

Seminar Slides

Some general advice about how to prepare seminar slides.

1. While it is quite common to be able to make an electronic presentation, it may be necessary to use overhead slides. It is wise to have both prepared. For an electronic presentation, use Powerpoint or Latex to create a pdf file.
2. Print your pdf file at the highest quality. On the computer you use, go into the Printer settings, right-click on “Adobe PDF”, click “Printing Preferences” and make sure the Adobe PDF Conversion setting are set to “High Quality”.
3. If you use Scientific Workplace, I recommend the “Beamer” package. You need to install special files. Go to <http://www.mackichan.com/>, and under “Support/Patches and Updates” you can download the beamer executable file. This template produces very nice slides without much extra work.
4. If you use Latex directly, some basic advice is to use the settings `\LARGE` or `\Large`, `\bf`, and `\sf`, so the printing is in large, bold, and sans serif fonts. Also make sure to print in landscape rather than portrait.
5. Powerpoint, Beamer, and other packages make it easy to add “dynamic transitions”, where the slide disappears gradually or with glitter, etc. I recommend that you do not use any such complication. It is distracting and can look rather silly. Perhaps, for one or two special slides which are meant to make a special point, you can use dynamics transitions, but otherwise stay away from them.
6. Presentation software allows you to present “bullet points” and lists one-at-a-time (step lists). That is, the slide starts with just the first item, and then you add each item sequentially by pressing the page down button. This can be a nice method to keep the slide presentation moving exactly along with your dialogue, but it can also be an annoyance, having to continually play with the computer or remote control. Furthermore, it makes it difficult to quickly page back or forward through your slides, which is commonly desired. (Someone asks a question, and in response you wish to page forward or back a few slides.) I recommend that you think carefully before using “step lists” and only use them in your presentation where you think they are particularly useful.
7. If your paper has tables with a large amount of information, you may wish to extract only a subset to present in a slide. Pick the main results of interest that you wish to discuss, and leave the remainder in the paper for the interested reader. (Tell the audience that there are more results in the paper.) If there are too many numbers on the screen, nobody will be able to read them.)
8. Have a backup copy of your presentation slides. (What if your flash drive gets lost?) One idea is to put the file on your website so that you can download it if necessary.