How to Give a Five-Minute Technical Presentation

Carey Rappaport
Professor & Associate Director
Gordon-CenSSIS
Northeastern University

September 8, 2009
Outline

0.  5 slides:

1. Title / Author / Affiliation
2. Outline
3. Problem Description / Motivation
4. Proposed Approach / Alternatives
5. Summary / Conclusion / Next Steps
Effective transfer of info in limited time

- Audience has to be guided:
  - Each slide has a title
  - Text should be bulleted
- Audience has to be entertained:
  - Dark background is easiest to read, but hard on printer ink
  - Font should be big as possible
  - Avoid too many colors, or poor contrasts, or bad fonts
  - Use all of the available space on slide (adjust font to fit)
- Abbr. often
- Animation is effective when slides are long

Use pictures …instead of words
Proposed Approach / Alternatives

- For real technical talk, discuss why the problem is important, difficult, interesting, and worth doing.

Mention previous approaches with advantages and difficulties

Present your best solution plan

Provide a testing metric to evaluate

Give alternatives should main plan fail

Discuss supplemental material: schedule, budget, personnel, contractual issues

- Defer details for a longer presentation
- Avoid equations as much as possible
Summary / Conclusions / Next Steps

- Identify ending
- Repeat main points: clarity / succinctness
- Stress contributions: slide organization, pictorial display
- Suggest action items: make these slides available, have students give talks
- Keep it short, meet time limit