858M: Presentation Guidelines

Your class presentations:

- should be 30–40 minutes long. Leave plenty of time for questions.
- can be done using slides or the board; if you are not accustom to giving talks, I suggest using slides.
- ought to address the following related to the paper:
  1. What question(s) are they trying to solve? Why are the questions interesting?
  2. What approach did they take to solve the problem? (Give the technical ideas as much as is necessary to get the idea; be ready to answer questions about the details, but don’t focus too much of the presentation on them.)
  3. What results did they obtain? How do the results answer the questions they started with?
  4. What are the major strengths of the paper and approach? What are the major weaknesses?
  5. What is the natural followup work to this paper?

Some presentation tips:

- Present in layers. **Do not present the paper in the order in which it is written.**
  1. Present the main point first: why did the authors conduct this study? What have they learned? If the audience were to remember one thing from the paper, what would it be? Look in the abstract, end of the introduction, and the conclusion for hints about what the authors think this is. (1–5 minutes)
  2. Describe the broad outline of how the experiments were conducted or the basic idea of the algorithm or the main point of the proof. Be brief, assume your audience knows the basic techniques (if they do not, you will fill them in during part 3 below). Examples: “They used a Bayesian network, trained on these examples, to create a classifier for graphs of size $< 10$.”; “They used linear programming to find the parameters that caused the model to grow networks that best matched the training set of graphs.” (2–6 minutes)
  3. Finally, present the paper details, and questions, suggested follow-ups, ideas for improvement, weaknesses, crazy ideas the paper inspired, etc.

- You should think of your talk as a story with a story arc: a story arc starts with background / mood setting, and then introduces a major “conflict” or problem. In scientific “stories” this is usually a question that needs to be answered. The rest of the talk is “resolution”: where you answer (perhaps partially) the questions.

- Avoid extraneous clutter on slides: Never allow “navigation controls” to appear on your slides. Don’t put the slide number on your slides unless you need it there. Never put the talk title or your name on every slide. Never include “talk roadmaps” on every slide. Avoid slide “decoration” — particularly avoid lines or decoration between the title and content. Leave a generous margin around the slide borders. Not every slide has to have a title — skip it if you feel it’s unnecessary.

- Titles should be $\sim 48$ point font. Normal text should be $\sim 28$ point font. No text should be smaller than $\sim 18$ point font.

- Avoid bulleted lists.

- Don’t include an “outline of the talk.”

- Don’t put too much on a slide. Try to just make one point per slide. But also don’t put too little on a slide. Good design can make slides both clear and full of content.

- Images are better than text.
858M Presentation Grading Sheet

Presenter Name: ___________________________  Date: ____________

Rubrics:
  • 9,10: Excellently done; minor improvements possible
  • 7,8: Very good; at most one “major” improvement possible.
  • 4,5,6: Good; adequately done, could be improved in several major ways.
  • 1,2,3: Fair; several major deficiencies are present.

Grading Categories:

_____ Presentation was well timed. (0–10 points)

_____ Presentation was structured logically and covered the main points from the paper. (0–10 points)

_____ Proper motivation and intuition for the questions, approach, and results was given. (0–10 points)

_____ Presentation covered the technical details to sufficient depth, correctly. (0–10 points)

_____ Slides were clear, correct, polished, and easy to read. (0–10 points)

_____ Speaker was clear and handled questions well. (0–10 points)

General Comments: