

How to do a 50-minute Class Presentation?

--- Pitfalls Observed from Students' Presentations

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1. Confuse it with a conference talk

- Use conference presentation slides from authors
 - ❖ It is so easy to get free slides
- However, they serve different purposes
 - ❖ 20 minutes vs. 50 minutes
 - ❖ Attract people to read a paper vs. teach details of a paper



2. Try to cover everything

- ❑ Some students develop slides that cover every corner of the paper
 - ❖ Not necessary
 - ❖ Not even possible in many cases

- ❑ Instead, you want to
 - ❖ Cover the main contributions
 - ❖ Plus whatever you are interested, and
 - ❖ Trigger discussion



3. Poor time management

- ❑ Dismissing a class too early is not good
- ❑ Leaving tons of slides unfinished is also not good

How to avoid them?

- ❑ Dry run with friends who are not familiar with your presentation
 - ❖ Track the time
- ❑ Prepare questions for discussion
 - ❖ Add questions **during** your presentation
 - ❖ Add a list of questions after your presentation
 - 1-5 minutes each for time control
 - Has to end with “?”



4. Do not engage students

❑ You put everyone to sleep by

- ❖ Bowing down your head and reading notes from computer screen
- ❖ Turning your back to the audience and just focusing on the projected screen
- ❖ Reading projected slides line by line

❑ You should

- ❖ Read feedback from students' faces
 - Not just my face
- ❖ Ask questions during your presentation



5. Do not interact with slides

□ Presenter seems to hate the slides

- ❖ Keep a long distance from the projected screen
- ❖ Never look at the projected screen
- ❖ Explain a complex and hence time consuming slides
 - without animation or pointing to specific parts of it while talking

□ Slides and your mouth should coordinate

- ❖ Visual signal from slides &
- ❖ oral signal from your mouth
- ❖ should coordinate



6. Very dry slides

- ❑ Having pages and pages of equations is not fun
 - ❖ Try to come up with examples
- ❑ When the equations or writing are so hard to understand, try to
 - ❖ Think hard and read it again (you are smart 😊)
 - ❖ Ask friends, the authors, and me, the instructor
 - ❖ Google it for answer; Youtube may even have a video
 - ❖ Finally, the equations may be wrong, and the authors can be poor writers
 - In this case, present your own understanding



7. Very busy slides

- ❑ Your mouth and your slides compete with each other
 - ❖ The audience can not read your slides while at the same time listen to you well
- ❑ Busy details can go to the “notes” area in PowerPoint
 - ❖ You can print them out and hold them in hand
 - ❖ Only guidance in terms of key words are needed in slides to show the logic
 - ❖ Do not write slides as if writing a pdf paper



8. No outline slide

□ Why needed?

- ❖ Teach students how to develop a research project from a main idea;
- ❖ How to organize a research project as well as a paper
- ❖ Guide your following slides explicitly (key words in your outline slides will be reused in your later slides)

□ When to bring up?

- ❖ After you worm up the audience
- ❖ After you introduce the problem you want to solve clearly
- ❖ Possibly after introducing the main idea or approach from 30,000-feet high
- ❖ Do not use your first slide as your outline slide



9. Monotonous and/or fast speaking

- ❑ Monotonous speaking and weak voice make the talk uninteresting
- ❑ Also, speaking fast is NEVER the goal
- ❑ How to make your speaking more effective?
 - ❖ Slow down at the key points
 - ❖ Read the audience's reaction to make sure they follow
 - ❖ Change your tone, speed, and voice volume if necessary
 - Repeat if needed but in a different way
 - ❖ Speak loudly, confidently, with passion, and with humor
 - Like a president's speech



