

Public Speaking

- In surveys of people's fears, DEATH often ranks Number 2.
- Guess what often ranks Number 1?
- Yes, public speaking...
- What are people afraid of?
- Well, basically, embarrassment...
 - ◆ which could be either physical or mental...

Reducing the Odds of Being Embarrassed

- Physical: Have a checklist and be methodical about it.
 - ◆ Use the restroom beforehand, have a water bottle with you, check your hair,... whatever.
- Mental: **Prepare prepare prepare!** It's work!
 - ◆ Some preparation tips...

Basic Goals for Any Talk

■ You want to appear:

◆ Competent

- You have to do your homework, know related background, organize your material so that it is understandable, spend time practicing (particularly for important talks like job talks).

◆ Calm

- You want to deal with questions without panicking. Also, try to avoid nervous habits and filler words (like “like”). Videotaping yourself can help a lot!

◆ Gracious

- Appear grateful for the opportunity to speak (but don't gush).

Talk Preparation

■ Begin by asking yourself:

- ◆ What am I trying to accomplish (or *teach* my audience)?
 - Three major points is about all people can take.
- ◆ Who is my audience?
 - This may impact the background you present and how you present the details.

■ Then create an outline.

- ◆ A good talk has good “flow.”
- ◆ An old adage:
 - Tell ‘em what you’re gonna tell ‘em.
 - Tell ‘em.
 - Tell ‘em what you told ‘em.

Talk Flow

■ A typical talk outline for me:

1. Set the stage, i.e., provide context.
2. State a dilemma or driving problem to motivate the work.
3. Provide a broad overview of the solution.
4. Dive into some of the details.
 - Another old adage: A good job talk should lose anyone who's not an expert in the middle. *I totally disagree with this!*
 - Dr. Brooks: “Speak to *inform*, not to *impress*. If you really inform, that will impress.”
 - Craft good visuals and examples to get across complex ideas without overwhelming.
5. Return to the dilemma or driving problem and provide evidence that my solution is really a solution.

Dealing with Questions

- First, realize that *anyone* can be tripped up.
 - ◆ If you mess up an answer, don't worry about it... we've all been there!
- Some tips:
 - ◆ **Slow down**, parse the question, think, *then* speak.
 - ◆ It's OK to say "I don't know" (being gracious here can help).
 - ◆ Offline: In preparing, try to anticipate questions. Put yourself in the audience's shoes. Think about leaving "holes" in your talk that will almost certainly create questions (that you know how to answer!).
 - ◆ Offline: Practice in front of a real audience, especially for important talks (like job talks).

Don't be Boring

- Try to project confidence and enthusiasm (even if you're not feeling it).
- Vary your speaking pitch, tempo, and rhythm.
 - ◆ Make sure you appropriately **project your voice!**
 - ◆ Talks that are too long lead to speaking that is too fast!
Finishing a bit early is better than going long!
- Move around.
- Use humor now and then if your personality allows.
 - ◆ Avoid canned jokes.
 - ◆ Self-depreciating humor works best.

Project Your Voice

- Speak to the people on the back row, not the people on the front row.
- If you're offered a mic, use it. If it's a clip-on, clip it on high near your face.
- **Look at the audience**, not the screen.
 - ◆ If your head is turned to the side looking at the screen, the mic may not pick you up.
 - ◆ Turning your head back and forth taking peaks at the screen can make your voice go in and out of the mic.

Jim's Theory of...

- ... diminishing nervousness.

Disclaimer

- In constructing these notes, I was mainly thinking about conference talks and job talks.
- Some of this advice applies to teaching, but in that context, you have limited preparation time.
 - ◆ E.g., you're probably not going to videotape yourself and practice every time you teach a class!