November 14, 2011

Synopsis: Presentations

1. Basics

2. Make your presentation simple and clear
   a. Slides reinforce what you are saying
   b. Visual aids (pictures, graphs, etc.) are good
   c. They came to hear you, not read the slides!
   d. Know your audience—what do they expect to hear?
   e. Plan your talk!
   f. Be prepared for the worst—what will you do if something goes wrong?

3. Good things to do
   a. Talk from notes, not slides!
   b. Design choices
      i. Don’t crowd slides—keep words to a minimum
      ii. 6 × 6 rule: at most 6 lines of text, no more than 6 words each
      iii. Okay to break long lists into multiple slides, but ask if you really need that list!
   c. Fonts and such
      i. Keep fonts consistent—same fonts for titles, body throughout unless there’s a good reason not to
      ii. Use an easy to read typeface—note they will be reading it from a distance
      iii. Avoid all capitals
   d. Colors
      i. Keep to one color scheme
      ii. Light on dark is often easier to read than dark on light
      iii. Check the slides in the lighting of the room where you will be giving the talk

4. Common problems
   a. Data dumping: don’t put your talk on the slides!
   b. Giving the wrong talk
   c. Reading slides
   d. Not planning, so your slides are unclear or jumbled
   e. Not checking the facilities, projector, and computer

5. Bad presentations