

16. If you have a “thank you” slide, keep the time you focus on it to an absolute minimum.

17. Don't be afraid of finishing early. No one will hold this against you. Trust me.

The worst seminars are those that try to take up 50 minutes to talk about something that can be discussed in 20 minutes.

How to give a seminar

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(Adapted from notes from EEB's Brown Bag Series; should be read with Lynda's notes above)

Give a strong, conceptually oriented introduction. Know what you are going to say, and make it punchy. Keep it short, but tell us why your talk is of interest to a group of biologists. (I would even suggest that you tell us what your main points are going to be; remember, this is not a mystery show. You are educating your audience. Give them every opportunity to get the main point.)

Give some natural history. Show some slides of the plant/animal and the habitat it lives in. Tell us why this organism is a good one for testing theory. Remember, this is a not lab meeting. Assume we know nothing about what you study or why you do it.

Give the relevant methods. But keep them short and avoid tedious detail. If people doubt your methods they can ask questions, but on the whole most people will trust you in a talk. Don't lose your audience with gory descriptions of DNA hybridization, multifactor repeated nested analysis of variance, and etc.

Give the MAIN results. Don't try to impress us with how hard you worked, and don't feel obligated to include everything you did. The mark of a good scientist is knowing what to leave out. Give us what we need to know to evaluate the ideas you set out in the introduction.

- a) Don't under any condition show us DNA sequences. No one can read that crap.
- b) Avoid showing ANOVA tables at all cost. Graph the results, and simply indicate whether the treatments are or are not significantly different. Briefly indicate how that result fits in with expectation.
- c) **Don't apologize** for your slides/overheads. Get them right! If the people in the back row can't read them, then they are advised to throw their lunch at you. Pay particular attention to the axes labels. Make them enormous!
- d) Speaking of axes: state what they are when the graph first comes up. Then explain the rest of the graph. Keep it as simple as possible.
- e) Don't say "I put this slide in to remind me of...." It reminded you! Keep going.

Give the conclusions. These should be directly related to the questions you set out at the beginning. If you rejected some of the alternatives, then you did science. Make it clear which alternatives are rejected and which remain.

Give the summary slide. This should be a slide that briefly summarizes your main one or two points. Don't give a long list or what you found. Tell us what you want us to remember.

- a) Opinion varies; my view is that this is not the place to show a picture of your lab and to individually identify each smiling face. Focus on what you want the audience to remember, nothing else. If you have to thank hordes of people, then work it into the methods and do it quickly.

End the talk definitively. Simply say thank you. Don't fade off with some sort of limp: "I think that is all I have to say."

Never, under any condition, go overtime. If you start late, then cut something out. The worst possible thing that can happen is that some of the audience is thinking about leaving instead of focusing on your brilliant summary. There is **no problem with finishing early**. I write 45 min talks for 50 min slots, and I know of several places where I can cut five minutes if necessary.

Don't try to stretch a 15 talk into a 50 minute talk. Fifteen minute talks in brown bag are acceptable. Fifty-five minute talks are not. If you can't give your talk in 45 minutes, its probably because you really don't have anything important to focus on.