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Presentations Workshop

Tobias Hartung

King's College London

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Why bother?

- First impressions matter!
- Communicate your work
- Good practice for most careers

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About Talks

Why bother?

- ▸ First impressions matter!
- ▸ Communicate your work
- ▸ Good practice for most careers

- ▸ Helps yourself understand what you have done
- ▸ Receive direct comments from your peers

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Types of Presentations

- ‣ Quick 1-5 minute "What do I do?" talks
- ‣ 10-25 minute conference presentation (contributed talks)
- ‣ $\approx$ 60 minute seminar/conference presentation
- ‣ Project presentation
- ‣ Workshops/trainings/classes
- ‣ Thesis defense
- ‣ Job applications
- ‣ and many more

What do all presentations have in common?

- ‣ There's not enough time.

What do all presentations have in common?

- ‣ There's not enough time.
- ‣ They all reflect on you.

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About Talks

What do all presentations have in common?

- There's not enough time.
- They all reflect on you.
- There's really not enough time.

What do all presentations have in common?

- ‣ There's not enough time.
- ‣ They all reflect on you.
- ‣ There's really not enough time.
- ‣ They need practice and polish.

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What do all presentations have in common?

- ▸ There's not enough time.
- ▸ They all reflect on you.
- ▸ There's really not enough time.
- ▸ They need practice and polish.
- ▸ Did I mention that there's not enough time?

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About Talks

What do all presentations have in common?

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- ▸ They all reflect on you.
- ▸ There's really not enough time.
- ▸ They need practice and polish.
- ▸ Did I mention that there's not enough time?
- ▸ ⇒ Focus on ONE clear target and message.

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Basics of a good Talk

The Top 10

1. Be neat.

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Basics of a good Talk

The Top 10

1. Be neat.
2. Slides are your friends.
   - Don't cram slides. Your audience isn't there for an eye exam.
   - Don't be a slave to your slides!
   - Panta rhei! (engl.: Everything flows!)
     Be flexible with your slides (maybe even have additional slides you do not intend to show but that may be useful if someone asks).

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3. Carpe diem! (engl.: Keep it short!)
   Use bullets and keywords rather than long sentences.

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3. Carpe diem! (engl.: Keep it short!)
   Use bullets and keywords rather than long sentences.
4. Be careful covering up slides.
   It can help the audience focus on where you are or leave them wondering what is currently hidden.

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Basics of a good Talk

The Top 10

5. Use LARGE fonts.

   If you can read this, you do not need glasses.

The Top 10

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6. Use color to emphasize where appropriate.

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8. Make eye contact.
   no eye contact "=" no confidence / dishonesty ⇒ trust ↓

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9. Know the time. Know which slides to skip if necessary.

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9. Know the time. Know which slides to skip if necessary.

10. Practice!

The "typical" talk ($\approx$ 15 minutes)

- Title/author/affiliation (1 slide) $\rightsquigarrow$ Who am I?
- Forecast (1-2 slides) $\rightsquigarrow$ Gist of the problem and your new insights
- Outline/Table of contents ($\leq$ 1 slide)
- Background (1-5 slides)
  - Motivation
  - Exact formulation of the problem
  - Related works
  - Methods/Ideas that you will use to tackle the problem

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The "typical" talk ($\approx$ 15 minutes)

- ‣ Results (2-5 slides)
  - ‣ key results/insights
  - ‣ try not to present everything ⤳ one talk, ONE message
- ‣ Summary (1-2 slides)
- ‣ Future work ($\leq$ 1 slide)
- ‣ Leave the "Thanks for listening" slide at home ⤳ people prefer to look at your summary
- ‣ Backup slides ($\leq$ 3 slides) ⤳ be ready to answer expected questions

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Focus your presentation

- Long, rambling presentations don't win any audience
  interest

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Writing your Presentation

Focus your presentation

- ▸ Long, rambling presentations don't win any audience interest
- ▸ ⇒ focused presentation, throw in asides to back up main point

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Writing your Presentation

Focus your presentation

- ‣ Long, rambling presentations don't win any audience interest
- ‣ ⇒ focused presentation, throw in asides to back up main point
- 1st Identify main statement or overarching theme

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Writing your Presentation

Focus your presentation

- ‣ Long, rambling presentations don't win any audience interest
- ‣ ⇒ focused presentation, throw in asides to back up main point
- 1st Identify main statement or overarching theme
- 2nd Choose up to 3 main points to back up/flesh out main statement/theme

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- 1st Identify main statement or overarching theme
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- 3rd

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Writing your Presentation

Less is more!

