

# Finance PhD Student Tutorial: Presenting Research

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# Today's Agenda

**Focus:** How do I present my research and build high-quality slide decks?

1. **Opening Discussion and Reflection (10 min):** What has my experience with presenting been?
2. **Presentation Overview (25 min):** What are the keys to presenting well?
3. **Building Beamer Slides (25 min):** How do I build slides to accompany my presentation?

## Opening Discussion

**Reflect on Your Experience** When I make a presentation:

1. How comfortable am I in my body language and speaking?
2. How well do I structure my slides to guide the presentation?

**Discussion time: 10 minutes**

# Your Presentation Should Guide the Audience, Not Overwhelm It

## ✓ Strong Presentation

Audience understands the story

Clear research question

Motivation explains why it matters

Results are carefully subsetting

Each table advances the argument

**Audience reaction:**

Formative questions that improve the paper

## × Weak Presentation

Audience loses the thread

Unclear question

Weak motivation

Messy slides

Too many results

Unrelated tables

Main takeaway unclear

**Audience reaction:**

Clarifying questions, criticism, and confusion

# Purpose of Presentations

- Much of academic work involves communicating research results
  - ▶ Often through presentations rather than others reading your paper
- Presentations have a **distinct** purpose
  - ▶ Presentation: extended advertisement for the paper while papers formally characterize research
- **Audience's Perspective:** Goal are to:
  1. Understand main points of the paper
  2. Its implications
  3. Form an opinion on whether it is correct and important
- Valuable for time spent preparing beforehand and structuring flow for external audience

# Planning a Presentation

- Convince audience to care about issues the paper raises & to pay attention during rest of talks
- Provide sufficient but not overwhelming background for audience
- Explain how you did the work and address any methodological issues
- Discuss why you interpret results the way you do and other interesting implications
- Do it in an entertaining way and finish in allocated time period

## 1. Unexpected Difficulty:

*“Accomplishing these tasks in front of a skeptical and sometimes hostile audience can be more difficult than many young scholars expect it to be.”*

— Michael Weisbach

## 2. Focus:

*“The goal is to impress the audience and get real feedback to improve the analysis.”*

— Michael Weisbach

# Practical Presentation Overview

- Best to structure presentation in the following order where possible:
  1. Pictures & Figures
  2. Tables
  3. Words
- Every slide should have a purpose and be self-contained
- Use reveals and **coloring** to guide your audience's attention
- Helpful presentation flow:
  1. 0–25 min: Question + motivation
  2. 25–35 min: Setup + data
  3. 35–55 min: Main results
  4. 55–70 min: Mechanisms / robustness
  5. Final: Conclusion

# Guiding a Presentation

- It's the presenter's job to effectively guide the presentation and control the room
- Importance of refining public speaking ability
  1. Talk directly to the audience, make eye contact, and explain issues in clear, easy to understand words
  2. Humor to lighten the presentation can be helpful
  3. Investments in improving public speaking skill are usually worthwhile
- **Answering Questions:** Respond in a grateful, thoughtful manner with goal to engage further participation
  1. Convey depth of knowledge
  2. Extent to which research is robust to alternative assumptions or research designs
  3. Fine to ask the audience to clarify their question and make sure you responded appropriately
- It's fine to defer answering an audience's question until later but always make sure you answer

# Discussing a Paper

- **Golden Rule:** Helpful to consider how you'd like to be treated
- Audience looks to discussant to help understand:
  1. Whether the paper is correct
  2. What can be learned from it
  3. Where it fits into a larger literature
- **Discussant's Goal:**  
*"Try to help the author make the paper better and frame criticism in a way that doesn't belittle or embarrass the author."*

— Michael Weisbach

- Discussant slides flow:
  1. **Motivation:** Present view on issue addressed in the paper
  2. **Contribution:** Explain how paper fits into larger literature
  3. **Execution:** Honest assessment on incremental contribution

## Role of Slides: Visual aid for the talk

1. Display the paper's results
2. Provide guidance for the audience
3. Focus people's attention on the issues the author wants to cover
4. Serve as take-away from presentation
  - ▶ Important to make slides easy to read

## Before Next Week (1 Hour)

- Reflect (30 minutes): Reflect on one of your prior presentations: What went well? What could you improve?
- Practice (30 minutes): Spend time practicing building slides in Beamer Tutorial or consulting other presentation tutorials
  1. Paul Goldsmith Pinkham's Beamer and Presentation Tutorial
  2. Jesse Shapiro: How to Give an Applied Micro Talk
  3. Amanda Y. Agan's Website: Presentation and other tips

## References

Weisbach, Michael S. The Economist's Craft. *In: The Economist's Craft*. Princeton University Press.