Talk Style Guide

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- *Say something interesting every two minutes.* This is the best advice I have ever been given on giving good talks. What makes a good talk is content. Be sure that, if asked, you are able to identify what is the crucial, interesting thing you are saying for every two minutes of your talk.

- *Talk for your audience.* The word "interesting" in the above guideline means not interesting to you, the presenter, not interesting to someone who is not in the audience, but explicitly interesting to the people listening to your presentation. Be sure your talk is targeted to your audience.

- *Use examples.* It is *never* a waste of time to go through a specific example of your problem. Though it may seem boring to you, you have likely worked with the problem for months. Your audience will gain an enormous amount of understanding from an example.

- *Never flash a slide.* If you are going to show something to your audience, be sure to give them enough time to look at it and understand it. Flashing a slide or two is a quick way of losing your audience's attention.

- *Use diagrams.* About $\frac{2}{3}$ of your slides should either be a diagram or include a clarifying diagram. Diagrams are much easier for your audience to digest than text descriptions or equations. Often, using the right diagram can help convey a sequence of complicated ideas quickly.

- *Almost no text.* The bullets on your slides should almost never be longer than a single line. If necessary, do this by re-wording, placing only the key phrase or idea instead of a whole sentence. No one wants to read bullets.

- *No tables of real numbers.* Never use a table of numbers to represent the results of your computations. Instead, always use a diagram or graph. Consider creative bar charts, graphs, pie charts, or heat maps. By presenting your data this way, you can highlight exactly the aspect of the data you want your audience to see.

- *No long equations.* If you are going to show an equation, be sure to spend the time really explain it. Do not flash long equations on your slides or in your bullets. If necessary, re-write the equation using English expressions to make it understandable. Avoid notation is not needed for the rest of the talk.

- *Have clear organization, but avoid a long, repeated outline.* A long, repeated outline is not necessary to give a sense of organization to your audience. If you need an outline, consider just using 3 bullets. Consider using a diagram instead of an outline as it can communicate more and stays in the audience's minds longer.

- *Control your audience's attention.* Point to your slides, to focus the audience and let them know the interesting information on the slide. This also lets the audience know why the slide is there and how it connects to what you are saying.

- *Be on time.* There is nothing worse than a presentation that is not on time. Practice, and time your presentation to be on the mark with regards to the time you are allotted. Typically you have a 10% margin of error.

- *Good talks teach the audience something.* The key to making a good talk is making it 1) understandable and 2) complicated enough to teach the audience something. Often the "something" you teach is a combination of the basics of the area and the basics of your result.