

Institutionen för TELEKOMMUNIKATIONSSYSTEM LTH

Som hjälp inför de presentationer som skall hållas i samband med 20-poängsexjobben finns här några tips. Dokumentet är som synes på engelska vilket inte innebär att anförandet skall hållas på engelska. En kort ordlista finns sist i dokumentet.

Some hints for the presentation of Master Thesis reports

Some helpful notes on giving presentations are given below. This is not a definitive set of do's and don't's but just a few points that might help improve the quality of your presentation. In any event talk to your supervisor beforehand to establish the content and style of your own particular presentation.

What makes a bad lecture/lecturers?

They talk too slowly or too fast. They stand still and just talk.

The talk is at the wrong level (either too simplistic or too difficult).

There are no visual aids — or even worse there are poor visual aids.

They are not responsive to the audience.

Flippancy!

They stare at the OHP, avoiding eye contact with the audience.

Poor timekeeping.

So what makes a good lecture/lecturers?

Introduce yourself as there might be someone in the audience who doesn't know you — even if you only suspect one person out of an audience of a hundred you should still introduce yourself. (For the purposes of your project talks you will be introduced by the chair of the session so this won't be so crucial. However, it is still useful to have an introductory OHP which has your name on it — just in case somebody missed it.) Use appropriate words, terminology and jargon. If you think you have used a technical word without explaining it, then pause to explain it. Make sure everyone can hear you — speak to the person on the back row, speak clearly and reasonably slowly.

Use intonation in your voice to add colour and interest. Be expressive.

Use the OHP — well (see below)!!

Establish eye contact with the audience — but don't threaten them.

PREPARE your talk (see below).

In a more structured fashion... There is a number of simple rules to giving a good talk.

Preparation

1. Check the room out (if possible). Where are the light switches, plugs etc.? What facilities are available? OHP? Slide projector?
2. Write out the script of your talk completely. Do this especially if you think you are going to be nervous — if you freeze then read the script. Put stage directions on the script, e.g. "Put OHP No.6 up", "Switch off lights", "Write definition on blackboard", "Refer back to flipchart at this point", etc., etc. HOWEVER — do not plan to use the script!! It is your life raft if you begin to fall to pieces. For your purposes the two golden rules are:
 - i/ Have a script; and
 - ii/ Don't use it (if possible)!
3. Plan the structure of the talk. There must be a beginning, a middle and an end — sounds too obvious? Then listen to some of your colleagues' presentations !
4. At the beginning you should establish a rapport with the audience. This does NOT mean telling a joke (see below). Tell them what you are going to talk about if nothing else.
5. You should plan the following elements of your talk:

Links: a bad talk is obvious by its lack of links. A link is a sentence or two that joins two different parts of the talk, e.g. "So we have seen that the evidence supports the use of carrots for improving your sight, let us now consider how carrots achieve this."

Frames: around each topic you should include a "frame". A frame introduces a topic and then rounds it off. Again, frames are more obvious when omitted — the audience is often left wondering — "What has this got to do with x y z?" when in fact the presenter is no longer talking about x y z but has forgotten to tell anyone else!

(As an aside these two structural elements are very important in conveying meaning even though they say nothing which is not new to the audience. It is frequently the case that very good students — and researchers for that matter — are poor communicators precisely because they omit links and frames. To them the structure of the argument is obvious, the problem is that the structure of their talk is not obvious.)
6. Think of a working title for the talk — and then stick to this! The title might be in the form of a question, e.g. "What is data?" or "Can rabbits see in the dark?"
7. If the subject is really big or you are new to it — brainstorm the general area and then pick some topics that you will cover in the talk.
8. Make sure you are ready for the obvious questions after the talk is over. You can be very cunning and leave obvious gaps — the audience (if they stay awake) will spot the gaps and jump in, and you will have the answer ready and prepared.

9. Plan a good summary at the end. In general you should say things three times over. Tell them what you are going to do, tell them and then tell them what you told them — and even after all this someone will have missed the main point.
10. You can generally get one idea across in one hour. Do not pack your talk with peripheral junk and try to tell them everything. A common failing in student presentations is to chuck ideas at the audience at the rate of one a minute — in three minutes flat everyone is lost!
11. Practise the talk. Stand in front of a mirror and give the talk. A full hours talk will condense into about 30 minutes in front of the mirror (see Timekeeping below).
12. If you are using OHP slides then remember the dictum — **BIG, BOLD and BLACK: SEVEN LINES OF SEVEN WORDS**. Vary this formula only if you have good experience of what works and what doesn't.

