

Techniques for Giving a Great Seminar

J. Paul Robinson

SVM Professor of Cytomics

Department of Basic Medical Sciences
& Professor of Biomedical Engineering, Weldon
School of Biomedical Engineering
Purdue University



A set of suggestions and examples for creating good quality presentations.
Improve your ability to communicate your message.
What to do and what not to do in your seminar!!

This presentation in various formats from previous years is available for
download from

<http://www.cyto.purdue.edu/education>

The Three Essential Features of a Good Presentation

1. Tell people what you are going to tell them → Introduction & outline
2. Tell them the material → Your core materials in necessary detail
3. Tell them what you told them → Summarize your findings and close your presentation

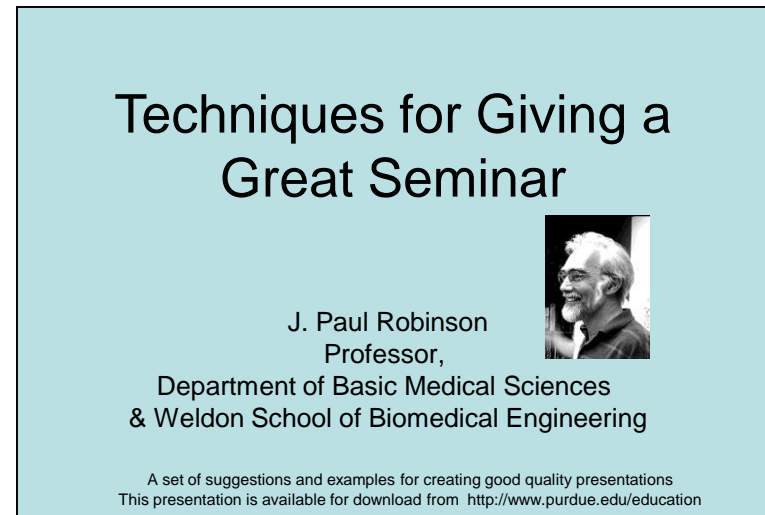
The basic rules of engagement

1. Be well prepared
2. Speak clearly
3. Keep to time
4. Be aware of your audience

Opening your presentation

1. You should be early (10 min) for your presentation.
2. You should have checked in with the person who will chair the session
3. You should have already checked the room, projector and computer well before your talk
4. You should be ready to begin when invited
5. Your first slide should be on the screen before you begin
6. It should have your presentation title on it and information about you

(Example opening slide from this presentation)



Have the projector and computer set up with the opening slide well before the presentation is due to start

Your Opening Statement

- **If you are an Invited Speaker:**
 - *“Thank you very much for that generous introduction. I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to give this presentation. It is an honor to be here at Purdue. Today I would like to present some ideas on the invention of the wheel....”*
- **If you are a Seminar Speaker (more informal):**
 - *“Thank you very much Professor X. I am very glad to be able to give this seminar. Today I would like to present some ideas on the invention of the wheel.”*

Your opening statement should be strong, and well prepared. It should be short and it can also be an expression of thanks to your host if appropriate.

Your Closing Statement

- Do**
- “In my last slide I would like to acknowledge the participation of my colleagues Jim, Jane, Alphonso, and Dr. Jones. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the *National Science Foundation* for funding this study.” (*pause here very briefly*) ... “Thank you very much for your attention.” (**Don’t say anything else!!!!**)

- Don’t**
- Don’t just stop!
 - Don’t say “*that’s it*” “*that’s the end*”: “*I’m finished*”
 - NEVER offer to answer questions if there is a chairperson - it is the role of the chairperson, not you, to ask for questions!!!! (**Don’t invite questions - it’s not your job – you might have gone 15 minutes over and you still think you should answer questions?**)

So: Make the audience feel comfortable about the end of your presentation by telling them when it is finished.

Key Material Items to Consider

- Your personal habits
- Use of the laser pointer
- The slide background
- Use of color
- Use of animation tools
- Use of diagrams or flow charts
- Amount of material per slide
- Number of slides in the presentation
- Your first and last slides

Your personal habits

- **Standing:** Face your audience, but if you are very nervous, look only at people in the middle or back rows
- **Pacing:** Sometimes pacing helps when you are nervous – it can also help to keep the audience's attention – but it can also be distracting – if you pace, pace slowly and deliberately
- **Speech:** Speak slowly, clearly, & deliberately
 - Don't say “Ummm”...or “Ah....”....between every sentence
 - Don't say “You know....” when you pause – silence is better!!
 - If English is not your native language, you must speak slowly or you may risk failure to communicate!!!
- **Fidgeting:** Don't play with the toys (like keys) or put your hands in your pockets and jiggle keys – hold the lectern if you have to. This might give you some additional confidence.
- **Humor:** Use very sparingly, it can be an ice-breaker but it is very hard to do – my suggestion is to avoid it

