

Technical Talk Guidelines

A brief guide for novice speakers

12/9/96

Sample Talk Outline

Title

Background or Introduction

- This may also go after the outline.
- Clearly define what the subject of the work is, why it is important, what others have already done, and how you have contributed to the state of the art.

Outline

- One slide only - don't spend too much time!

Body of Talk

- The whole audience should be able to follow the first item.
- The talk should progress to more detailed and higher level material.
- Many talks contain some material that only part of the audience will fully appreciate.
- Introduce new sections. Make it clear when a new section begins and how the new section relates to the previous section and to the rest of the talk.
- Lead into succeeding slides when talking. (Always know what your next slide is!)

Summary

- This is what you want the audience to remember.
- Should contain a small number of items.
- Sometimes called Conclusion.

Miscellaneous “Rules” for Good Talks

Talk Strategy

- The whole talk should have a well-defined purpose.
- It should tell a clear story.

Individual Slides

- Keep the amount of information on each slide small.
- Equation slides: Use a small number of equations, define all symbols, describe physical meaning.

Graphs

- Should have title, axes should be labeled (with units).
- Source should be referenced if not the speaker or co-authors!

Presentation

- For moderate size rooms, point to the screen, talk to the audience.