

Some tips for presentations

1 The message

Any presentation intends to convey a message to the audience. The particular message is of course different for each presentation and more importantly there are different kinds of messages, such as

Appeal such as: *Brush your teeth twice a day!*

Training such as *How to use Gauss' theorem to evaluate a surface integral?*

Information such as *How does a steam engine work?*

Documentation such as *Main findings of my master thesis*

Advertisement such as *Great achievements at Lund University*

Here it is crucial, to have a realistic idea about the message, which can be transferred. Typically, the audience will understand little, and only very few points will be memorized. It is thus of crucial importance to be aware of the specific message one wants to convey and focus the effort on bringing this message into the mind of the audience.

2 Structure

A well-known saying reads

1. Tell your audience what you're going to tell them.
2. Tell them.
3. Tell them what you told them.

This reflects the main idea, to focus on the message to be conveyed. However there is one important point missing: First you have to catch the interest of the audience. Thus

0. Start with examples or questions, the audience finds interesting, and which connects their general interest to the particular topic of your presentation.

In particular start slowly, so that everybody can follow you, even if they are still looking for their pencil or switching off the mobile phone. It also takes some time to get used to the voice of a speaker.

3 General rules for comprehensibility

In preparing slides, remember, that they have three purposes:

1. They provide the opportunity to show all sorts of figures (or even movies) as well as equations to which the presenter can refer in his/her speech.
2. They visualize the logical structure of the presentation
3. They display key statements from the talk. The direct connection between spoken and written text highlights the points addressed in the speech. This provides a second chance for the audience to access the statement in case they did not receive its content from the speech.

Considering the specific purpose helps to establish a good individual style for the slides. *Note that the slides are not a place for additional information which is skipped in the speech.* The

only exception are references, to clarify priority issues.

Furthermore, the following advices are helpful:

- Avoid abbreviations, which the audience is not common with
- Text should be short. Restrict to individual phrases with less than about seven words. Nobody can read entire paragraphs, while listening at the same time.
- Lists should not contain more than 5 items, unless there is a clear sequence as in a recipe. If needed, subheadings may help.

4 Originality

It is assumed that the presenter has created the slides together with the coauthors. Material, in particular figures (and sometimes other content such as specific equations), which is taken from other persons should be marked accordingly. These references are typically not full bibliographic, but must contain sufficient information for the audience to identify the creator of the work. Examples are A. Miller(Uni Oxford), J. Faist Science94, or D. Jackson Electrodynamics.

5 Technical recommendations

- Use good contrast for letters. Bad examples, which are difficult to see are green on blue background or light red and yellow on white background. Bold-face text is generally easier to see.
- The letter size should be sufficiently large. There is always somebody sitting in the back of the room. A recommendation¹ is 28 pt for headlines of the slide, 24 pt for the key phrases, and 18 pt for secondary information.
- Sans-serif fonts (e.g. Arial) are quicker to read than serif fonts (e.g. Times).
- All axis labels of figures must be readable. This frequently implies, that you must redo figures with fewer ticks, or even omit the numbers, if you do not refer to them (but axis labels are required!).

¹M. Alley *The craft of scientific presentations* (Springer, New York, 2003)