

# HOW TO PRESENT

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UNIVERSITY OF  
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The first two slides are fakes.

This first one is an intentionally bad slide. I try to have the lights on with glare on the screen, try to make the projector out of focus, etc. Essentially, do everything you can to make this first slide almost illegible. Its surprising how no one will complain!

I start pretending I am somewhat rushed, unprepared, last minute, bumbling around with wires, etc.

```
***STOP: 0x000000D1 (0x00000000, 0xF73120AE, 0xC0000008, 0xC0000000)

A problem has been detected and Windows has been shut down to prevent damage
to your computer

DRIVER_IRQL_NOT_LESS_OR_EQUAL

If this is the first time you've seen this Stop error screen, restart your
computer. If this screen appears again, follow these steps:

Check to make sure any new hardware or software is properly installed. If this is a
new installation, ask your hardware or software manufacturer for any Windows updates
you might need.

If problems continue, disable or remove any newly installed hardware or software.
Disable BIOS memory options such as caching or shadowing. If you need to use Safe
Mode to remove or disable components, restart your computer, press f8 to select
Advanced Startup Options, and then select Safe Mode.

*** WXYZ.SYS - Address F73120AE base at C00000000, DateStamp 36b072a3

Kernel Debugger Using: COM2 (Port 0x2f8, Baud Rate 19200)
Beginning dump of physical memory
Physical memory dump complete. Contact your system administrator or
technical support group.
```

Then have blue screen of death and panic. Then... recover by pulling out my memory stick and borrowing another student's computer. Describe how all presentations start well before the presenter walks into the room.

To have ready

- notes
- handouts
- backup
- computer
- speakers on reserve if needed (cable?)

Check the room out well before the event

Check audio, projector

- Seating (rearrange)

Just before the presentation

- Last minute check
- Greet people

# How to Present

Saul Greenberg  
University of Calgary



Image from:

First things first:

- never check your presentation with your luggage
- check out media long before the talk starts
- make sure all audience can see projected image
  - walk around
  - 2 projectors
  - wall vs. screen
- focus
- know equipment: switches, bulbs
- light and glare: media tradeoff
- backup media should always be available

This slide: intro slide

introduce self, where from, and topic

## **The Message**

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### **Prepare yourself**

- know your message
- know your audience & venue
- practice, practice, practice

### **Typical presentations**

- top-down structure
- keep it simple
- use media effectively

### **Style**

- stay in control
- use body language
- let your enthusiasm show!

I always write out what the goal of the talk is, that is, the main message that I want people to remember from the presentation

The entire talk should be crafted to deliver this message

## **Outline**

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Why present?

Presentations you may give

Structure

Style and tips

Use of media

Handling questions

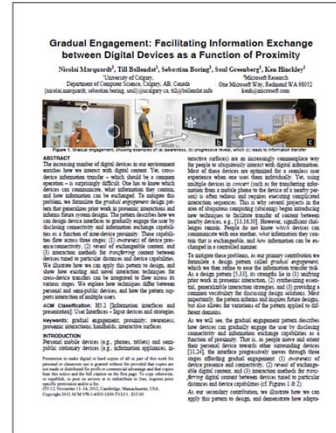
To deliver this message, I will first ....

The outline provides a road map, and should relate back to the message

motivation

## Why present?

Science includes the dissemination of knowledge



Dissemination:

- papers
- presentations
- posters
- demonstrations
- videos
- www
- system / software releases ...

motivation

## **Why present?**

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### Audiences are opportunities

- get them interested in your work
- associate your "face" with the work
- provide discussion / feedback

### The downside:

- risky!



Dissemination:

Audience:

-is this the audience I want e.g., good conference? A write only paper?

-are there people I want to hear me in this audience?

-will the work be remembered afterwards

surprises, skits, this intro!!!

