

VITALS FOR AN “EFFECTIVE” SCIENTIFIC TALK

- Good science:** interesting important topic, problem clearly defined, adequate data/methods, compelling results, logical interpretations, limitations acknowledged, conclusions well justified
- Satisfied audience:** they learned, understood, were interested in YOUR work. They walked away knowing your problem and two important conclusions.
- Practice, practice, practice**

FOR A TRULY OUTSTANDING/MEMORABLE TALK (i.e., ICEING ON THE CAKE)

You and your performance:

Personal appearance: neat, professional attire, err on the formal side. Nothing extraordinary.

Body language: be open, project confidence, modest gesturing and motion adds to liveliness. Maintain clear line of sight to the screen. Smile.

Voice: speak loud (if you have a soft voice use a microphone), varying pitch and tone (avoid monotone), speak deliberately, clearly, and don't rush

Speaker-audience rapport: make eye-contact with, speak to, and respond to the audience. Relate your work to the interests of your audience and credit work by people in your audience.

Language: minimize jargon, accurate vocabulary, concise sentences (no wasted words or “hmm”, “errr”, “ehhhh”, non-words).

Use of pointer: point deliberately, steadily, and slooowly to the part of image you're discussing. A shaky or wild pointer is distracting. Never point a laser into the audience or the back of the moderators head.

Attitude: be yourself, be happy, show enthusiasm, and, most of all, project confidence

Entertain: Convey your story, share your thought process, entrain the audience into your journey, challenge the audience, and use humor appropriately. A great talk often raises as many new questions as new answers.

Mechanics of your presentation

Hardware/software: Know how to use the computer, projection equipment, and software

Image layout: Keep 'em simple. Good size proportion between diagrams/illustrations, axis labels, and text. Use minimal text with simple, direct, active words

Image appearance: Use consistent style. Use (tasteful) colors for emphasis, distinction, and clarity; use transitions/animations sparingly and only to emphasize/illustrate your most important points.

Image content: quantity of material can be covered in < 3 minutes, if more time is needed, then use appropriate transitions to add or build more to image. 2-3 important points per image.

Timing: appropriate time spent on individual slides, on each section, and on the whole talk. Don't go over your time limit!

Answering questions

Repeat the question: emphasize positive/supportive questions, rephrase negative or non-supportive questions so that it rounds-out, complements, or helps understand your work

Answer the question

Don't bluff: Never fake and answer or give a wrong one. If you can't think of an answer you can say, e.g., “I have not considered that before. That's a good point that we should discuss later”

Be appreciative: Smile, thank audience for their interest and participation.