

AAAI-19 Tutorial SP6Q: Presenting a Paper

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Guidelines

These guidelines provide advice on making an effective, enjoyable and memorable presentation of a scientific paper. It is a personal view and others might differ. In any case, there is, of course, no “one size fits all”. I would encourage everyone to seek alternative sources of advice, to get feedback on their own presentations, to record and review their own presentations, and to find a speaking style that works well for them and their audiences.

1. Convey enthusiasm for the material.

The talk is an advertisement for the paper. Enthusiasm for the material should shine through. It engages the audience with the work (and keeps them awake and away from their email). *It is very difficult to be too enthusiastic.*

2. Make the presentation easy to follow.

Think of the talk as an advertisement for the paper. It is easy to speak too fast, to cram in too much material. It is easy to ignore the limits of human short term memory in introducing new terminology or notation. It is easy simply to overestimate the audience’s ability quickly to come to grips with material the speaker has been immersed in for months or years. Abstract the essence and identify the essential. *It is very difficult to oversimplify.*

3. Employ helpful examples.

An *initial* example at the *very* beginning can start things off on the right foot. Examples should be as *simple* as possible; an example that seems simple to the speaker can easily be hard for the audience to follow. Running examples are especially useful. *It is very difficult to devote too much time to examples.*

4. Use your voice and body language effectively.

The audience can be kept awake, and emphasis can be conveyed, by a voice that gets louder and softer, higher and lower, faster and slower, that pauses and repeats. Body language can convey emphasis and excitement. *It is very difficult to be too animated.*

5. Employ visual and dynamic forms of communication.

Bullet point slides that just summarize what the speaker is saying just compete with the speaker for attention. Tiny text is unreadable. Diagrams, graphs, charts, pictures, cartoons, videos, demos, dynamic graphics, can inform and enliven the presentation. *It is very difficult for the talk to have too much visual interest.*

6. Engage the audience.

A speaker can engage the audience with eye contact, with questions, with humor, with props, with rhetorical devices (like repeating “It is very difficult to...”). *It is very difficult to make the talk too entertaining.*