

EVALUATING AN ORAL PRESENTATION

W. Durfee Sept-08

This guide will help you to evaluate a presentation when the purpose of the evaluation is to assess the quality of the presentation itself, rather than to assess its technical content. In providing a critique, be gentle in your comments. Find at least two positive things to state before launching into a list of negatives. It does the speaker no good to be ruthlessly hammered on their presentation style to the point where they are fearful of presenting again. Remember that when you are on the receiving end, hearing constructive, respectful criticism is the best way to hone and improve your presentation skills.

In a good talk, the speaker understands his or her audience and the purpose for the talk. The presentation is well organized, delivered so all can understand, and accompanied by clear, supporting visuals. For the ME 2011 presentation, technical content must be delivered.

In evaluating the presentation for its technical content, look for an introduction that clearly lays the foundation for the talk and motivates you to pay attention to the material which follows (a good sign that the speaker understands the audience and their reason for being there). In the body of the talk, the information should be presented clearly and succinctly. Equations, graphs and links to physics and engineering are good. The talk should conclude with a summary of what was said,

The visuals should be clear, uncluttered and serve to support the presentation. Text should be sufficiently large to be read by those in the back row. Good use of graphics can do an excellent job of helping to explain complex material and break up what might otherwise be a fairly tedious succession of text-only, bulleted lists. Judicious use of color.

The speaker should deliver the presentation using a voice which projects to the last row and with clearly articulated words. Note that projection is different than shouting. Also, articulation often can be improved by slowing down and taking care to pronounce consonants at the end of each word. The tone and pitch should vary and the speed be neither too fast nor too slow. No “umm’s”, “aahh’s”, “you know’s”. The talk should be presented rather than read as a prepared speech. Eye contact with each section of the audience is important, as is avoiding pacing or nervous fidgeting with pointers and the like. The speaker should talk to the audience, not to the projector nor screen. There should be good use of the overhead or data projector and no blocking of the screen. Hands should be used for appropriate gesturing and definitely not left in the pocket. Finally, the presenter should be relaxed.

Recording your evaluation

Use one side of a 3x5 index card to record your evaluation of the speaker using this format:

- Line 1 Speaker's name
- Line 2 Score (1-10) for quality of the technical content
- Line 3 Score (1-10) for quality of visuals
- Line 4 Score (1-10) for quality of delivery
- Line 5 Score (1-10) for overall quality of the talk
- Lines 6-10 A brief comment which explain the reasons behind your scores or which provide additional critique about the presentation

PLEASE BRING THIS HANDOUT WITH YOU TO LAB SECTION. THANKS!