Risks:

-people remember bombs and bad talks

-hard to recover

-risk worth it: eg, live demo implies faith in the software

-possible to produce a paper which sounds ok in writing but may seem stupifying or trivial as a presentation

## **Presentations you may give**

### Research papers

- seminar/conferences, workshops

### Surveys / topic introductions

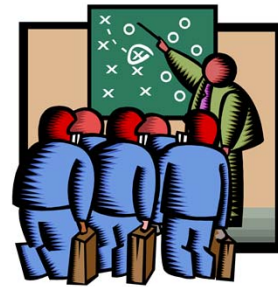
- tutorials/conferences/class

### Discussions / points of view

- seminars, workshops
- panels

### Defense of known subject matter

- thesis, proposals




Your minimum presentations:

- You are required to give at least one departmental seminar to your peers (other grads) and faculty
- You should try to publish and present at least one paper and/or outside presentation
- You have to give a Thesis Oral, where orals are public.



## Presentations you may give

### Audiences

- topic specialists
  - area specialists
  - computer scientists
  - scientists
  - academics
  - public
- 
- experts
- lay

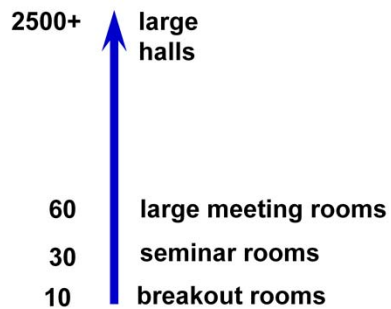
Audience:

- your talk must be prepared at the right level for your audience.
- A great talk for one audience may bomb with another.
- the audience determines the amount of detail you can get into

## **Presentations you may give**

As room size increase, so does:

- formality
- inability of audience to cope with detail



Larger audience:

- broader interests
- less overall knowledge of your area
- less able to cope with detail

Exception: thesis oral

- small but formal

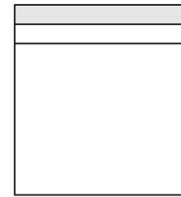
## **Structure**

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The Opening: 1

*1-2 minutes*

- Introduce yourself and co-authors
- Tell them what you are going to tell them
- Define the problem
- Provide a road map (outline)



Give the chair notes to introduce you, and discuss it with them  
so you get a good intro!

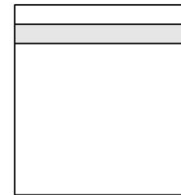
## Structure

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The Opening: 2

*~5 minutes*

- Tell them why they should listen
- Motivate the audience
  - define the problem in greater detail
  - emphasize goal and contributions
- Background / terminology
  - relate to earlier work
  - avoid or explain jargon



Example:

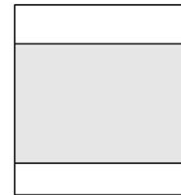
- Apply theoretical aspects to real world problems and applications
  - how it fits in
  - why it is useful
- Gives background to understand your talk
- Avoid or explain jargon / acronyms

## **Structure**

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### The Body

- Tell them
- Describe what you did, and how you did it
- Explain its significance



-Avoid excessive details:

Refer to paper for details

-Significance

Tell audience why they were there

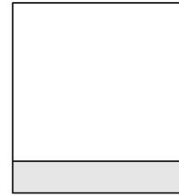
## **Structure**

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### Conclusions

*2-3 minutes*

- Tell them what you told them
- Summarize purpose and main point(s)
- Discuss current work/open problems
- Indicate your talk is over



-Mention gaps that weren't covered in the talk or the paper (avoids awkward questions)

-Be open and honest

increases credibility

## **Style and Tips**

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I can't overemphasize the importance of **being clear in your own mind** what you want the audience to get from your presentation.

Only then can you really concentrate on doing a good job of getting it across.



**Bruce MacDonald**

Your message should permeate your talk

-the intro, the contributions, the conclusions

-all points should re-enforce it

-it should be the single thing the audience takes away with them



**Know your  
Message !**



**Bruce MacDonald**

Your message should permeate your talk

-the intro, the contributions, the conclusions

-all points should re-enforce it

-it should be the single thing the audience takes away with them



## **Style and Tips**

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Don't get bogged down in details

- will lose people and never get them back
- main point forgotten by audience
- fit details to your audience

**Keep it simple**



Details:

- You know too much, and can get bogged down / over-run time
- Shorter talks are harder!
- Decide what you want to include and leave out while still communicating the main message is hard work

Audience

- Different audiences require different styles / terminology / detail

## **Style and Tips**

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### Good body language

- be enthusiastic
- maintain eye contact
- speak clearly and audibly
- don't read



## **Use your voice and body**

'Sell' your ideas.

