



# How to give a talk - Mechanics

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# Why work on your oral skills?

- Makes you memorable
- Gets you a job
- Helps make sure you keep the job
- Helps you persuade others
- Perceived as a winner!



(credit to Wanda Pratt for several slides)

# Why oral presentations?

- Presenting well is correlated with
  - Ability to disseminate ideas
  - Professional success
- Presenting well is *not* correlated with
  - Quality of work
  - Quality of writing
  - Quality of character

(credit to Russ Altman for these sentiments)

# What makes a presentation bad?

- Content
  - Disorganized
  - Inappropriate
  - Uninteresting or irrelevant
  - Offensive
- Delivery
  - Too quiet
  - Too dull
  - Too fast



# What makes a presentation great?

- **Appropriate content**

- Hook
- Why?
- What?
- How?



- **Powerful delivery**

- Inspire: leave the audience wanting more
- Make it personal—become a storyteller
- Pictures & figures

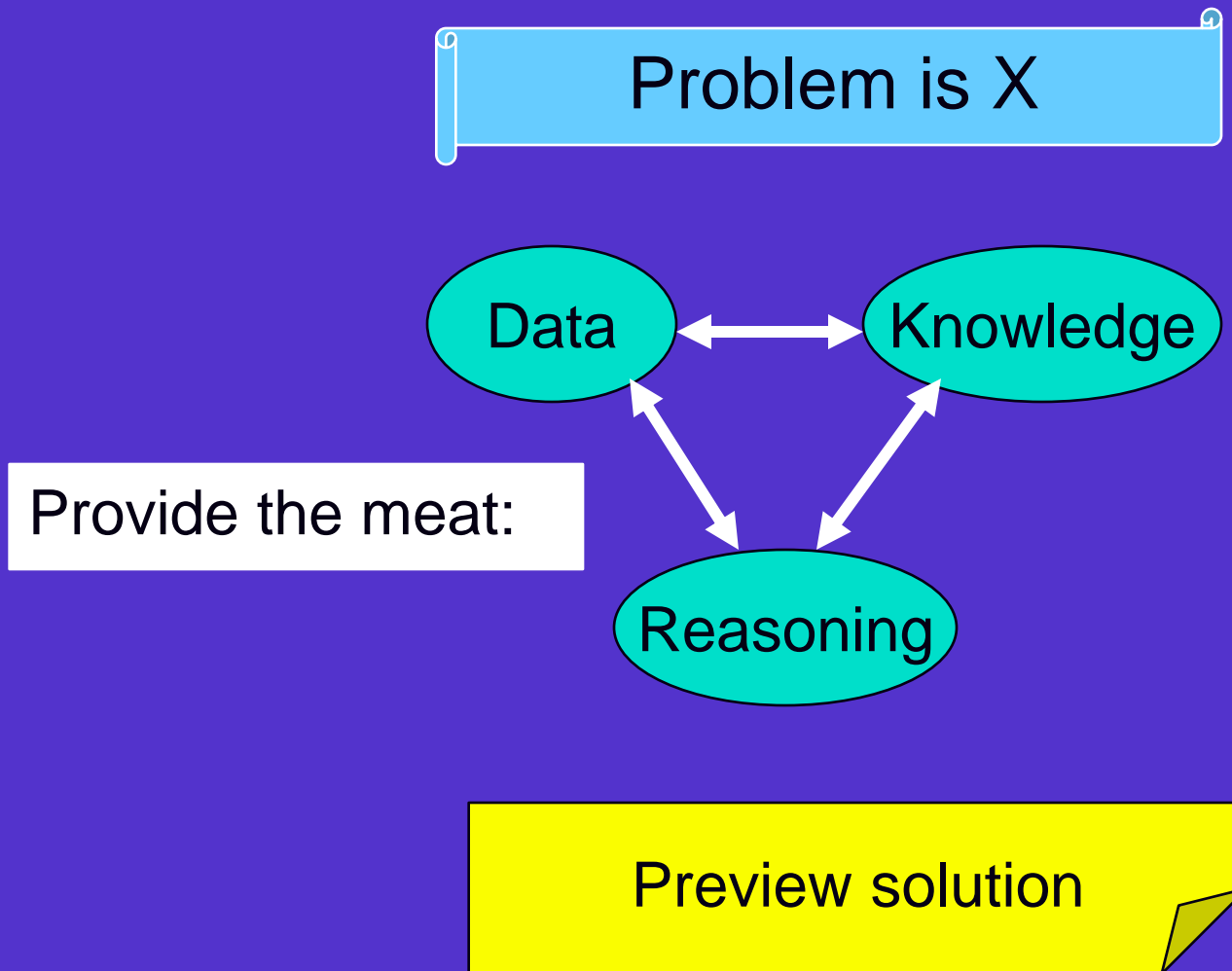
# Structure and organization

- Have a single take-home message:

**Strong oral communication!**

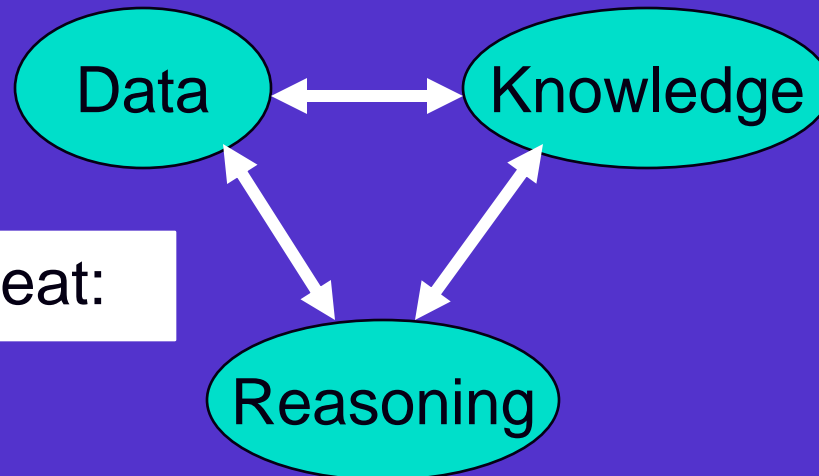
- Structure:
  - Set up the problem
  - Preview your take-home message
  - Provide meat: support your message
  - Conclude: Repeat your message
  - Questions?

# Structure & organization (as a picture!)



# Structure & organization (as a picture!)

Problem is X



Provide the meat:

Solution is Y!!



# Slide order

- Each slide is important
- Know your transitions
- Use the slide sorter to rethink organization
- For longer talks, use an outline slide

# Public speaking tips

- Practice your patter
  - Measure time (20-25 mins of patter, 10-15 mins for discussion & questions)
  - Pause for emphasis
  - Speak slowly and distinctly
- Look at audience, not screen or monitor
- Be aware of body language
- Do not read your talk
- Be enthusiastic!

# Public speaking tips

A thick red line starts at the top left, curves around the title, runs horizontally across the top, then drops vertically down the right side, ending in a small arrowhead pointing left towards the bottom right corner.

**Practice,  
Practice,  
Practice !**

# Slide text [FAIL]

- It is almost always a bad idea to put complete sentences in your slides, especially if the sentences are long and complex.
- It is bad to crowd your slide with text; instead, you should use figures or omit words.
- One bullet -- one idea
  - Sub-bullets: never by themselves
  - Sub-bullets: always parallel