- ‣ Oral communication is different from written communication!
- ‣ Keep it simple!
- ‣ Repeat the main points and key insights!

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Writing your Presentation

Less is more!

- ‣ Oral communication is different from written communication!
- ‣ Keep it simple!
- ‣ Repeat the main points and key insights!
- ‣ Don't overwhelm your audience!
- ‣ stick with your main points
- ‣ only use information you need to support/clarify your main argument

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Writing your Presentation

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- ‣ Keep it simple!
- ‣ Repeat the main points and key insights!
- ‣ Don't overwhelm your audience!
- ‣ stick with your main points
- ‣ only use information you need to support/clarify your main argument
- ‣ Reflect on your audience!
- ‣ adjust the your argument depending on the audience
- ‣ make them want to learn more

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Writing your Presentation

Deciding on media

- ‣ not every presentation needs high tech media
  ↝ blackboard talks are still very common in mathematics
- ‣ Do you need fancy visuals?
  Often they are more distracting than useful.
- ‣ Do you want to use a computer to show other things (e.g., run some code)?
- ‣ Pick a medium you are comfortable with!

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Writing your Presentation

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- ‣ Do you want to use a computer to show other things (e.g., run some code)?
- ‣ Pick a medium you are comfortable with!
- ‣ Know your time restraints and location!

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Writing your Presentation

Actually writing

1. if using slides, choose your layout (re-formatting in the end is a pain)

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Writing your Presentation

Actually writing

1. if using slides, choose your layout (re-formatting in the end is a pain)
2. write an outline

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Writing your Presentation

Actually writing

1. if using slides, choose your layout (re-formatting in the end is a pain)
2. write an outline
3. fill in the main points

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Writing your Presentation

Actually writing

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4. fill in the necessary background

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1. if using slides, choose your layout (re-formatting in the end is a pain)

2. write an outline

3. fill in the main points

4. fill in the necessary background

5. give it a timed dry-run (note that your final presentation will be significantly shorter than your first go at it)

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Writing your Presentation

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3. fill in the main points
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6.
   ‣ add more detail ($\lesssim 30\%$ over time)
   ‣ cut or make note of slides to possibly skip ($\gtrsim 30\%$ over time)

Actually writing

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5. give it a timed dry-run (note that your final presentation will be significantly shorter than your first go at it)
6.   ‣ add more detail ($\lesssim 30\%$ over time)
     ‣ cut or make note of slides to possibly skip ($\gtrsim 30\%$ over time)
7. back to 5 (unless $\approx 30\%$ over time)

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Practice, practice, practice!

- ‣ Practice is often neglected (lack of time?), but key for a good presentation.
- ‣ Practice out loud (otherwise you will run $\approx 20\%$ short)
- ‣ Every time you practice, vary it a bit
  - ↝ goal: keep it conversational
  - ↝ internalize, not memorize
- ‣ be aware of timing
- ‣ have practice audience behave like you expect your real audience
- ‣ practice opening/closure more often (e.g., on the underground)
- ‣ add background noise (e.g., music)

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Delivering your Presentation

Practice, practice, practice!

- ‣ videotape ⇝ eliminate distracting verbal/physical tics
  Would YOU want to listen to your presentation?
- ‣ practice standing up
  ⇝ practice your gestures and how you are going to move
- ‣ practice in the clothes you will wear
  ⇝ makes practice seem more "real"
  ⇝ Are the arms of your jacket too tight? Can/should you
  move the way you intend to?
- ‣ practice in the room of your presentation (once, if possible)
  ⇝ technology test, see room restraints

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Delivering your Presentation

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- practice in the room of your presentation (once, if possible)
  ⤳ technology test, see room restraints
- Visualize Success
  ⤳ by the time you give your presentation, you have already successfully delivered it multiple times

"um", "ah", "like", "you know" - Why it happens

▸ Pay Attention!
  ⤳ indicates a new thought / more information ⤳ don't interrupt me, even if I am momentarily quiet

▸ signals your brain is choosing the right word

▸ The subject is hard
  ⤳ the more you have to think about what to say, the more it happens

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Delivering your Presentation

"um", "ah", "like", "you know" - Why is it a problem?

- ‣ distracting
  ↝ 91% admit to daydreaming regularly during presentations

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Delivering your Presentation

"um", "ah", "like", "you know" - Why is it a problem?