Using a pointer

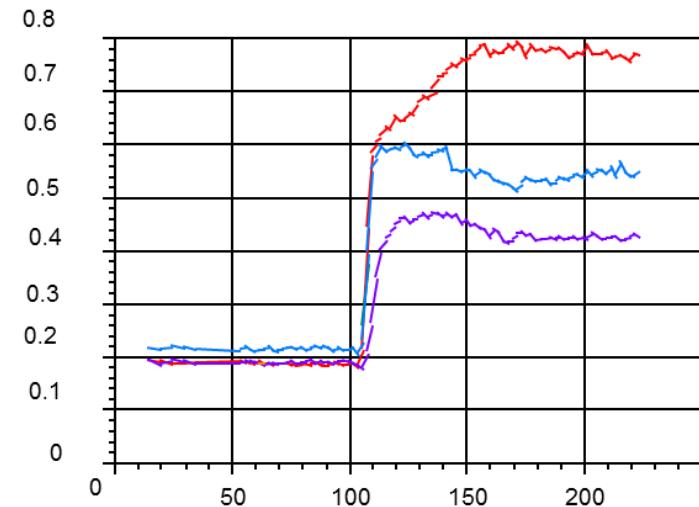
- Use the pointer to add emphasis and assist the audience follow your ideas

Do:

- Use sparingly
- Hold on only for a second at a time
- Hold it steady

Don't:

- Leave the pointer on!!
- Spray the audience...ouch!
- Flash the pointer all over the slide



So In Emergency: If the pointer dies, don't panic. A good chairperson will observe and deal with it. If not, find a stick, pen, or some long object and use that to point to the screen. Don't let this put you off your presentation. If in a very large lecture theater, simply direct your audience to the spot!

Pointer use reinforcement

- There are 4 main points:
 - The length of time you leave the pointer on
 - Are you “firing” at the audience?
 - Are you distracting your audience rather than focusing them?
 - How steady your hand is

Example: When you mention the first point – put the laser at the “-”. Discuss this point, then move to the next point. Mostly pointers are useful when dealing with figures and images. It is unnecessary to point to each line of text, but for learners, it is a good way to keep yourself on track.

Pointer hints for nervous people

(that's most people actually!)



- Hold the lectern when you talk – it stops your hands doing funny things. When you become more confident, you can walk away from the lectern.
- Hold the laser pointer on the edge of the lectern when you point it – then your quivering fingers won't make the pointer bounce everywhere!!

Fonts

- Try to use a single, clear font across the entire presentation
- Make the text large enough that the audience can read it
- *Some fonts are really bad*
- **SOME ARE WORSE**
- And some should be avoided at all costs

Don't even think of doing this!

Note: You might think that your science is a work of art, but the art is in the science not the art.

Using Backgrounds

- Backgrounds are fun, but they can be distracting
- Sometimes you cannot read the text
- Sometimes backgrounds are more interesting than the data
- They significantly increase the size of the file
- Sometimes they just look ridiculous
- It is a well known fact that the most important factor in reading text is**contrast**
- The best contrast is.....**Black** and **White**

So: Sometimes boring old black and white slides are easier to see and can be effective in communicating your message!! !!

More on Backgrounds

- Be careful when using backgrounds available from templates
- A more conservative approach is safer
- You want the audience to focus on your data, not your background
- If you must, use a simple color like blue
- Some examples follow in the next 5 slides – the last 2 are not acceptable

Lesson: Pretty backgrounds are fun but foolish! It might seem like a good idea at the time, but your audience is thinking ...”*Oh no, not another symphony of colors....*”

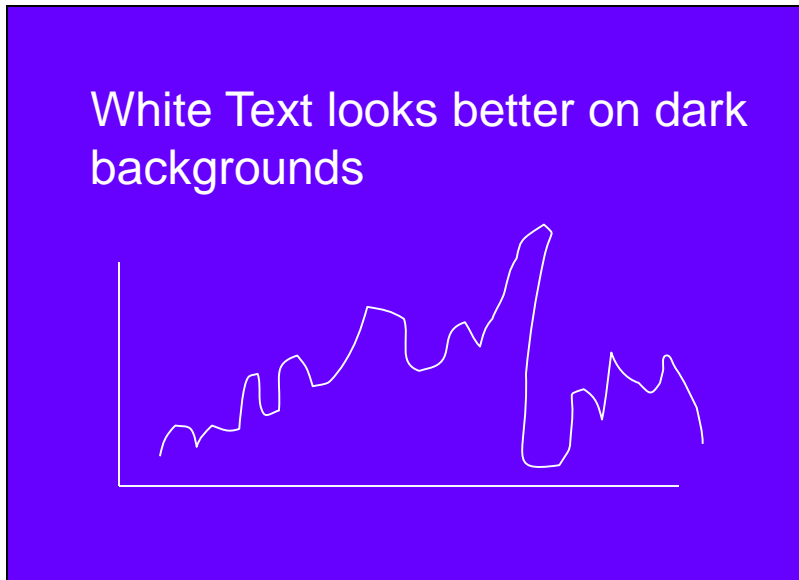
Use of Color

- Color shows **emphasis....**BUT..
- It should be used sparingly
- Certain colors cannot be used together
 - For example:
 - Red text cannot be used on blue backgrounds or vice versa
 - Blue text cannot be used on red backgrounds or vice versa
- Colors that should virtually never be used are:
 - Purple, pink and bright green
- Yellow can be used on black but never on a white background

