

Journal club (seminar, lecture) presentation tips

I. Preparation

- A. Choose an interesting paper with presentable data
 - 1. Only one paper
 - 2. Research paper, not a review
- B. Make sure you understand the background
 - 1. Look up references
- C. Make sure you understand the experimental details
 - 1. Look up references
- D. Make sure visuals are easy to see - enlarge the figures and tables.
 - 1. Preview your slides in a real auditorium from the back of the room. If you can't read them easily, change them.
- E. Beware of Power Point
 - 1. Concentrate on content, not gloss.
 - 2. Use a minimum of slides.
 - 3. Avoid low contrast colors. White backgrounds work best.
 - 4. Avoid excessive text and avoid reading text to the audience. It is better to use minimal bullet points where necessary and elaborate by speaking directly to the audience.
 - 5. Avoid excessive "cute" animations or graphics. It's distracting.
 - 6. In general, concentrate on the audience, not on the slides. (See II-G)

II. Presentation

- A. Practice your presentation with a timer. 50 minutes for a one hour slot is optimum.
- B. No one understands anything. Start from the beginning, keep it as simple as possible, remember the big picture. It is far better to insult an arrogant know-it-all than to leave someone behind.
- C. At least half of your responsibility is to tell the audience what you are doing during the presentation, to guide them through the presentation.
- D. Present an outline of the talk.
 - 1. Better yet, put it on the board, or use it repeatedly during the talk to track your progress.
- E. Presentation drill
 - 1. Tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em (outline)
 - 2. Tell 'em (body of the presentation)
 - 3. Tell 'em what you told them (concluding summary)
- F. Figure drill
 - 1. Hypothesis
 - 2. Experimental design & details - use written outlines
 - 3. Experimental data
 - 4. Interpretation
 - 5. Conclusions
 - 6. New Hypothesis - how it leads to the next experiment
 - 7. CAUTION

- a. Don't show a figure unless you intend to actually address specific elements of the figure in detail
- b. If you are not going to discuss all of the data in a figure, tell the audience this and direct their attention to the things you *are* going to discuss.
- c. It takes the audience a long time to assimilate a figure. If you carefully point out all of the features of a figure as it is presented (abscissa, ordinate, symbols, columns, etc.) it helps them to understand it and it forces you to keep a reasonable pace.
- d. Make sure you understand the difference between data, interpretation and conclusions, and that you make these distinctions during the presentation.

G. Communicate with the audience

1. Make eye contact with everyone; concentrate as much as possible on the audience rather than the slides.
2. Ask for questions
3. Listen carefully when a question is asked. Often there is a lot of confusing wasted discussion that revolves around a misunderstood question. If you don't understand the question, ask for clarification.

H. Don't *try* to be humorous

1. Most likely you will just distract the audience and embarrass yourself
2. Usually the most humorous stuff is spontaneous or unintentional