

Presenting your research: Giving talks

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Stanford Linguistics

CS224u: Natural language understanding



Basic structure

Mirrors paper structure, but **must be simpler**.

Beginning

- What problem are you solving?
- Why is it important?
- What approaches have been tried, and why have they not fully solved the problem?

Middle

- What data?
- What approach? (model type, feature representations)
- How to evaluate success?

End

- Quantitative results, graphs.
- Which features/techniques/resources contributed most?
- What kinds of things do we still get wrong? Examples.
- Overall, what happened and why?

Patrick Blackburn's fundamental insight

Where do good talks come from?

Honesty.

“A good talk should never stray far from simple, honest communication.”

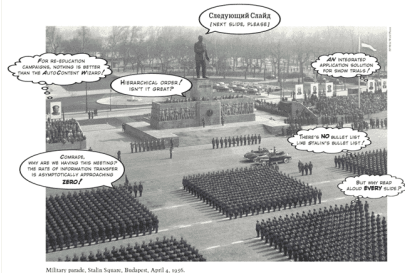
<https://web.stanford.edu/class/cs224u/readings/blackburn2001.pdf>

PowerPoint used for evil (not inevitable!)

Edward R. Tufte

*The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint:
Pitching Out Corrupts Within*

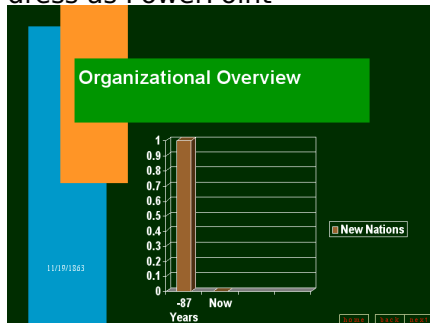
SECOND EDITION



Military parade, Stalin Square, Budapest, April 4, 1956.

<http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/powerpoint>

Peter Norvig: Gettysburg Address as PowerPoint



<http://norvig.com/Gettysburg/>

Slide design: two schools of thought

Minimalist

1. Your slides should be as spare as possible.
2. The audience should spend most of the time listening to and looking at you.
3. Individual slides do not stay up for long or get used in more than one way.

Comparative

1. Your slides should be as full as possible without sacrificing clarity.
2. Your talk should make it easy for people to spend time studying your slides.
3. Individual slides stay up for a long time and get used to make multiple comparisons and establish numerous connections.

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A personal matter

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- The minimalist view seems right for telling a story – often the best mode when time is of the essence and the audience is mainly there to learn about what your paper contains.
- The comparative view seems right for teaching; it's the closest slides come to a full, well-organized chalkboard.
- Find the style that works for you. As long as you think long and hard about what it will be like to listen to your talk, and adjust accordingly, you'll shine.

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4. **Boxes**, arrows ←, and other devices to help people navigate plots, model diagrams, and long prose statements.

Guiding audience attention

Overlays

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Color

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Size

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Boxes

Guiding audience attention



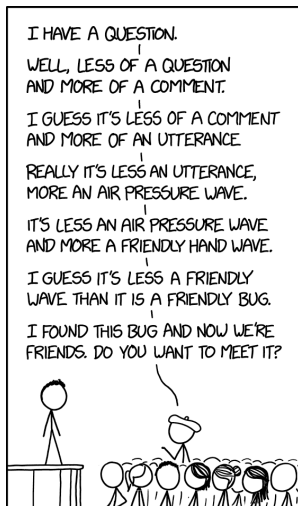
Boxes

More mundane things

- Turn off any notifications that might appear on the screen.
- Make sure your computer is out of power-saver mode so that the screen doesn't shut off while you're talking.
- Shut down running applications that might get in your way.
- Make sure your desktop is clear of files and notes that you wouldn't want the world to see.
- If using PowerPoint / Keynote / Google Slides, have a PDF back-up just in case.
- Projectors can fail; always be prepared to give the talk without slides.

The discussion period

1. This is an important part of the presentation.
2. It should be a chance for the audience to gain a deeper understanding of your ideas. When the entire discussion period has this aim, it is a joy.
3. But sometimes other things happen: hostile questioners, confused questioners, . . .
4. Try to pause for one second before answering each question.
5. Avoid saying “I have no idea” and leave it at that. When floored, say: “I have no idea, but let’s think about . . .”
6. Most questions won’t make total sense to you. Your questioner doesn’t know the work all that well.
7. You’ll be a hit if you can warp every question you get into one that makes sense and leaves everyone with the impression that the questioner raised an important issue.



<https://xkcd.com/2191/>