Presentation Guidelines

Chair of Software Engineering II

Version of 2024–05–29

You will be giving a presentation for your seminar, bachelor, or master thesis soon? Please carefully read the following guidelines and follow them while creating and giving the presentation. Many things mentioned here might be clear to you; however, we noticed several times that one or the other item might not be known or not be respected by students. *Be aware:* Your presentation will be one part of your seminar grade and even an own grade in case of a thesis, worth three credit points. Please remember this when estimating the effort you spend for creating and giving the presentation.

Basically, all items we provide in this document are not new and are not specific to us. They are widely accepted as a style of good presentations.

General

- Your presentation time will be 20 min.

  Stick to this time; we will cut you short if you run significantly over this time limit. Of course, a significantly shorter presentation will have a negative impact on your grade as well.

- Do not use a heavy-coloured slide theme.

  Your slides will never profit from being too colourful. Fancy colours or colour gradients might look terrible on the projector and will not help you to transfer your message. Stick to a simple slide theme with high contrasts: black on white or white on black work well; similar colours are also fine. Use colours only were they reasonably help you in making your point.

- Be careful with fonts.

  For screen/projector one should prefer sans serif fonts as they are better readable. Make the font size large enough—your audience might sit away several metres from the projector and might thus not be able to read all the tiny stuff.

- Provide slide numbers.

Adding slide numbers to your slide master is easy. For the audience, slide numbers make it easier to reference certain slides during the Q&A part. Referencing to 'slide five' is easier than referencing the 'slide that showed the Perpetuum Mobile'.

- Your slides are only helping in transferring the information.

  A presentation is not about fancy slides. It is about the message you want to deliver (in this case: what you did and what the results were). Slides shall help you but they cannot substitute the message.

- Do not have a table-of-contents slide.

  For a twenty-minute talk there is *no* reason to waste time on such a thing. The agenda is more or less clear anyway: you will introduce and motivate your problem, if really necessary provide some background for understanding, explain your solution to the problem, and show and discuss your results.

- Do not have a 'Questions?' or 'Thank you' slide.

  Instead, create a summary of your presentation that shows the most important aspects. Prof. Andreas Zeller from CISPA/Saarland University provides a nice blog post on how this could be done. You can find further examples from other people that come to a similar outcome.

- Get feedback on your slide deck before the presentation.

  Send your slide deck to your advisor at least one week before the scheduled presentation. This will allow you advisor to provide you feedback on your slides and on the planned presentation.

- Less is more.

  Do not try to put every detail from your seminar work or thesis into the presentation. This will not work within the short amount of time. Instead, pick those parts that you want to present (you maybe have some outstanding results and some results that are nice but not outstanding). Less is more is also a good way for estimating the number of slides. The average time you should spend on a slide such that the audience understands the content is at least one to two minutes. This will result in 10 to at most 20 slides for a presentation.

- Know your audience.

  You should present neither information that is already obvious to your audience, nor go into too much detail. For example, we all know about the basics of Scratch, Whisker, MATE, Pynguin, and other tools and concepts frequently used at our chair. Spend your limited presentation time to show more about your own research rather than motivating what those tools are and why they should be used. However, if there are details required to understand why and how you extended those tools, you should explain them in adequate detail. Finding the right middle-ground between the audience being bored and overwhelmed is difficult. Use the offer to get feedback from your advisor in advance.

Further Advice

- Be early for the presentation.

  Arrive early for you presentation. Ten to fifteen minutes are a reasonable amount of time. Use the time for a technical check of your setup but also to calm down a bit.

- You will be nervous.

  And that is good. Being nervous is nothing bad, but you need to be able to control it such that you can give a good presentation.

- Practice your presentation.

  There are few things that are more embarrassing to your audience than a presenter not knowing what is the topic of the next slide. Many presentation programs, for example, Apple Keynote, provide a speakers view showing you a thumbnail of the next slide.

- Use animation wisely.

  Animation on slides can be reasonable to highlight certain things. Too much is just distracting and annoying.

- Use speaker notes.

  Many presentation programs provide a way to add speaker notes to your slides. Use them and state bullet points there with facts you want to mention.

- No walls of text.

  The slide shall not be your manuscript that you can read out loud to the audience. We can read ourselves. As little as 20 to 30 words is the absolute maximum of words on a single slide. Prefer figures/images/other visualisation. Walls of text disturb the audience because they will read the text on slide instead of listening to you.

- Do not just copy tables/figures from your paper/thesis.

  There is a high chance your paper/thesis will use a different font than your presentation (a font with serifs for the thesis, a sans serif font for the presentation). Copying figures/plots/tables from your paper will make them look different; besides, if you just put a screenshot into your presentation, quality might be bad, too. Recreate figures/plots with your presentation program (lucky you, if you used LaTeX for your presentation, then you can copy at least the LaTeX code and adjust it). Avoid tables on slides if possible; your audience can barely grasp them; just pick the relevant numbers/facts and visualise them differently.

- Have a well-prepared introduction and conclusion.

  You should learn the sentences you want to use for your introduction by heart. A well-prepared introduction catches the audience and they will be curious what you are going to present. Vice versa, if you loose the audience's attention in your introduction, the rest of the talk will barely be followed.

- Have a backup of your slides.

  Store it somewhere online, were you can easily access it, in case your computer does not work for whatever reason. Also have a PDF version of your slides stored online, in case no attendee can provide a computer that runs your highly customised super fancy presentation tool. PDF will just work, although it does not allow for certain features, such as animation.