How to give a great talk!

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Some information was adapted from:
K. H. Grobman- Paper Presentations in Psychology: How to give a good talk in Psychology or other Sciences

I. How long is your presentation?
   a. From the total time, subtract for distractions such as administrative distractions that might happen at the beginning of a talk.
   b. URS talk = 15mins. Plan to talk for 13-14 minutes which then leaves a couple minutes for distractions and still leaves a couple minutes for questions.

II. Preparation
   a. Practice- Nothing matters more to giving a good talk than practicing. Practice by yourself for timing. Practice with friends or your lab for comfort and feedback. Even practicing a talk just once can dramatically improve how smoothly you speak.
   b. Room - Go to the room for your talk early. You can test that all of your equipment works. You can also change things about the room before others arrive. Do you need some of the lights out for your projected slides to be clear? Find out.
   c. Have Something to Say- Talks are milestones. Push yourself to your limit in the days before your talk so your not pushing yourself the minutes before the talk.
   d. Wear something professional and comfortable.
   e. Bring a bottle of water
   f. Load your presentation onto the computer before the session begins so you are not wasting time.
   g. Bring multiple copies of your presentation (2 jump drives, google drive, e-mail). Do not count on the internet to be working.

III. Your Presence - Your Body
   a. Talk to your audience- Do not read to your audience. Do not talk to your computer or the projected slides. Be happy to be able to tell your audience about something so interesting. Smile. Move around. Use gestures to convey meaning and highlight slides.
   b. Your Words - Vary your voice to convey enthusiasm and key points. Enunciate clearly. Speak at a normal conversational speed. Try to avoid filler sounds like "um" between your thoughts.
   c. Be aware of your body language, gestures etc.

IV. Your Confidence
   a. Be confident. What if inside you are saying, "How can I possibly be confident presenting in front of all of these people". Reframe your self-talk. “I’ve read more about this topic than 99% of the people in the audience”.
   b. Everybody Knows more than Me - Your audience might know a lot. Your advisor might know more about the subject matter than you. However, you know more about your particular paper than anybody else.
   c. But my Study Didn't Work - Isaac Asimov said, "The most exciting phrase to hear in science - the one that heralds new discoveries - is not "Eureka!" but "That's funny..." There is something interesting about your study, even if it did not work out. You were surprised. That's interesting! Sometimes this means reframing your study as about something different than you planned. Give the talk your data fits, not the one you would have given before you began.
   d. So Many Mistakes- You made mistakes and did not account for everything. Do not be apologetic or bogged down in describing mistakes. Acknowledge problems matter-of-factly. You might say, "Due to an equipment error data from 3 participants on the last trial was lost." Stop there. Do not tell us whose fault it was or any other details. That makes mistakes seem like they are larger than they are. Present your study positively. Short-comings are just opportunities for future research.

V. PowerPoint Slides –
   a. Simplicity- Just because PowerPoint can do something doesn't mean it should. Start out by making your slides plainly, with only content. Then only add elements (e.g., colors, font size, effects, comics) that add something to your presentation (e.g., sense of continuity, clarity of main points versus details).
   b. Words- Use a large font. I use 44pt for titles, 32pt for main points, and 24pt for supporting information. Write as few words as possible. People naturally read whatever you put on a slide. When you put bullet points on your slides, you give your audience a structure to follow the substance you convey with your voice. If you write out long sentences in small font, your audience will pay more attention to your slides than to you.
   c. Cite your references in small font on the slide and also on your reference slides.

VI. Sophistication of Presentation
   a. Simplicity is a Virtue - If you can be simple, do not be complex. Avoid using jargon or acronyms whenever possible. Aim for simplicity in every aspect of your talk, not just language. Can you organize data more clearly. Can you make more simple graphs. Can you remove unnecessary nuance from your literature review?
VII. Parts of Presentations
a. Title Slide (Title, Name, University)
b. Introduce your key question or topic area.
c. Provide an outline- and stick to your outline
   i. Conventions – Every field has a conventional format for presenting a study or a project (e.g., Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion). Unless you have a convincing reason not to, follow the convention.
d. Have a conclusion slide
e. Thank You Slide
f. References
g. Questions

VIII. Goal for Presentation
a. Everything you present should convey your big idea. What is your "take home message?" Just because something is interesting doesn’t mean it belongs in your presentation.

