Tips for preparing a clear talk

Kristen Grauman
Facebook AI Research
University of Texas at Austin
Disclaimer

I don’t always prepare a clear talk...
Some guidelines

1. Consider the audience & event
2. Don’t bury the lead
3. Be concise
4. Give credit
5. Q&A: the unknown unknowns
6. Delivery tips
7. Clear slides
Consider the audience & event

- Your group meeting?
- CVPR?
- Job talk to entire CS department?
- Interdisciplinary?
- K-12?
- Formal? Casual?

- Degree of detail
- Degree of jargon
- Depth vs. breadth
- Latest vs. arc of progress
Don’t bury the lead

Problem

Our idea

• Don’t leave contribution implicit
• Reiterate and rephrase message throughout
• Verbally: give salient markers; “Important”…”stress that”...
• “Punchlines” for results
Be concise

“I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.”
— Mark Twain

- Prep the “concept bullets”
- Breathe, and use fewer words
- Short text phrases (not sentences)
- Not every detail needs to surface

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Twain
Give credit

• Paint the big picture of literature for context
• (Clusters of) related work & key contrasts
• Give credit for borrowed slides, per slide

[Slide credit: Jane Smith]
Q&A: The unknown unknowns
Q&A: The unknown unknowns

• Guess likely questions & prepare
• Don’t skip to backup slides unless necessary
• Sometimes it’s better to defer a question
• Answer, then stop.
• Share feedback with co-authors afterwards

https://duffylondon.com/product/tables/abyss-horizon/
Delivery tips

• Practice and get feedback; iterate
• The first slide - what will you say?
• Be loud enough
• Use pauses
• Flow: think through transition in and out of each slide
• Qualitative examples: say something about one or two.
• Manage time: stopwatch, prevent derail
• If you’re skipping something, then skip it.
• Think about where you want to stand / test the room.
• Check the laptop, AV
• Nerves: “If you’re nervous, it means you care” ~Trevor Darrell

https://www.ted.com/playlists/497/practice_makes_perfect
Carefully done slides reduce cognitive load

- Animation – to focus attention
- Font size – 28+ for main text
- Simplest visual possible to make the point
- Consistency: font size, capitalization, alignment…
- Avoid jitter of text placement in consecutive slides
- One liners where possible
- Use color to link pieces of equations
- Delete “Hi my name is …” from notes of first slide!
- Avoid content-free “Thank you!” slide
Some guidelines

1. Consider the audience & event
2. Don’t bury the lead
3. Be concise
4. Give credit
5. Q&A: the unknown unknowns
6. Delivery tips
7. Clear slides