

How to Give a Bad Talk

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1. Thou Shalt Not Be Neat

- i could be doing GREAT research instead
 - who cares about spelling and grammar?
 - People don't care about readability, only about how smart I am, so why bother?
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- Write all over the place

2. Thou Shalt Not Waste Space

- Old argument
 - Simple economics
 - Each transparency costs \$2
 - Saving 5 is 10 bucks
- New argument
 - Saves disk space, network bandwidth
- Cram 10+ bullets/slide
- You've done a lot of work if your slides have a lot of stuff in them!

3. Thou Shalt Not Write Large

- Saves space!
- And I don't want to be thought of as being LOUD, do I?
- The big shots I want to impress sit in front, anyway!
- And you can fill up all the space below with long equations explaining your wonderful new theory in small print

4. Thou Shalt Not Draw Pictures

- Think how many bullets you can get instead of a picture.
- Is a picture really worth 1,000 words?
 - Or is it a crutch for weak minds?
- And people might think I'm not capable of abstract thinking if I actually *show* useful pictures

5. Thou Shalt Not Use Color

- Flagrant use of **color** signifies lack of seriousness
- Be somber, serious, morose
- That way, only the people who are experts in your field will understand what your main contributions are
 - And everyone else will be very impressed!

6. Thou Shalt Not Cut To The Chase

- When running out of time, what do you do?
 - Skip slides and get to the key conclusions?
 - Or go through all the slides, just speaking faster?
- Remember, it took you 30 mins to make each slide!

7. Thou Shalt Not Be Expressive

- People came to listen to your contributions, not to see if you are a great orator
- Be as dry and detailed as possible
- Don't identify and emphasize the important parts
 - After all, the experts you seek to impress are intelligent enough to form their own conclusions
- Avoid explanations and intuition
 - After all, the raw numbers, complex graphs, and equations speak for themselves

8. Thou Shalt Lose Thy Audience

- This applies especially to interview talks
 - “Keep the audience engaged for 75% of the time”
 - “Lose most of them (other than the experts) for at least 20% of the time”
- If people can understand everything you say, how hard can it be?
 - It’s better for the audience to think your work is deep because they don’t understand it, rather than realize it’s shallow because they do!

9. Thou Shalt Not Make Eye Contact

- Hard to acknowledge everyone’s presence
- Why be partial to some people over others?
- Just keep looking at the slides during your talk
 - That way, you won’t miss any points
- Also helps you avoid noticing raised hands and potentially embarrassing questions

10. THOU SHALT NOT PRACTICE

- This is **THE MOST IMPORTANT commandment**
- How can you appear spontaneous if you do practice?
- After all, people like seeing you *ad lib* everything
- And it takes away from valuable research time!

Advice

- **Negate** the previous ten commandments
- And make a summary slide!
- Even if you follow most of them, **MAKE SURE TO BREAK #10.**
 - Practice, practice, practice... it does make perfect
- Take comments and advice professionally
 - Constructive criticism is a **valuable** commodity; you don't get it often
 - Likewise, be professional and sincere in the comments you give others

Hints for a good 6.829 talk

- 15 minute talk + 5 minutes for questions
 - We'll try not to interrupt other than for quick clarifications
 - All are welcome to come and listen
- You can assume that we've read the proposal
 - Don't belabor the introductory material (1-2 slides enough)
- Make sure you cover the following in slides
 - Clear statement of the problem (and why it's interesting)
 - Your contributions
 - 1 slide on most relevant related/previous work
 - Covering one (or at most two) key result in some detail (pick the most interesting one)
 - If applicable, clearly say what more you expect to do between now and the paper (due 12/12)
- **Please PRACTISE YOUR TALK**