Oral Presentations
(Chapter 12)
How People Evaluate Presentations

- There are 3 elements, known as the “three V’s” that constitute a presentation: the verbal, the vocal, and the visual:
  - **Verbal** is what the speaker says – the actual words and content.
  - **Vocal** is indicative of how it is said – includes pitch, enthusiasm, intonation.
  - **Visual** is what the audience sees – the speaker’s appearance, eye contact.

All three factors go into the evaluation of speakers.
How People Evaluate Presentations

Some results of an UCLA study by Dr. Albert Mehrabian indicates that the relative importance of these three elements is 7% verbal, 38% vocal, and 55% visual.

The point is that content is important, but the other elements can’t be ignored. If the visual and vocal are poor, it will be .

Something else to consider: in the first 7 seconds of meeting someone, people typically form a number of subconscious opinions including the person’s income level, competence, character work ethic, and dependability.
What factors are the opinions based on?
Appearance
Dress
Posture
Speech patterns
In order to make an effective presentation, the presenter must understand the subject matter, understand the needs of the audience, and prepare the presentation.

An oral presentation is for the benefit of the audience, not the presenter.

A presentation for engineering professors would likely be different from one for your family and friends.
Preparing the Presentation

Some questions to ask in the process of analyzing the audience:

- What are they interested in?
- What do they want from your talk?
- What does the audience already know about my subject?
- What don’t they know?
- What is the attitude of the audience toward me and my subject?
- What do you want them to learn?
Organize the Presentation

Just like a story, a presentation has an **introduction**, a **body**, and a **conclusion**.

**Introduction**
The introduction is absolutely critical – if the audience does not understand the presentation from the outset, they will tune out.

Take time to explain the problem in simple terms.

The objective is to motivate the audience by describing what is being presented and why it is important.
Organize the Presentation

Introduction (cont.)
After giving the motivation of the problem, an overview of the talk can be provided.

The overview should be relevant to the problem at hand, not a generic one.
Organize the Presentation

Body of the presentation
This is done by having a group of 2 – 4 related slides that support each of the main points.

The first slide of the group provides some key ideas, followed by the remaining slides that go into more detail on the particular point.

Don’t make the talk unnecessarily technical or use a lot of jargon.

If it is necessary to jargon or acronyms, make sure they are defined for the audience.
Organize the Presentation

Body of the presentation (cont.)
One strategy is to increase the level of complexity as the talk proceeds.

There is tendency to present equations, vaguely refer to them, and then move on. Equations should be presented for a reason, so talk about them and describe their significance.

Every equation has a story; it is the presenter’s job to tell it. The same is true of graphs and plots.
Organize the Presentation

Conclusion
Provides an opportunity to summarize and emphasize the main points of the presentation.

Tell them what you told them by reviewing the important points and conclusions.

If there are recommendations to be made for future action, address them here.

The conclusion is an opportunity to explain the next step for the project.
Meet the time constraints

Make sure the presentation falls within the time constraints – the audience will be alienated if it is far too short or too long.

The tendency is to exceed time limit since there is so much information to convey. You may be abruptly cut off and not be able to conclude the presentation.

Accept that all of the information can’t be conveyed in the given time and use it carefully to highlight the important material.
Lay out of Slides

*Use a large font.* This ensures that information on the slides can easily be seen by the audience.

*Have a goal of five to seven points per page.* Avoid the tendency to cram as much information as possible on a page.

*Avoid fancy graphics.* The content and material are what matter the most, not fancy formatting and special effects.
Lay out of Slides

*Group slides together to make a major point.* Make the first slide the general one with key statements. The following ones should have more detailed information.

*Do not create a canned talk or speech.* This is acceptable in some fields, but not in engineering and science where a more extemporaneous style is the norm. Let the bullet points on the slides serve as guides for what to say. Avoid the use of cue cards and do not just read directly from the slides.
Preparing for the Questions and Answer Session

One of the biggest fears of presenters is the dreaded question and answer session.

This is where the audience gets to ask questions and possibly expose the presenter for what he or she doesn’t know.

How do you prepare for this?
You must be knowledgeable about the subject, but you don’t need to have the answers to every question.
It is a good practice to rephrase questions that are asked for the benefit of you, the audience, and the questioner.

Rephrasing is also a courtesy for the other members of the audience who may have not heard or understood the question.

Most questions are made in good faith as the questioner is trying to clarify a point or learn more. If you can’t answer the question, admit it and do not try to come up with a phony answer.
Suggested Outline for Oral Presentation Preparation

*Title* – identifies the team and team members.

*Overview* – general outline of the presentation.

*Problem statement* – identify the needs of the project.

*Background material* – summary of research survey on the relevant technologies and systems.

*Design alternatives* – present at least one solution.
Suggested Outline for Oral Presentation Preparation

*Selected design* – convince the audience why it was chosen.

*Project plan* – include deliverables, tasks, schedule, member responsibilities, budget.

*Conclusion* – summarize the presentation and

*Backup slides* – more detailed information that may help clarify points in the main presentation.