Much of message comes from body language and voice

Scripts: reading from them puts people to sleep.

## **Style and Tips**

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### Timing

- adjust content to fit
- don't rush



## **Watch the time**

Time:

Conferences - strict time

people hate missing coffee breaks / lunch

you may lose your question period

avoid going faster: trim instead

## **Style and Tips**

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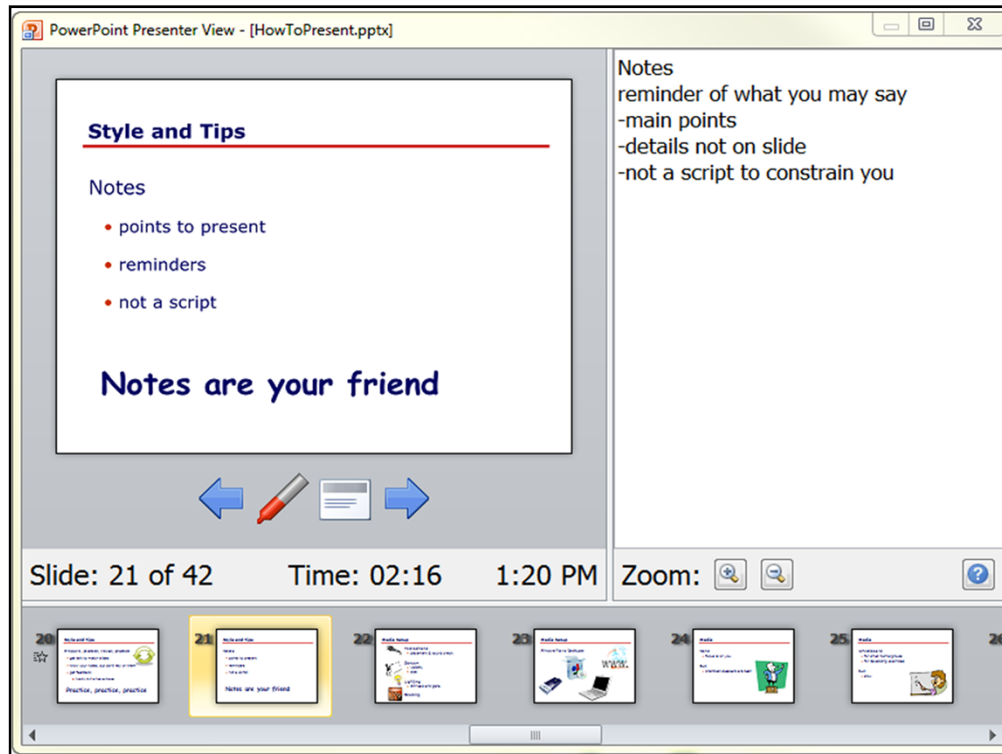
Prepare, practice, revise, practice

- get talk to match slides
- know your notes, but don't rely on them
- get feedback
  - friendly but critical audience



**Practice, practice, practice**

Practice is the most important single thing you can do to improve your presentation!!!



## Notes

- reminder of what you may say
- main points
- details not on slide
- not a script to constrain you

## Media Setup

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Always have backups



Expect everything to work, but prepare for failure

May have 2<sup>nd</sup> lower quality version, but still works (eg overheads)

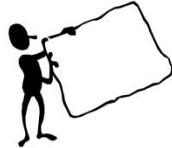
## Media Setup

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### Microphone

- placement & sound check



### Screen

- visibility
- size
- lighting



### Seating

#### Microphone:

- placed too high, breathing
- too low, bad audio / feedback
- keep mouth by mike
- watch out for wires
- know where the switch is

#### Screen and lighting

- Can people easily read smallest text from the back?

#### Seating

- rearrange if needed
- Get people to sit near front (handouts)?

