Presentations in Grad School: The Basics

Say less, and land more

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TRANSITION TO GRAD STUDIES WORKSHOP

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You are not bad at this, you are just nervous.

Public speaking beats death on many fear surveys. You are in good company.

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By the end, you will be able to

- Shape a talk around your audience and one message
- Open, structure, and close so people actually remember
- Build slides that help you instead of upstaging you
- Deliver with steadier nerves, and handle questions



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POLL

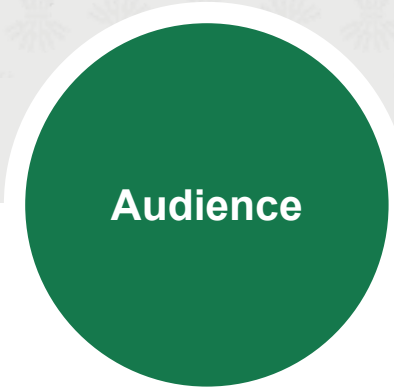
1. **Which part is hardest?**
- Message
- Structure
- Slides
- Questions

Keep your answer; we will come back to it at the end



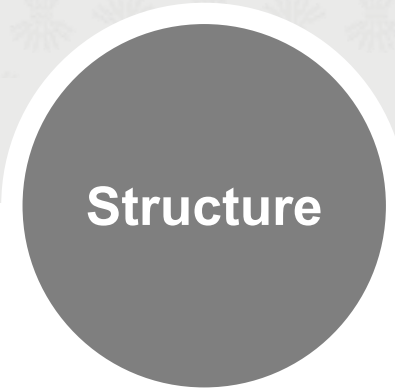
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Four basics do most of the work



Make it about them

Match depth, say why it matters



Give it an arc

Open, build, and close well

Keep them simple

One idea per slide



Stay calm

Slow down, take questions

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1

Know Your Audience and Message

It is not your talk, it is theirs

- Match your depth to who is in the room
- Tell them early why it matters to them
- The same talk can win one room and bomb the next



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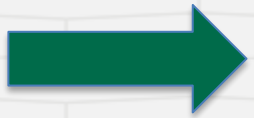
Transform, Don’t Just Inform

INFORM

What do I want to say?

- Facts
- Slides
- Explanations
- Everything I know

“Here is my information.”



move the audience

TRANSFORM

What should change for them?

? **BELIEVE**
think differently

♥ **FEEL**
care more

✓ **DO**
act next

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Map the shift from before to after

What they...	Before	After
Know		
Believe		
Feel		
Do		

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Map the shift from before to after

What they...	Before	After
Know	Not confident...	How to efficiently present
Believe	Sharing Information...	A roadmap can help me succeed
Feel	Boring...	Curious, motivated, optimistic
Do	Aim to inform/fail to personalize	Aim to transform

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2

Structure with a Clear Arc



Give them a tour, not a data dump

Open with the question, then methods, results, and next steps

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Open with a story, and circle back to it

- Skip “today I will talk about,” and open with why
- Start with a time-framed true story, like “last year”
- Say it three times, tell them, tell them, tell them
- End where you began, and close the loop



