

# Technical Presentations: How to Irritate the Interested Listener

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# Outline

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Schmeiser

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# Disclaimers

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**1** Subcultures differ within IE

**2** USA  $\neq$  Rest of the world

**3** Most of this talk is opinion; form your own opinion.

# We assume...

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**1** Technical content

**2** Technical audience

**3** Time limit

# Speaking area: Names of things

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1 “dais” = “rostrum” = raised platform

# Speaking area: Names of things

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- 1 “dais” = “rostrum” = raised platform
  - 1 “podium” = dais used by orchestra conductor
  - 2 “pulpit” = dais used by clergy

# Speaking area: Names of things

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- 1 “dais” = “rostrum” = raised platform
  - 1 “podium” = dais used by orchestra conductor
  - 2 “pulpit” = dais used by clergy
- 2 “lectern” = reading desk

# Speaking area: Names of things

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- 1 “dais” = “rostrum” = raised platform
  - 1 “podium” = dais used by orchestra conductor
  - 2 “pulpit” = dais used by clergy
- 2 “lectern” = reading desk
- 3 “A speaker stands behind a lectern on a dais.”



# Before speaking, check how to...

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**1** get to the speaking position.

# Before speaking, check how to...

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- 1 get to the speaking position.
- 2 turn on visual aid(s).

# Before speaking, check how to...

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- 1 get to the speaking position.
- 2 turn on visual aid(s).
- 3 be heard.

# Before speaking, check how to...

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- 1 get to the speaking position.
- 2 turn on visual aid(s).
- 3 be heard.
- 4 be seen (you and the visual aid(s)).

# Before speaking, check how to...

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- 1 get to the speaking position.
- 2 turn on visual aid(s).
- 3 be heard.
- 4 be seen (you and the visual aid(s)).
- 5 know the time.

# Before speaking, check how to...

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Conclusion

- 1 get to the speaking position.
- 2 turn on visual aid(s).
- 3 be heard.
- 4 be seen (you and the visual aid(s)).
- 5 know the time.
- 6 how to leave.

# Speaker behavior

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- 1 How to begin?
- 2 The title slide.
- 3 Where to stand?
- 4 Where to look?
- 5 How to talk?
- 6 Where/how to point?

# Aristotle's Big 3

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- 1 Ethos: establish who you are
- 2 Pathos: establish motivation
- 3 Logos: reach a clean conclusion (logically, quickly)



# U.S. Military's Big 3

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- 1** Tell them what you are going to tell them.
- 2** Tell them.
- 3** Tell them what you told them.

# Schmeiser's Big 3 (for a technical seminar)

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- 1 Define the problem, its context, its motivation
- 2 Define properties of a good solution.
- 3 Discuss your solution.

# Rardin's Big 3 (for an interviewing seminar)

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- 1 Prove that you can teach.
- 2 Prove that you can communicate with peers.
- 3 Prove that you can “blow them away”.

# Visual aids

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**1** None? Probably not.

# Visual aids

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**1** None? Probably not.

**2** Blackboard? My preference for teaching.

# Visual aids

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- 1 None? Probably not.
- 2 Blackboard? My preference for teaching.
- 3 Live demonstration? Good.

# Visual aids

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- 1 None? Probably not.
- 2 Blackboard? My preference for teaching.
- 3 Live demonstration? Good.
- 4 Slides? MSpowerpoint or TeX Beamer or ...

# Visual aids

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- 4 Slides? MSpowerpoint or TeX Beamer or ...
  - 1 One slide, one idea. Headings.



# Visual aids

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- 3 Live demonstration? Good.
- 4 Slides? MSpowerpoint or TeX Beamer or ...
  - 1 One slide, one idea. Headings.
  - 2 One slide, 1–3 minutes.

# Visual aids

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- 3 Live demonstration? Good.
- 4 Slides? MSpowerpoint or TeX Beamer or ...
  - 1 One slide, one idea. Headings.
  - 2 One slide, 1–3 minutes.
  - 3 Readability: Concise. Font size. Margins.

# Visual aids

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- 1 None? Probably not.
- 2 Blackboard? My preference for teaching.
- 3 Live demonstration? Good.
- 4 Slides? MSpowerpoint or TeX Beamer or ...
  - 1 One slide, one idea. Headings.
  - 2 One slide, 1–3 minutes.
  - 3 Readability: Concise. Font size. Margins.
  - 4 Hiding content. Hmmm?

# Word choice

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**1** Not fancy; clarity is the goal

# Word choice

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- 1 Not fancy; clarity is the goal
- 2 Reuse names of things

# Word choice

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- 1 Not fancy; clarity is the goal
- 2 Reuse names of things
- 3 Simple words are good

# Word choice

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- 1 Not fancy; clarity is the goal
- 2 Reuse names of things
- 3 Simple words are good
- 4 Parallel structure is good

# Word choice

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- 1 Not fancy; clarity is the goal
- 2 Reuse names of things
- 3 Simple words are good
- 4 Parallel structure is good
- 5 Specific is good



# Word choice

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- 1 Not fancy; clarity is the goal
- 2 Reuse names of things
- 3 Simple words are good
- 4 Parallel structure is good
- 5 Specific is good
- 6 Active voice is good

# Do these things.

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- 1 Include only an appropriate level of detail.
- 2 Define terminology, notation, parts of figures.
- 3 Explain, rather than read, the slides.
- 4 Stand to block nobody. Move.
- 5 Avoid distractions (e.g., touching a dropped screen)
- 6 Avoid saying “I know that you can’t read this.”
- 7 Occasionally, be silent. Allow for questions.
- 8 Be flexible. Elaborate or omit as needed.

# Rardin's list of things not to do

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- 1 “Losing” part of the audience in the first third of the talk.
- 2 Not explaining why the listener should be interested.
- 3 Failing to show the “forest” first, then the “trees”.
- 4 Introducing unnecessary notation.
- 5 Dwelling on “regularity conditions” that are needed for rigor, but not for insight.
- 6 Making definitions without motivating them; e.g., examples.
- 7 Dense slides, so that the reader must either read or listen, but not both.
- 8 Sparse slides, so that the listener must wait for several slides to get a single idea.
- 9 Not repeating part of earlier slides, so that the listener has to remember something nontrivial for an earlier slide to understand the current slide.

# References that I Like

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- 1 W. Strunk Jr. and E.B. White (1979). *The Elements of Style*. Macmillan Publishing Co., New York (third edition).

# References that I Like

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- 1 W. Strunk Jr. and E.B. White (1979). *The Elements of Style*. Macmillan Publishing Co., New York (third edition).
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# References that I Like

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- 1 W. Strunk Jr. and E.B. White (1979). *The Elements of Style*. Macmillan Publishing Co., New York (third edition).
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**Conclusion**

Always think about the listener.

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Always think about the listener.

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QUESTIONS?