# Slide text (good)

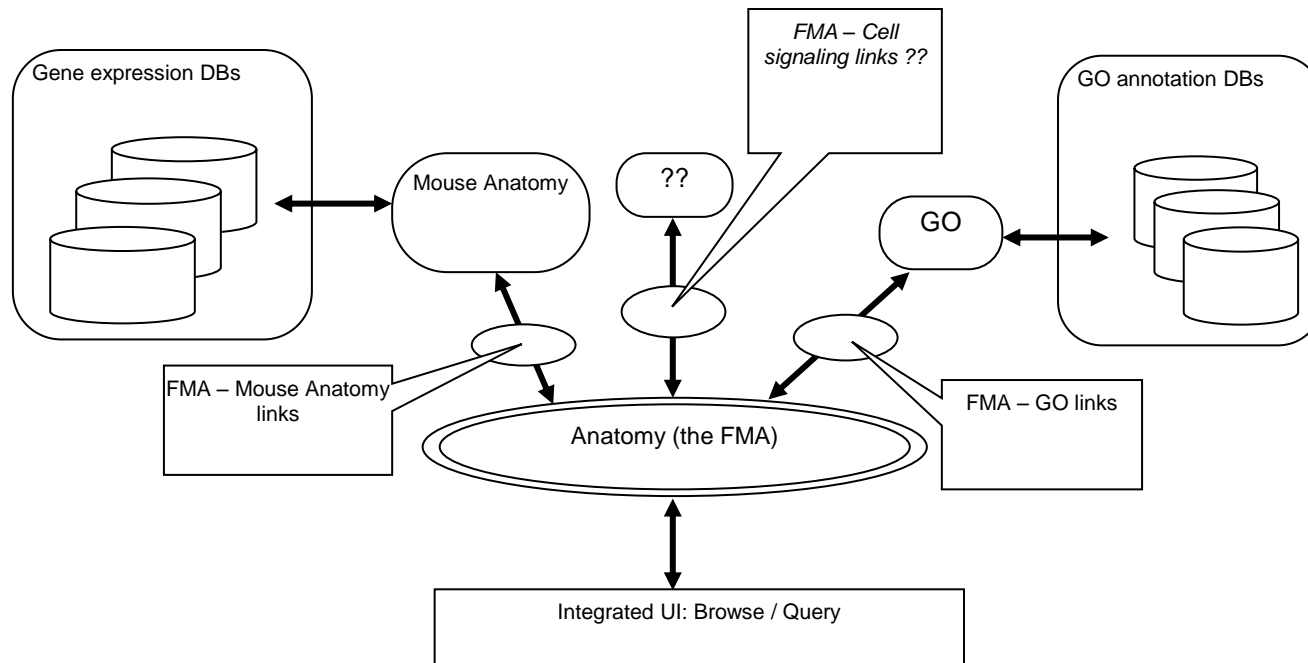
- Minimize text
- One bullet -- one idea
  - Sub-bullets: never by themselves
  - Sub-bullets: always parallel



# Fonts (This is 40pt Arial)

- This font is 32 point Arial.
  - This is 24 point font. Try to stay this size or larger
    - This is 20 point font. It is the minimum for readability.
      - Never, never use smaller than 20 point font.
  - Beware of MS powerpoint “auto-resizing” your fonts!
- **Use one font throughout your talk**
- Beware of small fonts in figures
- Prefer sans-serif fonts

# Figures: Don't do this!



**Figure 1.** A diagram where our anatomy ontology acts as a hub for integrating knowledge. Mappings to GO and to mouse anatomy are described in Section 3.1 and 3.2; mappings to cell-signaling knowledge sources are future work.

# Question answering

- Stay in control
  - Be brief
  - “Hold that question – I’ll return to it”
  - Let’s talk about this “off-line”
- Guess at probable Qs, and prepare slides
- Relax, listen, think
- In large halls, repeat the question
- If you don’t know, say so



# Confidence

- Confidence is very convincing!
- Signs:
  - Body language: power poses
  - Volume level
  - Intonation
- Problems:
  - Too much confidence?
  - Too little confidence?
  - Uptalk?

# “Totally like whatever, ya know?”

(excerpt from Talor Mali, 2002)

- What has happened to our conviction?  
Where are the limbs out on which we once walked?  
Have they been, like, chopped down  
with the rest of the rain forest?  
Or do we have, like, nothing to say?  
Has society become so, like, totally . . .  
I mean absolutely . . . You know?  
That we’ve just gotten to the point where it’s just, like . . .  
whatever!
- . . .
- I entreat you, I implore you, I exhort you,  
I challenge you: To speak with conviction.
- To say what you believe in a manner that bespeaks  
the determination with which you believe it.  
Because contrary to the wisdom of the bumper sticker,  
it is not enough these days to simply QUESTION AUTHORITY.  
You have to speak with it, too.

# Summary

- Goal: communicate your ideas
  - Avoid distraction
  - Have a clear structure
  - Speak well



**Good Luck!**