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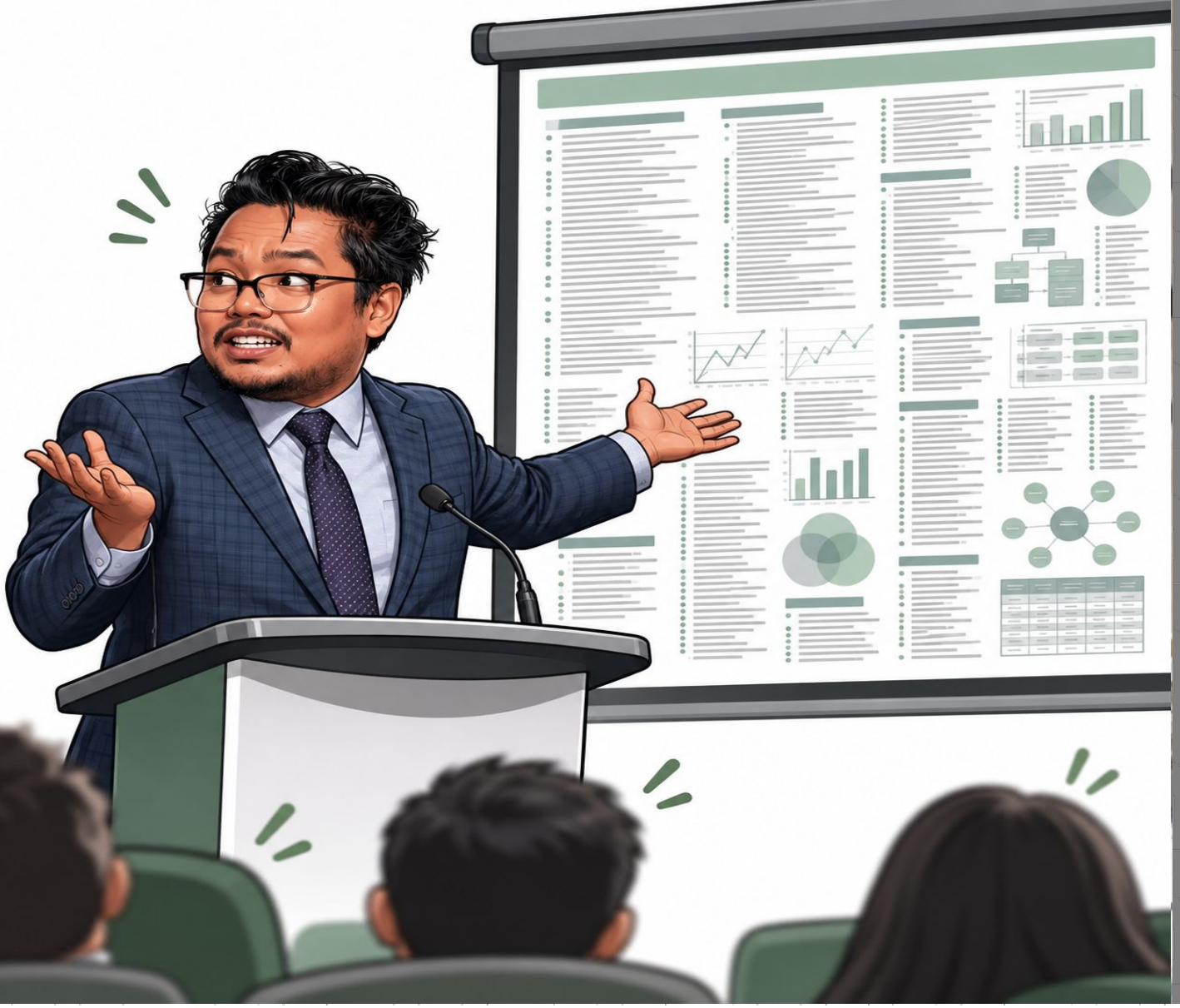
ACTIVITY

Draft your first thirty seconds, a hook, not an agenda

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3

Slides That Support You



Your slide is not your teleprompter

- One idea, a few words, and space
- If they are reading, they are not listening
- A picture beats a wall of numbers

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Make it readable from the back row

- Large font, strong contrast, simple layout
- Add short alt text to your images
- Show data as one clear graph, not a spreadsheet



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A Comprehensive Overview of the Background, Methodology, Preliminary Results, Statistical Analysis, Limitations, Future Directions, and Broader Implications of Our Multi-Year Mixed-Methods Investigation into the Many Factors That May or May Not Affect Graduate Student Productivity, Wellbeing, and Time Management

Background

- Prior work suggests sleep, workload, supervision, and environment all influence productivity, though results are mixed and often contradictory across disciplines and institutions
- Few studies isolate sleep specifically, and most rely on self-report, which is prone to recall bias and social desirability effects
- Our study builds on Smith et al. (2019), Jones and Lee (2020), Patel (2021), and roughly forty other sources listed in the appendix

Methods

- We surveyed 412 graduate students across 7 departments over 3 academic terms using a 68-item questionnaire administered online and in person
- We also collected 34 semi-structured interviews, 12 focus groups, and two weeks of daily diary entries from a subsample of 40 participants
- Data were analyzed with multiple regression, thematic coding, ANOVA, and a structural equation model, with alpha set at 0.05

Results

- Students who reported 7 or more hours of sleep were on average 23 percent more productive than those who reported fewer than 6 hours
- Productivity also correlated weakly with workspace, caffeine, exercise, and number of supervisor meetings per month
- Hours slept and productivity index: under 6 = 61, 6 to 7 = 74, 7 or more = 84

Limitations

- Self-report, single institution, one discipline cluster, possible confounds, small interview subsample, seasonal effects not controlled for

Future work

- Longitudinal design, objective sleep tracking, cross-institution replication, and a larger interview sample

In summary, while the relationship between sleep and productivity appears robust in our preliminary data, considerable caution is warranted given the limitations above, and future research should replicate these findings across a wider range of institutions, disciplines, and populations before firm conclusions can be drawn. We gratefully acknowledge funding from the imaginary research council, grant number 000-000, our participants, our lab, and our families. References available on request. See Figures 1, 2, and 3 in the appendix.