- ‣ distracting
  $\rightsquigarrow$ 91% admit to daydreaming regularly during presentations
- ‣ annoy the audience
  $\rightsquigarrow$ in particular, if the audience has a hard time following your content already (you know, 'cause it's math)

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"um", "ah", "like", "you know" - Why is it a problem?

- ‣ distracting
  ⤳ 91% admit to daydreaming regularly during presentations
- ‣ annoy the audience
  ⤳ in particular, if the audience has a hard time following your content already (you know, 'cause it's math)
- ‣ diminish your credibility
  ⤳ He doesn't even know what he's talking about!

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"um", "ah", "like", "you know" - Why is it a problem?

- ‣ distracting
  ↝ 91% admit to daydreaming regularly during presentations
- ‣ annoy the audience
  ↝ in particular, if the audience has a hard time following your content already (you know, 'cause it's math)
- ‣ diminish your credibility
  ↝ He doesn't even know what he's talking about!
- ‣ triggers "This person is dishonest" - response
  ↝ in particular, if they think you are trying to buy time

"um", "ah", "like", "you know" - Do what?

- ‣ Practice!
  ⤳ the more familiar you are with the talk, the less your brain has to search for correct words
  ⤳ remember: memorization makes you sound robotic
- ‣ record yourself
  ⤳ identify your specific vocal filler
  ⤳ it's hard to notice them while speaking
- ‣ practice with a friend
  ⤳ filler words are a form of communication ⇒ they increase in front of a live audience

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"um", "ah", "like", "you know" - Do what?

- ‣ One thing at a time
  ⤳ break long presentations into individual chunks and practice them individually

- ‣ tell a story
  ⤳ reduces information complexity
  ⇒ a natural flow in your "story" reduces jitter

- ‣ DON'T PANIC (and carry a towel)
  ⤳ fillers are going to happen, it's fine
  ⇒ be mindful of them, but don't wrack your nerves over it
  ⇒ just relax

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Delivering your Presentation

Story time! Putting in the leg work

- ‣ 91% admit to daydreaming regularly during presentations
  ⇒ grab their interest and you'll become one of the most
  memorable speakers they have ever seen

- ‣ create an objective for your audience
  ⤳ having an interesting goal can carry your audience
  through tedious technical parts

- ‣ interrupt patterns / make it a dialogue
  ⇒ audience participation
  ⤳ encourage the audience to ask questions or ask the
  audience questions (and then be silent)

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Delivering your Presentation

The BIG Day - we're just about there

- ‣ dress appropriately
  - ⤳ be comfortable, but don't look like a hobo
  - ⤳ neutral colors, nothing distracting
- ‣ mask you're nervous
  - ⤳ clench your hand a few times to deal with adrenaline, then take a few deep, slow breaths
  - ⤳ SMILE ⇒ hides you're nervous from the audience AND tricks your brain into thinking you are less anxious than you really are
- ‣ talk to people before your talk
  - ⤳ have a few friendly faces in the audience

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Delivering your Presentation

The BIG Day - the presentation

- ‣ if you are very nervous, stay behind a lectern

- ‣ don't pace

- ‣ engage the audience
  ⤳ make eye contact (don't stare)
  ⤳ look in all directions equally often (section up the room and make eye contact with one person in each section on a rotational basis)

- ‣ give an engaging performance
  ⤳ move deliberately, vary your vocal inflection
  ⤳ balance between rehearsed and spontaneous movement (get a feel for it while practicing, you don't want to look robotic or erratic)

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The BIG Day - Talk slowly!

- ‣ most common way of sabotaging your presentation is to flood your audience with a tidal wave of information
- ‣ Going too fast? Have a sip of water!
- ‣ have an ally in the audience to signal you if you are going too fast
- ‣ Running out of time? Don't speed up! Skip slides or quickly summarize them!

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Delivering your Presentation

The BIG Day - The Closing

- ‣ just like the opening

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The BIG Day - The Closing

▸ just like the opening

NAIL IT!

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Delivering your Presentation

The BIG Day - The Closing

▸ just like the opening

NAIL IT!