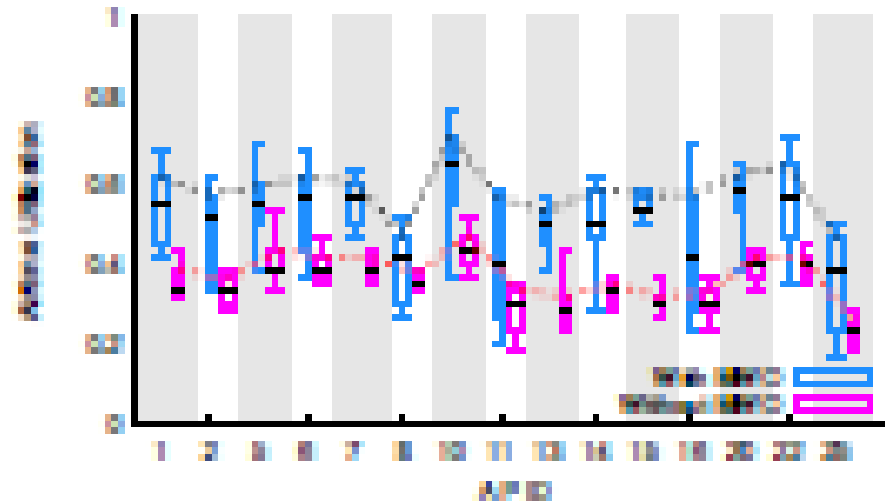
10. Ten slides with the same title

- Having 10 slides with the same title, such as “xxx design” and “performance evaluation,” is
 - ❖ Boring
 - ❖ Not informative

- While you can and should
 - ❖ Have a more specific title for each slide (or every 1-3 slides) to give more information
 - ❖ Anyway, title is the most eye-catching place in a slide
 - Do not waste the precious resource



