’t explain
- Anticipate questions (give them leads)

Practice

- Practice
- Practice
- Practice

- In the mirror
- To friends
- To your advisor

General Outline

- Introduction
- Body
- Technicalities/evaluation/experiment
- Conclusion
Introduction

• Define problem
• Motivate the audience
• Introduce terminology
• Discuss prior work
• Emphasize contributions
• Provide a roadmap

• Outline slide (bad or good?)

Body

• Abstract the major results
• Explain the significance of the results
• Sketch the evaluation method, experiment, proof, supporting argument for your results

Technicalities

• Present methods of evaluation, experimental setup, or lemmas
• Present details
Conclusion

• Refer back to previous sections and results by summarizing
• Emphasize contribution or major result
• Give open problems and future work
• Questions?

Summary

• Presentations are about communication – not just talking
• Listening is hard work and your job is to make it easier
• Give the audience a chance to think and digest the material
• Speak clearly and TO the audience
• Use a top-down approach – what is the message
• Repeat, repeat, repeat
• Engage the audience
• Summarize
• Practice, practice, practice

Resources

• Google “giving presentations computer science”
• Frank Kschischang at: www.comm.utoronto.ca/frank/guide/guide0.html
• Adapted from slides of Matthew Turk at UCSB