

Practicum on Public Speaking

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Outline of Today's Session

Topic: How to prepare and deliver effective presentations

- Part 1: A public speaking primer
- Part 2: Michael Alley's "assertion-evidence" approach to PowerPoint
- Part 3: Critique and improvement of slides

Where will this apply?

All future oral presentations

First Rule of Public Speaking!

- Audience, audience, audience
 - Who are they? What are their priorities?
How is your work relevant to them?
What assumptions are they operating with?
- Listening is hard work; your job is to make it easier

Three Major Components of Public Speaking

- What you say
- How you organize what you say
- How you deliver what you say

What You Say

- What is your purpose?
- What were your methods?
- What are your most important claims/findings?
- What is the best evidence for your claims/findings?
- What do you recommend?
- How do all these connect with your audience?

How You Organize What You Say

- Tightly connected to what you say
- Logical beginning, middle, and end (think funnels)
- Explicit roadmap
- Clear transitions and signposts throughout (think bridges and freeway exits)

“If the audience doesn’t know where they are, they become tired much more easily.”

Alley 2003

Be Repetitive - Strategically

- Use your conclusion to summarize and emphasize key points
- Reinforce importance and relevance of your message

How You Deliver What You Say

Brainstorm...

How You Deliver What You Say

- Style of language
- Style of presentation
- Body language
- Voice

Language

- Use everyday language
- Avoid jargon – or, if necessary, define terms
- Add life with language, such as metaphor/analogy, but don't overdo it

Presentation Style

- Extemporaneous – not the same as impromptu!
- With visual aids

Body Language: Posture

- Posture
 - Attentive
 - Professional
 - Avoid slouching

Body Language: Movement

- Movement and gestures
 - Keep under control
 - Avoid pacing
 - Avoid fidgeting, playing with pens, hair, etc

Body Language: Eye Contact

- Eye contact
 - Make it
 - Vary it
 - Avoid scanning and too much focus on one or two people

Body Language: Facial Expression

- Facial expression
 - Positive
 - Animated, as appropriate
 - Show your enthusiasm

Body Language: Dress

- “Business Casual”
 - Clean, neat, professional
 - Less formal than a suit; more formal than jeans
 - Today’s models

Voice

- Clearly – be loud enough
- Slowly – enunciate
- Pauses sound longer to you than to audience
- Watch out for verbal fillers – um, ah, so, you know...

Part 2: Alley's “Assertion-Evidence” Approach

Benefits of Presentation Slides

- More than doubles recall...
 - Hear: 10%; See: 20%
 - Hear and See: 50%
- ...when effective!
- Serves as record and reference after the presentation

Design Basics 1

- Use sans serif font (i.e. arial)
- Avoid serif font (i.e. times new roman)
- Less is more – for words and images
(white space is your friend)

Design Basics 2

- Use color judiciously
- Ensure strong contrast between type and background - black on yellow is the quickest combination to read
- Avoid combining red, green, and brown; avoid “hot” backgrounds

Assertion-Evidence Design

- Audience reads from top left toward bottom right
- Use headline to state a claim
- Use rest of slide to illustrate claim with clear, concise images and words
- Adds approximately 10 percentage points to scores on recall tests (Alley 2005)

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Please see page 11 of: <http://www.writing.eng.vt.edu/handbook/visuals/08b.ppt>

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Impact of Assertion-Evidence Design

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Please see page 23 of: http://www.writing.eng.vt.edu/speaking/rethinking_penn_state.pdf

Michael Alley

- Virginia Tech
- *The Craft of Scientific Presentations*
2003
- <http://www.writing.eng.vt.edu/>
- Examples, templates, guidance on scientific posters as well as slide presentations, references and resources

Part 3: Critique

Three (Somewhat Random) Examples

- How would you improve the slides?
- How would you advise the presenter?

A (Few Words) of Caution

“PowerPoint is a competent slide manager and projector. But rather than supplementing a presentation, it has become a substitute for it. Such misuse ignores the most important rule of speaking: Respect your audience.”

Edward Tufte 2003