## Media

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None

- focus is on you

But

- practiced speakers are best



Avoid no media unless you are skilled



## Media

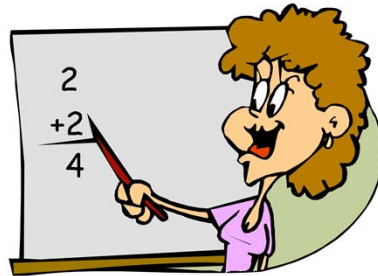
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### Whiteboard

- for small rooms/groups
- for developing examples

### but

- slow



Whiteboard:

-can use with other media

eg for recording static list of points during presentation

-electronic whiteboards atop e.g. powerpoint

## Media

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### Slide deck

- the norm
- text / images / videos
- static and dynamic content

### but

- less text per slide
- expect poor lighting



### Computers:

- excellent for multimedia
- unreliable, hard to set up, projector problems, power issues, resolution dilemmas, projector brightness, audio jacks, small screens...
- expect them to fail
- maximize font size / images / contrast due to poor lighting

## Media

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### Video and demos

- showing vs explaining
- tells the story

### but

- don't let them take over



### Videos

-great, but don't let them take over

### Demos

- they see it, they believe it
- risky, but well worth it
- have backup (video) just in case!

Text description

## **Proxemic Media Player (2010)**

A video media player

senses

- distance and orientation of a person

reacts by

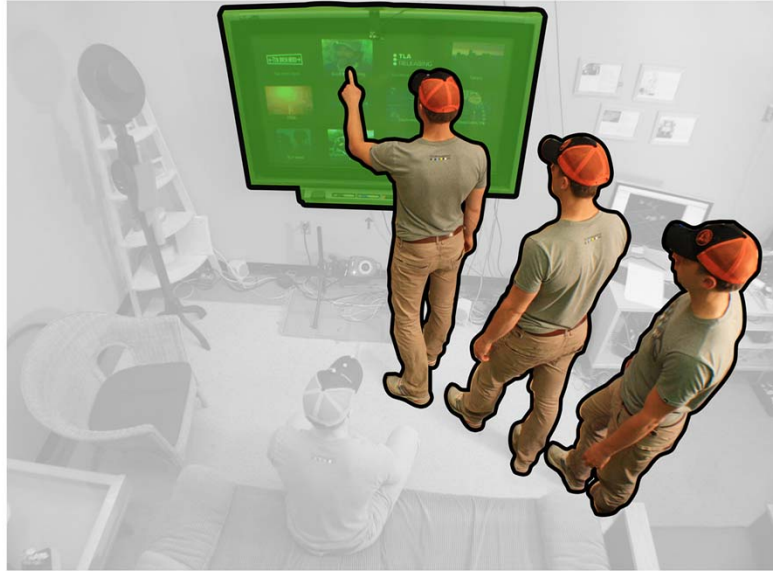
- turning itself on
- progressive detail
- interaction techniques tuned to distance

Illustrating a system by text

-textual descriptions of visual material hard to understand

Picture

## Proxemic Media Player



Illustrating a system by image

-weave a scenario around it so people can understand how the system works

## Proxemic Media Player Application



- reacts according to distance & orientation
- increase in detail & interactivity

Illustrate a system by image and video

[This slide actually plays a video]]

-use image as prelude to tell them what to watch for

-reduce the volume and talk over it if it's a long video so it doesn't take over

**Too much detail; cluttered**

## **Appearance of Media**

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### None

- practiced speakers are best at this, because they are comfortable talking to the audience

### Whiteboard

- this is best for small rooms, for groups and for developing examples where the example unfolds over time
- it's really too slow a medium, because it takes time to write things down!
- it also puts your back to the audience

### Transparencies

- must be legible by people at back of your expected meeting room in bad lighting conditions (assume the worst!)
- of course, it should be typeset. Some good things to remember are:
  - large, variable width fonts
  - uncluttered, with only a few easily remembered points on the slide that you can talk around
  - white space used as hints
- don't prepare too many, because people won't remember. Around 1.5-2 minutes/overhead or more is a reasonable rule of thumb
- people remember visuals, so prefer pictures/tables over words if possible

Example of different (bad) media use

## Appearance of Media (16 point courier)

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### None

- practiced speakers are best at this

### Whiteboard

- best for small rooms/groups
- best for developing examples
- very slow

### Transparencies

- must be legible by all (assume the worst!)
- typeset
- don't prepare too many
- prefer pictures/figures/tables over words



