How to Give a Talk

Why Listen?

• People fear public speaking
• You will speak
  – For class, work, job interviews, thesis defense
• Another skill to learn
  – Like designing a program
• Enjoy!

Main Messages

• Giving a talk is like ...
• Know your audience
• Start with message audience will receive
• Prepare topic tree
• Know common mistakes

Giving a Talk is Like ...

• Stuff you already know... planning, program design, writing, teaching, learning ...
• Can read books
  – “Preparing Instructional Objectives” by Mager
  – “Handbook of Technical Writing” by Brusaw
  – “The Elements of Style” by Strunk and White
  – ...
• Have some skills (e.g., can speak)
  – But you need to refine and new skills
Know Your Audience

- What do they know/believe?
  - Talk at right level
  - Use the right means
- They will be mixed
  - So deal with it!
- Interest
  - Inform
  - Persuade -- change
  - Expose a structure

Focus on Audience Receiving Messages

Messages!!!

- You must have messages
- They are destination
- A few, not many
  - Plan supporting sub-messages
- Do not plan outward from you, but backward from audience

Messages

- “I have too little to say”
  - Bah
  - Not so
- “I don’t have enough time”
  - So, change your messages
  - Point to other resources
- “… then I did this and then I did that…”
  - Is your chronology important?
**Topic Tree**

- Like program design
- Display it any way that works
- Depth depends on audience
  - Don’t preach to choir
- Practice, practice, practice!
  - How long will it take?
- Prune
  - Remove deadly details, keep good examples
  [major limb pruned here]

**Topic Order**

- State messages early
  - So not a mystery to audience
- Decide precedence *after* content
  - Many paths to success, order may not matter
  - Depth first vs. Breadth first
- Talk’s order is not necessarily the order of planning the talk!

**Outline**

- Introduction *(done)*
- Messages
  - Giving a talk is like ... *(done)*
  - Know your audience *(done)*
  - Messages audience will receive *(done)*
  - Prepare topic tree *(done)*
  - Know common mistakes *(next)*
- Summary

**Avoiding Misstakes (Outline)**

*(proff read)*

- Timing
- Tension
- Tedium
- Techniques
Common Mistake - Timing

• Prune during timed practice
  – “Cram” implies you aren’t focusing on audience
• Be aware of time
• Beware too much intro!
• Plan for disaster
  – “eeek” doesn’t impress
• If behind, don’t talk faster
  – Audience cannot listen faster

• Set pace for audience not you
• First few minutes
  – Why should they listen?
  – Why should they believe you?
• Finish
  – Impress main messages
  – Don’t gasp or get tossed off stage

Common Mistake - Tension

• Audience is on your side
  – They want you to succeed
  – Look at them during talk
• Butterflies are normal and good
• Plan, prune and practice so you can relax
• Messages
  – Focus on audience not you

• Are you enjoying it?
• Are you interested in them?
• Occasional witticism is good
  – A cartoon ...
• Monotone!!!
• Interact with them
• Messages are key!
**Techniques**

- Speed bumps
- Don’t kill interest with detail
  - Judging detail “level” is hard part
- No preemptive apology
- Talk tool - Powerpoint

**Slides**

- Informs audience and focuses you
- Use slides
  - Support messages, say why there
- Not “busy”
  - Size
- Don’t write what you will say
- Transitions
  - Physical movement of slides
  - Know what you will say

**Slides**

- Good
  - terse
  - phrases
  - bullets
  - highlight key points
  - graphs
  - pictures
    - Revise, revise, revise!
- Bad
  - verbose
  - compound sentences
  - paragraphs
  - unlabelled graphs
  - tables of numbers

- Complex figures are ok
  - Spend time
  - Describe axes, then trendlines, then results
  - Point to spots
- Tell them what to get from the figure!
Summary

• Messages
• Audience
• Backwards
• Topic Tree
• Plan, prune, practice
• Enjoy

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