Some Hints on Oral Presentations

ENGR 125CS

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Outline

- Introduction
- Getting Started
- Preparing Visual Aids
- Time Limits
- Practice and Evaluation

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Introduction

- Professional Oral Presentations
  - Need to convey technical content
  - Usually have a strict time limit
  - Expect a knowledgeable audience
  - Use a formal presentation style

Getting Started

- Organize your talk with an introduction, the outline, body, and summary or conclusion.

- Refer back to the outline frequently: let the audience know where you are in the talk

- Include only facts or concepts that can be explained adequately in the allotted time.

- Rehearse the presentation so you can confidently deliver it in the allotted time.

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Getting Started (cont.)

- Consider:
  - What are the two or three key points I want the audience to remember?
  - What would most surprise the audience about this information?
  - What if visual aids don't work?
  - What if I find out I have less time than planned?
  - What if someone asks a complicated question right in the middle of the presentation?
  - Have a clear and professional conclusion: *not* "well, I guess that's it."

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Visual Aids

- In general, do not just read from a prepared script. Use an outline or note cards as topic reminders

- Arrive early enough to familiarize yourself with the microphone, slide controls, laser pointer, A/V staff, etc.

- Do not read text from the screen

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Visual Aids (cont.)

- Every time you display a slide the audience needs time to interpret it.
  - Describe the abscissa, ordinate, units, and the legend for each curve.
  - If the shape of a curve or some other feature is important, tell the audience what they should observe in order to grasp the point.
- Superfluous animation, display effects, sounds, blinking text, etc., should be avoided
- Use the pointer only when necessary

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Visual Aids (cont.)

- Allow one minute of your talk for each slide, e.g., aim for 12 slides in 15 minutes
- Minimize the number of text lines and graph curves.
  - More than 12 lines of text or 5 curves are too many to be comprehended within one minute.
  - *Too little is better than too much.*

Visual Aids (cont.)

- Characters should have a height at least 1/40 of the total frame height.

- Black lines or white lines on a solid background are more legible than colored lines: avoid using color to distinguish data.

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Visual Aids (cont.)

- Verify that the presentation format matches the available projection equipment.

- Laptop, DVD, overhead slides, or VHS tape: make sure such a player will be on hand—and test it in advance!!

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Time Limits

- Know how much time you have been allotted: never exceed the time limit, and avoid leaving lots of extra time

- PRACTICE in front of a critical audience with a stop watch

- Keep track of time during the presentation

- Never try to "fly through" the last set of slides if time has run out: PREPARE to "cut to the chase" if necessary

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Practice and Evaluation

- Public speaking takes practice: you need to *do* it to get better at it
- Solicit critical feedback from others
- Practice good posture when facing the audience, pointing to slides, etc.
- Work on speaking clearly and evenly

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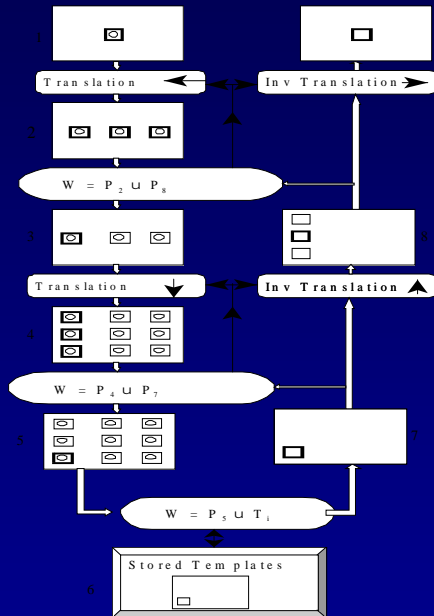
Examples

Too small, and poor choice of line colors.
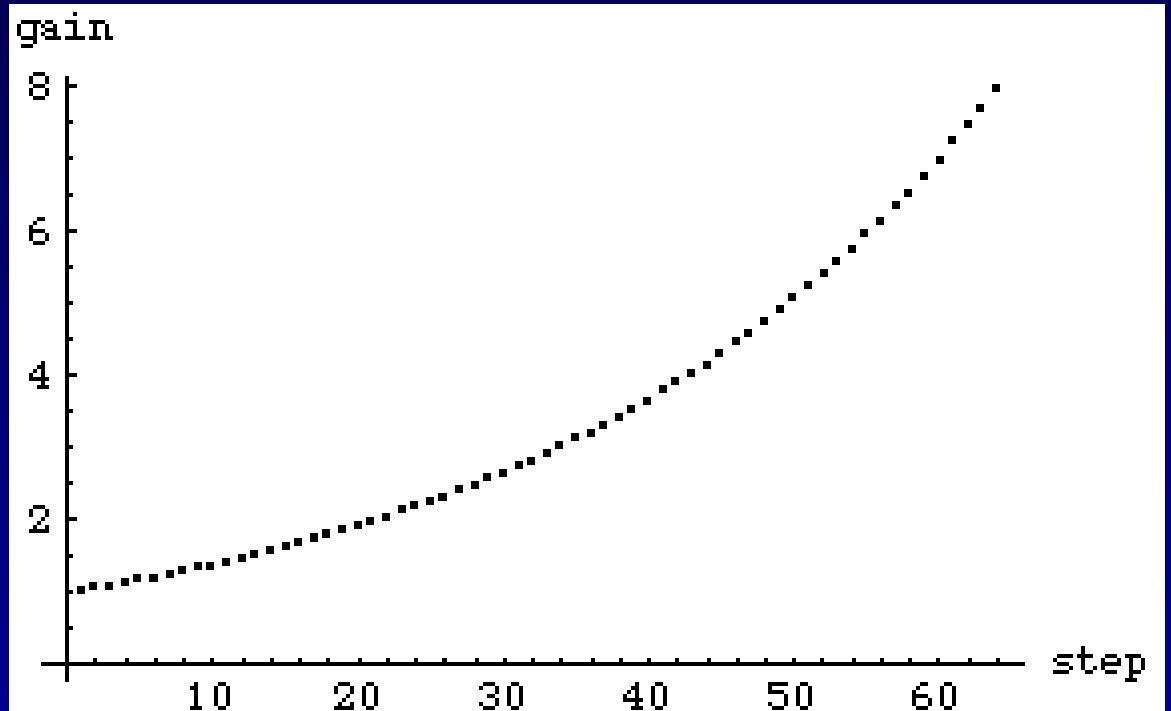
Crude text style, but conveys the point

Examples

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Why show so many lines?
No one can read it!

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Conclusion

- Decide upon two or three key points
- Anticipate problems and prepare contingency plans
- PRACTICE thoroughly and carefully
- Seek and use feedback from others

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