ALL CAPS

## **APPEARANCE OF MEDIA**

---

### NONE

- PRACTICED SPEAKERS ARE BEST AT THIS

### WHITEBOARD:

- BEST FOR SMALL ROOMS/GROUPS
- BEST FOR DEVELOPING EXAMPLES
- VERY SLOW

### TRANSPARENCIES

- TYPESET
- DON'T PREPARE TOO MANY
- PREFER PICTURES/FIGURES/TABLES OVER WORDS

Fontitis, overdecorated

## Appearance of Media



### None

- practised speakers are *best* at this



### Whiteboard:

- **best** for
  - small rooms/groups
  - developing examples
- very slow

### Transparencies

- must be *legible by all* (assume the worst!)
- **Typeset it**
- don't prepare too many
- prefer pictures/figures/tables over words



Bad colors, contrast...

## Appearance of media

---

### Transparencies

- must be legible by all (assume the worst!)
- typeset
- don't prepare too many
- prefer pictures/figures/tables over words



### Computers

- less text / slide
- expect poor lighting
- best for animations and demonstrations



Your screen may give far better contrast than the screen in the hall!!!

Gratuitous animations (not visible in handouts)

## **Appearance of Media**

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### None

- practiced speakers are best at this



### Whiteboard

- best for small groups
- best for developing examples
- very slow



### Transparencies

- typeset
- don't prepare too many
- prefer pictures/figures/tables over words



Alignment & white space

## **Appearance of Media**

---

None

practiced speakers are best at this

**Whiteboard**

best for small groups

best for developing examples

very slow

**Transparencies**

typeset

don't prepare too many

prefer pictures/figures/tables over words



About right

## **Appearance of Media**

---

### None

- practiced speakers are best at this



### Whiteboard

- best for small groups
- best for developing examples
- very slow



### Transparencies

- typeset
- don't prepare too many
- prefer pictures/figures/tables over words



## Question/Discussion

Anticipate questions ahead of time

- dry runs help

Turn "bad" questions into good ones

- always repeat the question

Maintain control

- guide discussion
- limit time on minor/irrelevant



Always repeat question

Bad questions

- can't hear it, rambly, vague, multiple questions, unclear
- transform it into a better question you can answer

Control: don't get left out of the loop

-many prima donnas out there who want their minute of fame

## **The Thesis Oral Presentation**

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### Why?

- a warm-up period for you and the examiners
- reminds examiners what they have read

### What?

- objective of your work
- very brief overview/motivation/history
- highlights of your methodology/results
- main contributions
- future directions

### To prepare

- mock defense

Ask your advisor about what should be in it.



## Summary

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### Prepare yourself

- know your message
- know your audience & venue
- practice, practice, practice

### Typical presentations

- top-down structure
- keep it simple
- use media effectively

### Style

- stay in control
- use body language
- let your enthusiasm show!

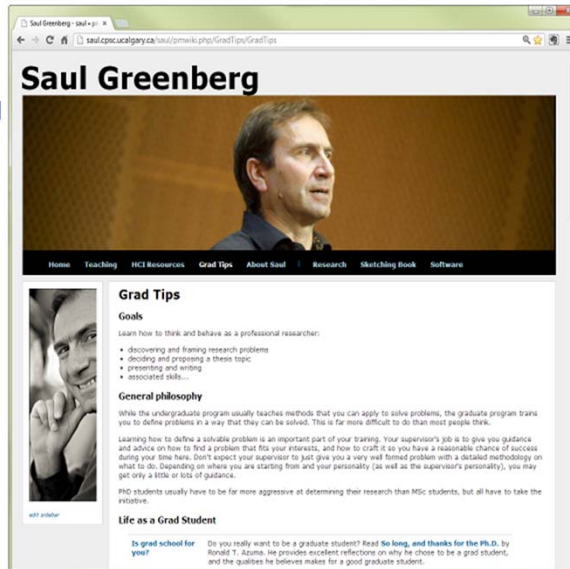
I always write out what the goal of the talk is, that is, the main message that I want people to remember from the presentation

The entire talk should be crafted to deliver this message  
... and it should end with the same message

## For more informaton

google

- Saul Greenberg grad tips



For all this material and more...




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