IX. Introduction –
a. Topic
   i. Introduce your topic with an over-arching description and research/topic question.
   ii. Define the key ideas.
   iii. Why is your subject important, practically or theoretically?
b. Literature Review – How do you decide what studies/literature to review
   i. Remember that studies are related because of theoretical constructs. A study is relevant if somebody studied the same underlying idea even if they used different methods and measures.
   ii. Do not include every relevant study. A "laundry list" of findings lacks structure and will not justify your study/project.
   iii. Remember your big idea. Describe competing theoretical models and highlight previous results that well-justify those competing viewpoints.
   iv. Culminate your literature review with a hint about how, under certain circumstances, the theories lead to conflicting predictions.
   v. The whole goal of the literature review is to demonstrate why your paper/project was important - outline how your work filled in a knowledge gap in the field.
c. Hypotheses –
   i. Say hypotheses in everyday language and theoretical constructs.

X. Method –
a. Be Concrete
   i. Describe the method from a participant's perspective.
   ii. Show stimuli; showing props is engaging.
   iii. If some of your participants read a happy, neutral, or sad story, then name your conditions "happy", "neutral", and "sad." Naming conditions "1", "2", and "3" just adds things for your audience to remember.

XI. Results
a. Details –
   i. Professors and fellow undergraduates like to know the nitty-gritty. Give us the results (e.g., p-values, F-ratio, N). Even if you do not say details aloud, put them on slides.
   ii. Graphs show the big picture; they are especially engaging. Tables can work too.
b. Testing Hypotheses –
   i. First give any descriptive results (e.g., to establish context) or preliminary analyses (e.g., to rule out counterbalancing effects).
   ii. Then present a result for each of your hypotheses in the order you proposed your hypotheses.
      1. Follow these steps for reporting each result: (1) remind audience of hypothesis, (2) describe analysis, and (3) state key idea behind result. Here is a sample power-point slide of a result from a made-up hypothesis. Say something like, "To test the hypothesis that 4-year-olds who can inhibit well are more likely to understand another person's beliefs, we correlated the day-night stroop task
with the false-belief task. The positive correlation supports our hypothesis.

**Inhibition and Understanding Others**

![Graph](image)

\[ r = .54, p = .03, n = 36 \]

*Note: made-up results*

XII. Discussion

a. Flow –
   i. Summarize your major results in everyday language.
   ii. This is where you explain your findings. Tie your findings to other literature and theoretical constructs.
   iii. Describe limitations of your study.
      1. Frame limitations as possible future studies.
      2. Describe your long-term plans for this research- if you have any.
      3. End with a grand concluding remark (e.g., hopes for future).

XIII. Questions –

a. Anticipate Questions.
   i. Be able to justify your decisions. Why did you choose one method over another (e.g., between-subject vs. within-subject, interview vs. survey)? Why did you choose one analysis over another (e.g., ANOVA vs. regression)? Why did you read this person’s work and not this person’s work?

b. Really Tough Questions –
   i. Questions can be tough, especially when you have not anticipated them. You can think about the question before you answer.
   ii. Silence for ten seconds is nothing for your audience, even when it feels excruciating to you.
   iii. Avoid filling time with "um's" or fidgeting. Stand in a relaxed posture that conveys how you are thinking.
   iv. You can always say.
      1. I don’t know. I’ll need to do some more research and get back to me. Leave me your e-mail and after I’ve thought about it some more I’ll get back to you.
      2. I don’t know. It is an interesting question- do you have any ideas about the issue?

c. Extra Slides - Some questions that you can anticipate will be easy to answer with a sentence or two. "Were there gender differences?" "No." Other questions are harder to answer. For those, and for general information, prepare extra slides after your talk that you can flip to when needed. Prepare histograms of each measure. Have complex analyses you did not present. Block quotations from famous papers can be helpful for theoretical points. For example, if you said Piaget claims something, have direct quotations prepared.

XIV. Keeping Your Perspective

a. If you are about to give your first talk, you will not be able to remember everything you just read, especially while you're giving your talk. Giving a talk is a skill; you learn through practice. You will have many more talks and everything will be fine in the long-run even your talk does go so well. No matter how well you do, you talk will be worse in your mind than it is to your audience. You compare your talk to the ideal in your mind. Your audience compares your talk to never attending it all. Just caring enough to try and give a better talk, something you demonstrated by coming to this presentation, is often enough to make for a great talk.