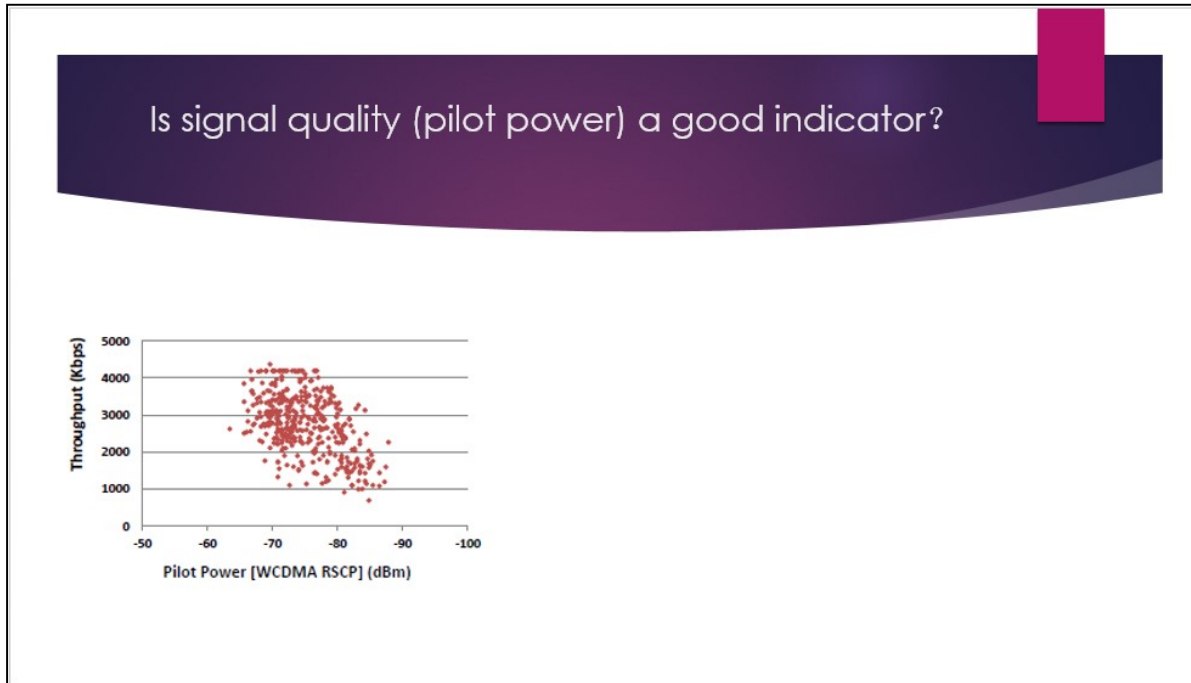
11. Vague data figures



□ Solution: zoom in pdf before copy and paste



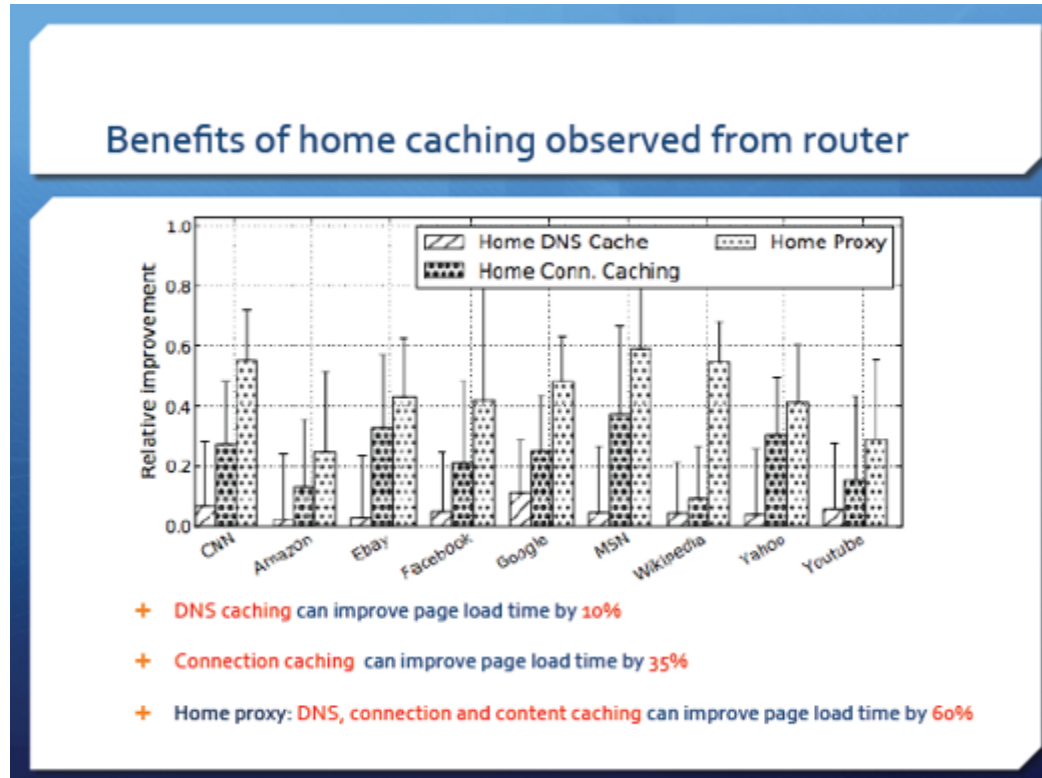
12. Unbalanced Slides



- ❑ Like taking a photo, do not put all things at a corner or make it unbalanced



13. No key observations for figures



- ❑ Without making the slide busy, key words can help (thus preferred but not necessarily required) the audience understand the key observations



14. Very general slides

- ❑ Do not use a very general slide that can be interoperated in one thousand ways
- ❑ Each slide serves one (≤ 2) very specific reason
 - ❖ **which means** that the content of a slide is better to be very specific
 - ❖ **which also means** that your slide should better only have ONE clear way to be interpreted
 - ❖ **Do Not** let the audience guess what you want to talk about by reading your slide
- ❑ **Slides should better be self-explanatory! !**



15. Handling questions

❑ Do not respond to questions, or

- ❖ Ask a question, get an answer from the audience, but do not respond to the answer

❑ Respond, but with irrelevant things

You should not **fear**, but instead

- ❖ Respond, and key to the point
- ❖ Pick your battle
 - What should you answer or even defend (if your paper)?
 - What is beyond this paper and hence open discussion?
 - Pick what to present in your slides



16. Staying in a fixed location

- ❑ Always stay in a fixed location in the classroom during the whole presentation
 - ❖ This only caters for one group of students, while may block the views and/or lose the attentions of another group of students.

- ❑ Instead, you should frequently change positions on the stage, engaging students from different directions



Thank You!

Ideas from these slides have been generated by Gang Zhou, students in his classes, and students and scholars in his research group.

