Organizing a ~30-minute prelim/final talk

This pie chart shows how much pie I ate while making this chart.
The Oral Presentation for the Prelim or Thesis

ANATOMY OF A GROUP MEETING PRESENTATION

- pulled all-nighter. finished slides 5 minutes before meeting started.
- trying to come up with insightful question that will impress advisor.
- first year. only person actually paying attention. has no clue what's going on.
- relieved she doesn't have to explain why she hasn't done anything this week.
- starving, thought there'd be food at meeting.
- has written two proposals in his head since meeting started.

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How Do You Start Drafting Your Presentation?

First, draft an outline for your presentation!!
Example organization of ~30-minute prelim talk

**Background and Introduction** (7–9 minutes)

⇒ 5–6 slides

~1 Title slide - Your name, advisor’s name, research title
~1 Outline slide – Organization of talk
~1 Overview slide – Why is this research important?
~2-3 Background slides – Provides essential background for non-experts

**Methods and Preliminary Results** (7–9 minutes)

⇒ 5–6 slides

~2-3 Methods slides – Theoretical/experimental methods used
~0-3 Preliminary results slides – Proof-of-principle results
Example organization of ~30-minute prelim talk

Proposed Research (10–12 minutes)

⇒ 5–6 slides

~1-2 slides per proposed project

Summary and Acknowledgments (1-2 minutes)

⇒ 2 slides

1 Summary slide - Review the main points
1 Acknowledgment slide – Acknowledge collaborators, funding agencies, helpful colleagues/staff, etc.

Questions

⇒ 3–N back-up slides – Anticipate questions that might arise
The title slide and outline prepares the audience to listen and shows organization of talk

Title slide
- Your name and affiliation
- Your advisor
- Venue and date
- Attention-getting graphic

Outline or overview of presentation
- Prepares the audience to listen
- Provides a logical structure for your talk
- Provides motivation and context
- Summarizes key points (limit to two or three for a ~30-minute talk)
The “body” of your presentation is the intellectual content of your talk

Problem statement, motivation

Previous work, essential background info

Methods

Results and Discussion

Proposed work (prelim)
Provide a “summary” slide
Recap key preliminary results
Reiterate proposed projects

Summary

- Non-Gaussianity in the CMB tells about creation of the initial density perturbations in the universe.
- The probability distribution of the nonlinear parameter in our model gives drastically improved constraints on non-Gaussianity.

Next: generalize our method to smaller scale fluctuations and apply to COBE and MAP data

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This slide will probably stay on the screen during the question period and will thus get the longest audience exposure—make it count!
Tips for preparing your talk

Adjust the presentation to your audience! Your committee are not all experts...make sure you have sufficient background to orient all members.

You don’t have to tell the committee everything about your research: Identify the 2-3 main points you can reasonably convey in a 30-minute talk.

Create an outline of your talk, i.e., have a logical organization: You can use the same outline as used for your prelim paper.
Have only 1 idea per slide

Use the header to state the main idea of the slide, and use the body of the slide to support that idea

Use well-labeled graphs and figures to illustrate your key points…this makes the slide more real and interesting to the audience

Avoid too much text….
Tips for preparing your talk (cont.)

Have only 1 idea per slide.

Use the header to state the main idea of the slide, and use the body of the slide to support that idea.

Use well-labeled graphs and figures to illustrate your key points...this makes the slide more real and interesting to the audience.

….or too many distracting images.
Label all elements in a figure

- Point out important features
- Label both axes of graphs and show units
- Provide a brief caption
- Give credit to source

The Nike laser system uses discharge pre-amplifiers. (Courtesy US Navy)

Sample normalized signals from the two-beam optical drive. (Courtesy C. Michael)
Presenting data is your most important and challenging task

- Avoid copying a graph from a formal article – they have a different style, e.g., labels are too small
- Use color and make lines thick, labels legible
- Label axes and annotate important points with arrows and add words
- Use tables sparingly – if used highlight important parts
Use equations sparingly

Use equations only when necessary

If you use equations
  Slow down
  Talk through step by step
  Explain relevance
  Combine with a picture that illustrates the physical principle involved
Remember, your goal is to convey your ideas, so avoid distracting text and effects!

Don’t overuse PowerPoint animations and sounds!

Make sure there is good contrast between text and background

Use simple (or no) backgrounds on slides

- Parity invariance fails, combine it with charge conjugation to create a new invariant
- Converts the right-handed anti-neutrino into a left-handed neutrino—exactly what we observe in nature
- Neutral kaon experiment
Use “normal” colors

DON’T use red/green or red/blue as contrasting colors
Make sure colors looks the way you expect using an LCD projector!
Avoid neon colors and pastels
Don’t use many random colors; people expect color to mean something

Superconductivity is an electronic state of matter that exists below certain currents, magnetic fields, and temperatures.

- I - Current
- B - Magnetic Field
- T - Temperature
- I_c - Critical Current
- B_c - Critical Magnetic Field
- T_c - Critical Temperature
Tips for presenting your prelim/final talk
Pointers for giving the best possible talk:

Maintain eye contact with audience
   Don’t stare at screen or monitor

Do not read your talk!

Avoid nervous mannerisms
   Pacing, bobbing, waving arms, jingling coins

Use laser pointer or stick directed at screen
   Don’t point directly at overhead on projector
   Don’t block the screen

Train yourself to speak slowly and distinctly—practice!

Avoid “fillers”: “uh”, “like”, “um”, “okay”

Be enthusiastic!
   If you don’t act excited by your results,
   don’t expect the audience to be!
Pointers for giving the best possible talk:

Don’t show any material on slides (e.g., figures, equations, text, etc.) you can’t explain!! This will invite questions you don’t want!!

Rehearse how you’ll end your talk

Don’t end with “Well, I guess that’s it…”

Don’t just stop and let the committee guess that you’re done

Thank the audience!
The best way to prepare for a talk is to **Know Your Material**

**Practice, practice, practice**

**Focus on communicating, not performing**

  Humor is good, but don’t overdo it

**Keep explanations simple**

**Prepare key phrases and words**

  It’s okay to write out material first
  Write the key point to make for each slide
  If the slide doesn’t have a point, eliminate it!!

**Stay on track**

  Small (planned) digressions fine if motivated, but get back on track (shows you are paying attention to audience)

*It takes three weeks to prepare a good ad-lib speech*
Check everything just before your talk

Check the projector
  Make sure you know how to turn it on
  See that it is plugged in
  Check which way to position your slides
  Adjust the focus

Check microphones, pointer, other tools

Arrange your slides, notes, and other materials
  Be able to reach everything without moving
  Be able to go through your slides without fumbling

Have a “clock” handy to check the time