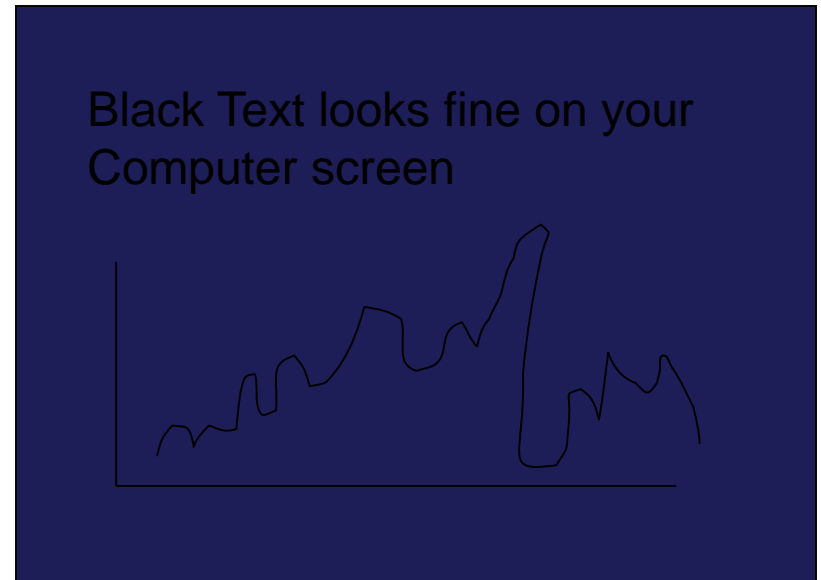
So: NEVER use red and blue together...it might look OK on your computer screen, but it's horrible on the projector screen!!

The difference between your computer screen and the projector screen

- Colors that look great on your computer screen may be TERRIBLE on the projector screen.
- For example BLUE background CANNOT have black text.



Your computer SCREEN looks like this....It's just OK.



But this is what happens when it is projected onto the screen....

So: NEVER use black text on a blue background...it might look OK on your computer screen, but the audience can't read it!!



Animation

- How much animation is right?
- Make sure you test it carefully!
- A small amount of animation is good
- Too much is “ditzy” and can annoy your audience
- If you annoy your audience, you don’t communicate

So: “Ditzy” animations are really off-putting to the audience. Good animations, such as how reactions takes place, are fine.

How Many Slides?

- Rule of thumb: 1 slide per minute of your allotted time
- You will spend longer on some slides than you think.
- For a 20-minute talk, use 20 slides. If you fill up your 20 minutes, there is no time for questions.
- Don't you hate being the last speaker in a session where everyone has gone 5 minutes over and your 30-minute talk now has 15 minutes left? **Don't do that to other speakers!!**
- This presentation was designed for a 45-50 minute talk with 10-15 minutes for discussion. There are 46 slides in the actual presentation (with a few hidden slides for explanation).

The last 2 slides are explanations as to how the slides were made – an example of adding extra slides in case a question is asked about a topic. A slide was added to give some explanation for the "online" version. This is not shown in the seminar.

So: 90 slides for a 45 minute presentation says *"I am going to blow you away with data, but I don't care if you really understand what I am saying. My huge number of slides says 'I can't organize myself!' Yes I am a jerk!"*

Summary

- A good presentation requires much preparation
- Make a proper introduction and use a slide that shows the structure (outline) of your talk
- Have slides that are clean, clear, and readable
- Use approximately 1 slide per minute
- Show a summary slide at the end
- Make the final slide an acknowledgement slide
- Add a few extra slides AFTER your last slide to use in case questions arise in areas you think might be useful
- Conclude by saying : “*Thank you very much for your attention.*” Stop and let the audience clap!!!
- Do NOT ask for questions unless there is no chairperson!!!!!!!!
- Never ask for questions!!
- What do you think about asking for questions?

So: Do NOT ask for questions!!

About this Presentation

- It was designed to assist individuals to create quality presentations
- You may copy this and use it for any purpose, it may not be commercialized
- If you do use it, please acknowledge the source as:

J. Paul Robinson, Ph.D.

Professor, Purdue University

Email: jpr@flowcyt.cyto.purdue.edu

Web: www.cyto.purdue.edu

The actual presentation is at <http://www.cyto.purdue.edu/Education/index.htm>

This talk has been presented many times since 2000. This current version 09/02/03