Caltech Spring 1998 CS 138c: Special Topics in Networking, Presentation Tips

Originally written by Rahul Simha; modified by Adam and Eve

Delivery

1. Don't talk with your back to the audience (at least, not too often).
2. Sustain eye contact with the audience as much as you can.
3. You should, in general, stand still. Pacing and shuffling your feet are no no's.
4. Avoid blocking the projection. One way is to stand back to the left of the screen and use your hands or a stick to point to items of interest on the screen.
5. Do not use the tactic of covering half your transparency to create suspense. You end up creating annoyance.
6. Pace your delivery carefully. Don't worry about "awkward silences", as they are never as awkward to the audience as they seem to you, the speaker.
7. Gesticulate for emphasis where useful.
8. Above all, try to appear relaxed, even if your stomach is abuzz with butterflies. "Never let them see you sweat."

Transparencies

1. Put down only essential stuff on the slides. Never clutter or crowd a slide (thumb rule: about 5-6 items per slide).
2. Never write full sentences on a slide -- just use keywords or brief phrases. You should, however, speak in full sentences.
3. Make your slides interesting and easy to read. Try using different colors, boldface, italics, etcetera, for emphasis. Use figures where useful. Of course, don't pretend to be Van Gogh -- you'll create the wrong impression (!).
4. Organize your material carefully. Spend a good deal of time planning the slides, judging the amount of space needed for a concept.

Preparation

1. You should present the essence of your subject. Basically, you will be teaching this material to the class! If may be useful to read some of the related references provided and add some background and context during your presentation.
2. Prepare a 20-25 minute talk, leaving 5-10 minutes for questions. Since three of you will be presenting during each class period, you will cover about 30 minutes each.
3. Present at least one key result in detail. Since this is an algorithms class, you could for example present a key algorithm and its refinements. Do not cloud your presentation with excessive detail.
4. Try to present your subject concisely. Where appropriate, define the problems studied as carefully

as possible.
5. We encourage you to present your own evaluation and criticism of the material.

Discussion

1. Everybody is encouraged to participate in the discussion and ask questions on the topics presented.
2. The purpose of the discussion period is to cover things that may have been left out of the actual presentation.

If you have any questions, contact the TAs: Adam and Eve.

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