Suggestions on Presenting Your Research

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1. Present good work
   a. The better the raw material, the more you can do with it
   b. If you actually believe it, you will present with more confidence and authority

2. No apologies! Plan and prepare
   a. Most people underinvest, do a poor job, then resolve to do better next time (repeating cycle throughout career)
   b. You should never need to read a talk you have practiced three times (though writing out the full text of talks can be comforting early in your career)
   c. Never begin your talk with some lame apology about not being prepared.

3. Consider your audience
   a. Technical versus non-technical presentation/tolerance for jargon
   b. Generalist versus specialty audiences and acronyms (NLSY, OLS, FUBAR...)

4. Allocate your time in proper proportion
   a. 12-15 minute versus 40-50 minute talks
   b. Time yourself while practicing your presentation
   c. Know how to cut your talk in half on a moment’s notice. What’s the point?

5. Big and clear
   a. All graphics should be readable from the back of the room (font size of 20)
   b. Move around a little so all can see, and speak clearly so all can hear
   c. Roll with the audience and meeting norms (serious/playful; active/passive)

6. The talk itself
   a. Introduce the characters quickly
      i. Situate your work in the literature but do not use up your time reviewing prior work
   b. Build some tension
      i. Identify a puzzle or a pressing need
      ii. Clearly state a research question bearing directly on this puzzle/need
      iii. Avoid “straw person” arguments -- alternatives must be compelling
      iv. Preserve conceptual precision here (you can simplify elsewhere)
   c. Show the "hooks" in your approach
      i. What did you do and how did you do it? Your underlying logic?
      ii. [Hooks are irresistably clever musical phrases in songs that get stuck in your head]
   d. "Show us, don’t tell us” Get to the evidence or results
      i. Better to present a few illustrative cases (with details) than a half-baked dash through all of your results
      ii. Do not get bogged down describing data, but show us how it works
      iii. Does a figure or quotation make the point better than a table?
      iv. Can you summarize/condense a table without doing violence to the evidence?
   e. Resolve the tension, however provisionally: several varieties
      i. Confirm suspicions
      ii. Solve a puzzle
      iii. Complicate the accepted wisdom
   f. Finish Strong! Do not stagger to the finish mumbling "that’s about it."
      i. I’d like to close on a programmatic note...
      ii. To sum up, this study confirmed our ideas on X but raised new questions about Y...

7. Simplify
   a. Communicate your take-home message or finding
   b. Take another run at making the point, from a slightly different angle

8. Respond appropriately to questions
   a. Listen to the whole question, then think, then respond
   b. Go home to the most “bulletproof” finding or idea if challenged