▸ reiterate your main points

▸ repeat why the audience should care about that information

▸ conclude with examples/applications/take home message

▸ comment on future directions

▸ don't dedicate a "thanks for not falling asleep" slide

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Delivering your Presentation

Example Summary

- so we set out to solve this problem I told you about

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Delivering your Presentation

Example Summary

- so we set out to solve this problem I told you about
- it's really important to solve, 'cause it's equivalent to the Riemann Hypothesis

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Example Summary

- ‣ so we set out to solve this problem I told you about
- ‣ it's really important to solve, 'cause it's equivalent to the Riemann Hypothesis
- ‣ using the techniques I talked about we could prove this theorem

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Delivering your Presentation

Example Summary

- so we set out to solve this problem I told you about
- it's really important to solve, 'cause it's equivalent to the Riemann Hypothesis
- using the techniques I talked about we could prove this theorem
- we also proved this other theorem

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Delivering your Presentation

Example Summary

- so we set out to solve this problem I told you about
- it's really important to solve, 'cause it's equivalent to the Riemann Hypothesis
- using the techniques I talked about we could prove this theorem
- we also proved this other theorem
- Corollary: Riemann Hypothesis is FALSE

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Delivering your Presentation

Example Summary

- ‣ so we set out to solve this problem I told you about
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- ‣ using the techniques I talked about we could prove this theorem
- ‣ we also proved this other theorem
- ‣ Corollary: Riemann Hypothesis is FALSE
- ‣ Future Directions: Revolutionize Number Theory and Cryptography

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Example Summary

- ‣ so we set out to solve this problem I told you about
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- ‣ we also proved this other theorem
- ‣ Corollary: Riemann Hypothesis is FALSE
- ‣ Future Directions: Revolutionize Number Theory and Cryptography
- ‣ more Future Directions: find an efficient algorithm to break RSA

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- ‣ so we set out to solve this problem I told you about
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- ‣ Corollary: Riemann Hypothesis is FALSE
- ‣ Future Directions: Revolutionize Number Theory and Cryptography
- ‣ more Future Directions: find an efficient algorithm to break RSA
- ‣ Seriously, stop using RSA!

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Delivering your Presentation

Example Summary

- ▸ so we set out to solve this problem I told you about
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- ▸ we also proved this other theorem
- ▸ Corollary: Riemann Hypothesis is FALSE
- ▸ Future Directions: Revolutionize Number Theory and Cryptography
- ▸ more Future Directions: find an efficient algorithm to break RSA
- ▸ Seriously, stop using RSA!

Thank you, for your attention!

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Pros and Cons

Pros of board talks

For many mathematicians, the blackboard is the only way to give a talk. (whiteboard = heresy!)

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Pros and Cons

Pros of board talks

For many mathematicians, the blackboard is the only way to
give a talk. (whiteboard = heresy!)

- flexibility ⤳ You can change your talk at a moments notice
  depending on your audience!

- concise and understandable (information density) ⤳
  Writing necessarily slows you down to an understandable
  speed and encourages brevity

- space ⤳ most proofs/sketches won't fit a slide, but a
  blackboard

- makes you think ⤳ gives audience a chance to think
  themselves
  ⤳ pauses hint that mistakes are easily made here

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Pros and Cons

Cons of board talks

- ‣ slow $\rightsquigarrow$ how much can you physically write in the allotted time?
- ‣ facing the board
- ‣ tendency to be very detailed and heavy
  $\rightsquigarrow$ the audience doesn't want to hear what's in your work/thesis/paper/..., they want a reason to read it themselves
- ‣ tendency: lack of preparation $\Rightarrow$ messy presentation

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Pros and Cons

Pros of slides

- ▸ fast
- ▸ focus on content (as time is less of a problem)
- ▸ focus on the audience (How long ago did I say ... again? Will they remember?) ⤳ more opportunities to observe audience
- ▸ show complicated diagrams / long formulae
- ▸ difficult to derail (slides won't go off topic)
- ▸ makes lighter presentations (if you don't cram your slides with detail)
- ▸ makes it possible to give a presentation without fully understanding it (pro or con?)

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Pros and Cons

Cons of slides

- inflexible / has to be prepared properly
- slides have to be written (can't just have a plan and talk around it)
- difficult to correct mistakes
- technology fails every once in a while
- if audience takes notes, they won't be able to fully follow

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Things to keep in mind

Board

- ‣ write large and legibly
- ‣ partition the board in A4 like shape
  ↝ helps keeping linearity
- ‣ face the audience
- ‣ stay on track
- ‣ keep the time in mind
- ‣ don't go into full detail
- ‣ put in the preparation

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Things to keep in mind

Slides

- slow down $\rightsquigarrow \gtrsim 1$ minute per slide
- don't overload your slides
- have backup slides with important additional information

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Questions?