

How I *try* to make my talks engaging

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School of Computer Science and Informatics, University of Liverpool, UK 18th September 2025

Overview

1 – Soft Skills

2 – Slideshow Basics

3 – Self Improvement

Use Your Voice

Speak loudly

Speak slowly

Be expressive

Eye Contact

Don't avoid everyone's eyes!

Don't fixate on one person!

Try the *figure-of-eight* pattern

Positioning and Movement

Don't stand behind your laptop

Move from side to side

Body Language and Gesticulation

Assume an open stance

Move your arms!

Imagine silently describing your ideas

Personableness

Be kind to the audience

Tell us a joke! (sometimes)

Story Telling

“Your audience members are log-space machines”

Tell simple stories

Repeat important points thrice

Recap

1 – Soft Skills ✓

Use your voice

Share eye contact

Move around

Gesticulate

Show personality

Tell simple stories

Recap

1 – Soft Skills ✓

Use your voice

Share eye contact

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Show personality

Tell simple stories

2 – Slideshow Basics

3 – Self Improvement

Know Your Slides

Never read off your slides

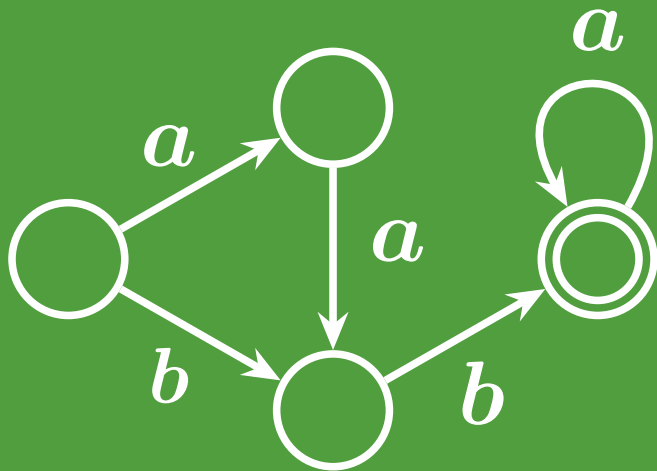
Always simplify your slides

Try different methods to remember

One Point Per Slide

Less is More

Pictures > nothing > unnecessary text



vs

Let $\mathcal{A} = (\Sigma, Q, \delta, q_i, F)$
be an automaton...

Title Slides are Important



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LICS'25: Seminar Room 1

25th June 2025

School of Computing, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Conclusion Slides are also Important

Don't use a blank “Thank you!” slide

Write down the main takeaways

Make it obvious when the audience should clap!

Overview & Recaps Slides

“Tell them what you are going to say”

“Say it”

“Tell them what you said”

Recap

1 – Soft Skills ✓

2 – Slideshow Basics ✓

Know your slides

One point per slide

Less is more

Title and conclusion slides are important

Do recaps ;)

Recap

1 – Soft Skills ✓

2 – Slideshow Basics ✓

Know your slides One point per slide Less is more
Title and conclusion slides are important Do recaps ;)

3 – Self Improvement

Easy Option: Practice Presentations

Present to at least 2 people

Make your audience give you feedback

Try giving your talk to a “outside friend”

Intermediate Option: Record Yourself

Record both practice and “live” presentations

Watch them back!

Identify one weakness to improve on

Hard Option: Try Public Speaking

Really practise your soft skills

After this, academic talks feel easy!

Valuable (way) beyond academic talks

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Know your slides

One point per slide

Less is more

Title and conclusion slides are important

Do recaps


3 – Self Improvement

Practise, Practise, Practise

Record yourself

Try public speaking

Thank you!

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