How to Give a Talk

Why Listen?

- People fear public speaking
- You *will* speak
  - For class, work, job interviews, thesis defense
- Another skill to learn
  - Like designing a program
- Enjoy!

Main Messages

- Giving a talk is like …
- Know your audience
- Start with message audience will receive
- Prepare topic tree
- Know common mistakes

Giving a Talk is Like …

- Stuff you already know… planning, program design, writing, teaching, learning …
- Can read books
  - "Preparing Instructional Objectives" by Mager
  - "Handbook of Technical Writing" by Brusaw
  - "The Elements of Style" by Strunk and White
  - …
- Have some skills (e.g., can speak)
  - But you need to refine and new skills

Know Your Audience

- What do they know/believe?
  - Talk at right level
  - Use the right means
- They will be mixed
  - So deal with it!
- Interest
  - Inform
  - Persuade -- change
  - Expose a structure

Focus on Audience Receiving Messages
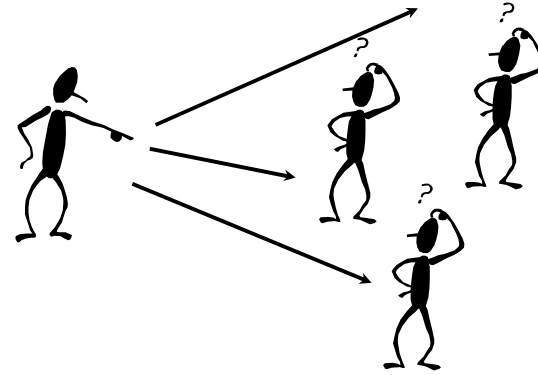
Messages!!!

- You *must* have messages
- They are destination
- A few, not many
  - Plan supporting sub-messages
- Do not plan outward from you, but backward from audience

Messages

- "I have too little to say"
  - Bah
  - Not so
- "I don't have enough time"
  - So, change your messages
  - Point to other resources
- "… then I did this and then I did that…"
  - Is your chronology important?

Topic Tree

- Like program design
- Display it any way that works
- Depth depends on audience
  - Don't preach to choir
- Practice, practice, practice!
  - How long will it take?
- Prune
  - Remove deadly details, keep good examples

[major limb pruned here]

Topic Order

- State messages early
  - So not a mystery to audience
- Decide precedence *after* content
  - Many paths to success, order may not matter
  - Depth first vs. Breadth first
- Talk's order is not necessarily the order of planning the talk!

Outline

- Introduction   (done)
- Messages
  - Giving a talk is like …   (done)
  - Know your audience   (done)
  - Messages audience will receive (done)
  - Prepare topic tree   (done)
  - Know common mistakes   (next)
- Summary

Avoiding Misstakes (Outline)

(proff read)

- Timing
- Tension
- Tedium
- Techniques

Common Mistake - Timing

- Prune during timed practice
  - "Cram" implies you aren't focusing on audience
- Be aware of time
- Beware too much intro!
- Plan for disaster
  - "eeek" doesn't impress
- If behind, *don't* talk faster
  - Audience cannot listen faster

Common Mistake - Timing

- Set pace for audience not you
- First few minutes
  - Why should they listen?
  - Why should they believe you?
- Finish
  - Impress main messages
  - Don't gasp or get tossed off stage

Common Mistake - Tension

- Audience is on your side
  - They want you to succeed
  - Look at them during talk
- Butterflies are normal and good
- Plan, prune and practice so you can relax
- Messages
  - Focus on audience not you

Common Mistake - Tedium

- Are you enjoying it?
- Are you interested in them?
- Occasional witticism is good
  - A cartoon …
- Monotone!!!
- Interact with them
- Messages are key!

"You're not allowed to use the sprinkler system to keep your audience awake."

Techniques

- Speed bumps
- Don't kill interest with detail
  - Judging detail "level" is hard part
- No preemptive apology
- Talk tool - Powerpoint

Slides

- Informs audience and focuses you
- *Use* slides
  - Support messages, say why there
- Not "busy"
- Size
- Don't write what you will say
- Transitions
  - Physical movement of slides
  - Know what you will say

Slides

- Good
  - terse
  - phrases
  - bullets
  - highlight key points
  - graphs
  - pictures

- Bad
  - verbose
  - compound sentences
  - paragraphs
  - unlabelled graphs
  - tables of numbers

- Revise, revise, revise!

Slides

- Complex figures are ok
  - Spend time
  - Describe axes, then trendlines, then results
  - Point to spots
- Tell them what to get from the figure!

Summary

- Messages

- Audience
- Backwards
- Topic Tree
- Plan, prune, practice

- Enjoy

How to Give a Talk