

# HOWTO: Presentations

General guidelines

**RWTH**AACHEN  
UNIVERSITY

# Title: A Descriptive Sentence

Subtitle: more details here

Author #1

First name, Last name #2

First name, Last name #3

Affiliation

email address

Occasion, Location, Date of the presentation



- 1 Type & Structure of the Presentation
- 2 Design of the Slides
- 3 P<sup>3</sup>: Prepare, Practice & Presenting
- 4 Summary





To have in mind:

- Time constraint. Normally: 20 – 40 mins.
- Sometimes constraint also on the # of slides.
- Design the presentation for the audience.



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- **The design of a presentation depends entirely on its type, duration and audience.**

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Introduction	→	What you are going to say
Central sections	→	You say it
Conclusion	→	What you have said

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- Dividing the talk in sections helps to both organize the talk and create a flow.
- Details are one of your enemies → Communicate only the main ideas.
- Customize your presentation according to the knowledge of the audience.



As everything else: It depends on the presentation's type and duration.

Alternatives:

- No outline
- Initial outline → sections announced by the speaker
- Outline repeated at the beginning of every section

- 1 Introduction
  - What? Why? Why important?
  - Background: Who? When? Where? Who else?
  - Quick overview of results/approach
- 2 Central sections
  - Your contribution
  - Results
- 3 Conclusions
  - Repeat the main concepts
- 4 Backup slides (optional)
  - For expected questions

What do I want the audience to take away from this presentation?

- The important concepts should appear on the slides.
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- Where are the messages in the presentation?  
Are they clear?
  - What is the most important concept of the presentation?  
*Point it out!*

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## Messages of this talk

- No fixed rules!  
Adjust to audience and type of presentation
- Practice!

- The attention span of an adult is around 15-20 mins.

## How to keep the audience interested?

- Create a flow.
- Use Sections. Subsections?
- Narration. Anecdotes. Humor?
- Examples. Even on the board.
- Images. Videos. Demos.
- Take questions\*. Ask questions.

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\* = don't let the questions get disrupt the flow.

If too many, too detailed, too difficult, or just wrong, take them offline!

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Find your own favorite style/theme. Fine-tune it.

minimal  
\slides

→

→

prosper

→

beamer

multi-media attack!  
keynote/powerpoint

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## Theme

On each slide there may be: ← *may, not should!*

- A title; possibly a subtitle.
- Running outline: section name, subsection name.
- Author's name. Affiliation. Logos.
- Conference name. Location. Date.
- ***Page number is a must.***
- ...

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This is a lot of information. Is it REALLY needed? It depends.

Also matter of taste, color scheme, font size, available space, ...

- Most slides are cluttered; ***less is better!***
- Contain messages, not full sentences.
- Limit each slide to ***one main idea.***
- Replicate necessary information from earlier slides.
- Create a flow through your slides.

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Ask yourself:

- 1 Why am I presenting this slide?
- 2 What do I want the audience to take away from this slide?

## Visual appeal:

ImpOrTanT

- Spacing.      Alignment.      Centering.      Symmetry.
- Font selection: type/size.      Colors.      Highlighting.
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## In your choices:

- Readability is crucial.
- Try to present concepts visually.
- Be meaningful & *consistent!*

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## Selected guidelines:

- Use large enough fonts.
- Build complex texts and graphics piecewise.
- Prefer vector-based images.
- Use images instead of text; our brain cannot read and listen at the same time!



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- Narration: from the speaker.
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## You present *both* your work *and* yourself.

- Dress nicely.
- No hands in the pocket! No arms crossed.
- Face the audience. Establish eye contact.
- “Speaker” not “reader”. Don’t read!
- Speak clearly. Pay attention to pronunciation.

## Beginning of the talk

- Introduce yourself.
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## End of the talk

- Finish in time! ← overtime is **BAD**.
- Summarize problem statement & results.
- Provide references. Links.
- Acknowledgments may be here.
- Thank the audience. **No separate slide**.
- Ask for questions.
- Answer previous questions. Elaborate.

## Language

- Spell check. NO TYPOS, please.
- ***Use one language consistently.***
- Lookup all the words you may need during the talk.
- Be extra careful with absolute words: best, fastest, optimal, . . .
- Write down the message you want to deliver.

## Fillers:

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- Very, actually, alright, anyway, somehow
- Thinking loud: uhhhmmmmmmmm
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Alright, fillers are hmm... **disruptive**, you know? Ok, I mean, hmmm... they do not add anything. So, ok, they are hmmm... boring, you know.

## Beforehand

- Setup laptop & projector **AHEAD** of time.
  - charge batteries
  - disable screen saver
  - disable pop-ups & messengers
  - a clock/timer may be handy
- Use a pointer.
- A remote control is also nice.
- Multiple copies: laptop, USB, web.

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- Have backup slides ready for expected questions.

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## Rehearsing

- Speak loud! Not mumbling or just thinking.
- TIME your talk.
- Look at yourself in the mirror.  
No reason to be embarrassed,  
that's exactly what the audience stares at.
- Record your talk. Audio/video recording.

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(You can't blame the audience.)

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## Messages to take away:

- Keep it simple, keep it interesting, keep it visual.  
Visual appeal vs. simplicity vs. readability.
- Understand the constraints: time, type, audience, ...
- **Practice!** And beg for feedback.

*Good Luck with your talk!*



*M. Püschel*

<http://www.ece.cmu.edu/~pueschel/teaching/guides/guide-presentations.pdf>



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*W. Strunk and E. B. White*

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