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ACTIVITY

Rescue a crowded slide, cut it to one idea

QR

Scan Me | add your handout link

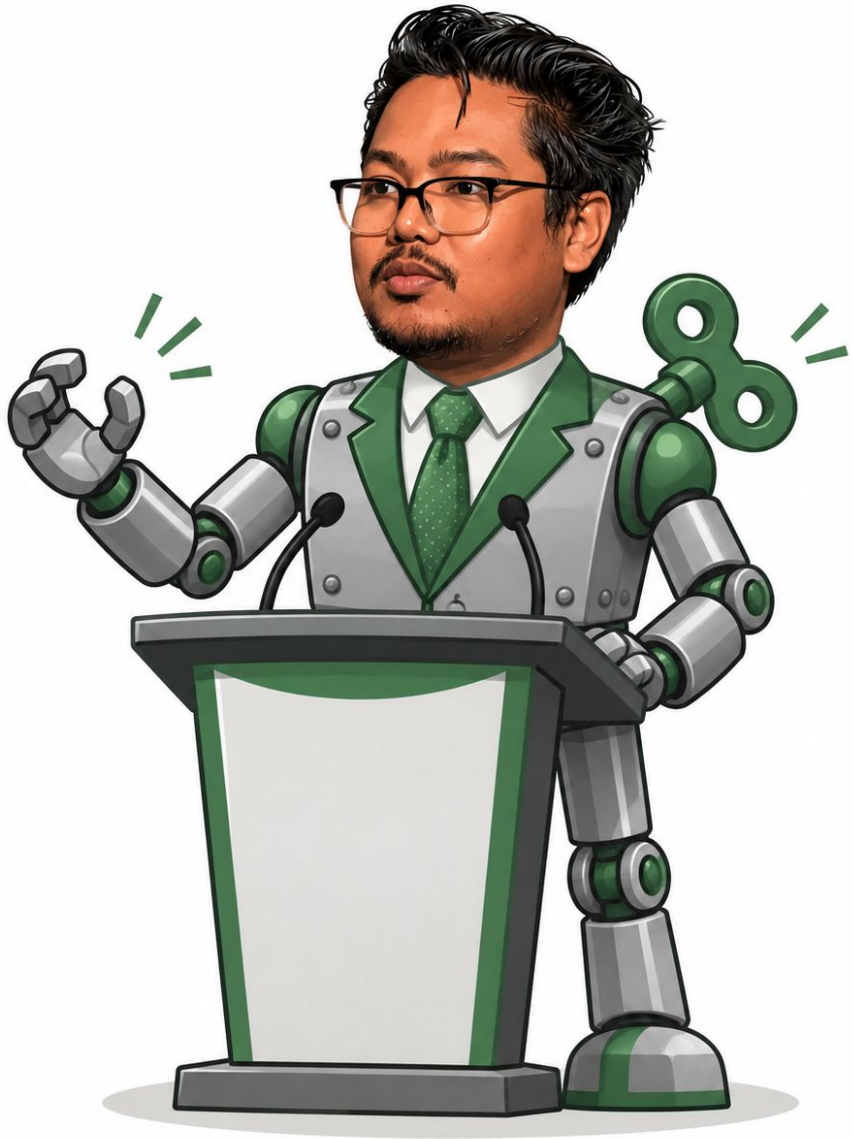
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4

Deliver and Handle Questions

Slow down, speak up, stop sounding like a robot

- Nervous speakers speed up, so slow down
- Louder than feels natural, and vary your tone
- Practise out loud, and push past the robot stage



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Pick one basic and use it in your next talk

- Make it about them, and aim to transform
- Give it an arc, open and close with a story
- Let your slides support, not compete

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References and further watching

- Practical Psychology, seven tips for a great presentation.
- Phil Waknell, TEDxSaclay, the three magic ingredients of amazing presentations.
- David Stuckler, how to give the perfect academic presentation.
- TED-Ed, how to script and deliver a talk.
- USask University Library, graduate learning supports.

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Questions/Comments

Thank you!

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