Some Hints on Oral Presentations

ENGR 125CS
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Outline

- Introduction
- Getting Started
- Preparing Visual Aids
- Time Limits
- Practice and Evaluation
Introduction

• Professional Oral Presentations
  – Need to convey technical content
  – Usually have a strict time limit
  – Expect a knowledgeable audience
  – Use a formal presentation style
Getting Started

- Organize your talk with an introduction, the outline, body, and summary or conclusion.
- Refer back to the outline frequently: let the audience know where you are in the talk.
- Include only facts or concepts that can be explained adequately in the allotted time.
- Rehearse the presentation so you can confidently deliver it in the allotted time.
Getting Started (cont.)

• Consider:
  – What are the two or three key points I want the audience to remember?
  – What would most surprise the audience about this information?
  – What if visual aids don’t work?
  – What if I find out I have less time than planned?
  – What if someone asks a complicated question right in the middle of the presentation?
  – Have a clear and professional conclusion: not “well, I guess that’s it.”
Visual Aids

- In general, do not just read from a prepared script. Use an outline or note cards as topic reminders.
- Arrive early enough to familiarize yourself with the microphone, slide controls, laser pointer, A/V staff, etc.
- Do not read text from the screen.
Visual Aids (cont.)

• Every time you display a slide the audience needs time to interpret it.
  – Describe the abscissa, ordinate, units, and the legend for each curve.
  – If the shape of a curve or some other feature is important, tell the audience what they should observe in order to grasp the point.

• Superfluous animation, display effects, sounds, blinking text, etc., should be avoided

• Use the pointer only when necessary
Visual Aids (cont.)

• Allow one minute of your talk for each slide, e.g., aim for 12 slides in 15 minutes

• Minimize the number of text lines and graph curves.
  – More than 12 lines of text or 5 curves are too many to be comprehended within one minute.
  – *Too little is better than too much.*
Visual Aids (cont.)

- Characters should have a height at least 1/40 of the total frame height.
- Black lines or white lines on a solid background are more legible than colored lines: avoid using color to distinguish data.
Visual Aids (cont.)

- Verify that the presentation format matches the available projection equipment.
- Laptop, DVD, overhead slides, or VHS tape: make sure such a player will be on hand—and test it in advance!!
Time Limits

- Know how much time you have been allotted: never exceed the time limit, and avoid leaving lots of extra time
- PRACTICE in front of a critical audience with a stop watch
- Keep track of time during the presentation
- Never try to “fly through” the last set of slides if time has run out: PREPARE to “cut to the chase” if necessary
Practice and Evaluation

- Public speaking takes practice: you need to do it to get better at it
- Solicit critical feedback from others
- Practice good posture when facing the audience, pointing to slides, etc.
- Work on speaking clearly and evenly
Examples

Too small, and poor choice of line colors.

Crude text style, but conveys the point
Examples


Why show so many lines?
No one can read it!
Conclusion

- Decide upon two or three key points
- Anticipate problems and prepare contingency plans
- PRACTICE thoroughly and carefully
- Seek and use feedback from others