

## Suggestions for Presentation of a Twenty-minute Talk

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How to present a research talk which will be remembered for a long(!) time for its presentation and clarity is a question which every newcomer would like to ask. Yes, one may also have a slight itch to prove that one is working on a very hard problem and his/her solution is straight from "the BOOK". We would like to suggest some points to ponder on the presentation only (these points may also help reduce itching).

There are basically only three points to remember: First, *do not cram too much* into fifteen minutes. Remember that in a twenty minutes talk you are allowed only fifteen minutes for presentation, the remaining five minutes are for the audience to have a break, to ask questions or make comments on your talk, and to go to another room if there are parallel session. That is also the time when the chair of your session will introduce the next speaker. If your talk is the last one, others have to go for lunch, dinner or to catch a flight. Please do not be afraid of the questions and comments. Most of the time it will not be a disaster if you utter: "Oh! that is a good point, I would like to get back to you after the talks" or simply "I do not know, but I would also like to know the answer. Is there anybody in the audience who knows the answer".

Secondly, if you are using transparencies, *write big letters*. It is tempting to photocopy the pages from your printed paper, but the people in the back of the room won't be able to read it. If you have taken the trouble to prepare a transparency, it must be worth reading. So let it stay on the screen for enough time for people to read it. When you write big letters, you will not be able to write a lot on one transparency. A rule of thumb is to present one concept on one transparency and use about twelve transparencies. No transparency should contain more than seven or eight lines.

Thirdly, *speak loudly and slowly*. The reason is probably clear. It is no use to rush through your talk so fast that the people listening cannot keep up with you.

There are at least two comments, from respected and admired teachers, which we think are worth quoting here. When the first author of this article was preparing his first talk for a conference, he was worried about: "What happens if I finish before the time? (People will think I do not have enough material!! No jobs!!! I

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am finished!!! For ever!!!! They will all go home talking about the talk which finished before time!!!!!!) Well, Joseph Hammer came to my rescue. He said, "Look, Dinesh, *they will be really thankful to you if you finish a bit early*". Times have changed, but I think, Joe is still right.

The second comment is from Susan Prazak: "*You can not offend anybody by keeping a talk simple*". You have probably heard about this principle before: "KISS" Keep It Simple, Stupid!

Another point to keep in mind is: do not rush through the main definition, and do give examples of the concepts as you introduce them. Probably many of the people are going to follow your lecture, or start daydreaming, or start working on their own problems depending on your first three transparencies. Statement of the results with only an outline of a proof is enough. Give simple examples whenever possible. Messy calculations on the transparencies do not make your result more important and hard. You may even like to practice your talk beforehand to see how much time it really takes. If it takes more time than fifteen minutes, then take out some material. Do not even think about going through it faster.

The abstract, which is published in the program, should contain the definition of the object you are studying, the statement of the problem and if possible your main result.

In the end, the most important thing to remember is to stop immediately when the chair says: "It is time".

*A Suggestion for organizers or chairs:* It looks very bad, if the speaker feels and/or says that he/she was not given the opportunity to use the full time. Therefore it is necessary that on the program it is clearly stated that the talks should be limited to fifteen minutes and the remaining five minutes are for the questions/comments on the talk and for a possible break (so the audience can go out or come in for the next talk). Of course, if chairs want to include a photocopy of this article in an instructions packet, they should feel free to do so.