The Talk Itself

1. If you have a script then do NOT read from it unless you think you are going to crack up. Some people read bullet points from postcards which they carry around during the talk — this is OK.
2. If you do crack up then grab the script and just read it!! But it is strictly for emergencies only!
3. Before you go into your talk have a few quiet moments on your own. Think **POSITIVELY** about the talk. Visualize a perfect talk. Imagine the ideal talk and then imagine yourself giving it. Make sure your own self esteem is good — if you think you are second rate then you will give a second rate talk.
4. Engage your audience using eye contact. Try to read the audience. Where are the important or interested people? Key in on them. Are they bored? Disinterested? (If so see below — Stimuli).
5. **DO NOT TELL A JOKE OR BE FLIPPANT IN ANY WAY**. Jokes are notoriously difficult to tell — badly constructed and poorly delivered they will wreck your talk completely.

(Aside: Some students frequently try to hide their inability to give a good presentation through the use of casual and repeated flippancy. Their attitude is one of — well you all know me, and I know you, and after all this is just a game, so what the hell, now where's that slide, oh I can't find it, never mind it wasn't important, here's the next one, well it speaks for itself, most of you know this, so I'll take it off before you can read it, is the time up yet? no, oh I'll go on then, etc., etc. Remember that this is an assessed part of your degree, approach it seriously and responsibly — don't try to be flippant.)
6. Use the OHP correctly. Put on the slide, straighten it and then stand well back to see what the audience is seeing. Don't hover around the OHP itself. Point to the screen not the OHP. When you have finally finished with the OHP switch it off.

7. Style. Make sure you know your own style and stick to it. On general is the classic "chalk-n-talk". You say something and then writes it on the board. Other people are "OHP-n-talk", i.e. put up a slide and talk about it, then put up another and talk about it, etc. Other styles are "The Enthusiast" — bounds about the lecture theatre (this style is common amongst sales and marketing people), "The Expert" — stands quite still, talks calmly and without interruption and completely unscripted and uses no other aids.
8. Vary the stimuli — this is an advanced technique to be used in either a long lecture or a sequence of lectures (so it doesn't apply to your talks). The idea is this — sooner or later you are going to be boring, when this occurs "vary the stimuli". For example you might suddenly change style — imagine "The Expert" who suddenly becomes "The Enthusiast" — the effect on the audience can be mind blowing. It is not a technique to use too much — maybe once a year.
9. Timekeeping — stick to time limits exactly. You should have some idea of where you should be as the talk progresses. For example, put the time on each OHP fly sheet when it should be placed on the OHP. (Put this as the clock time says 3.06 and how many minutes into the talk — if possible you don't want to pause adding up how many minutes you've got left.) In this way you can either speed up or slow down as required to finish on time. As you get better at giving talks you can have slides that can be omitted (without loss of coherence) to speed up a talk and topics that can be slipped in to pad out a short talk — but don't try this during your presentations.
10. When answering questions never be afraid to say "I don't know". It is generally best to be straightforward and honest. "I don't know" is quite alright because it is an acceptance on your part and equally doesn't threaten anyone in the audience. Try to avoid saying "I don't understand you" since this threatens the questioner while admitting your own inability. This is not a hard and fast rule since sometimes questions are badly phrased but it is better to try and be positive. Ask for clarification or answer what you think the questioner was asking, if the questioner is genuinely interested then he or she should realise that the original effort was badly directed and should come back with a clearer version.

Finally, never answer a question with "I was told to do this by X" (usually where X is your supervisor!). This is your project, your work and your presentation — accept the responsibility that goes with the position. You may well have been "told" to do something but in answering a question you should give the reasons that underlay that "telling". Don't pass the buck! Answer the question!

Liten ordlista:

assess=något som skall bedömas

chuck=slänga

cunning=slug,listig

dictum=utsaga

esteem=sätta värde på

flippancy= nonchalans

hover=driva omkring

rapport=relation [god]