

# Questions in presentations: Talks and Posters

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- Know your audience
  - Types of questions
- Answering questions
- Strategy for handling questioners
- Differences for posters

# Know your audience and time

## Time

- Short talk, long talk, poster

**Audience** – Background, Age, time of day, time sitting, known provocateurs

- Students
- Professionals
- General public

Different types of questions => different strategies

# The types of questions

- Real probing question
  - The most challenging - best
- Misunderstanding
  - You get to clarify (apologize for not being clear??)
- I want to be heard
  - Hmmmm, ok
- I'm smarter than you
  - No doubt
- I already did that
  - That was a good year

# Dealing with Questions

This can and should be the most useful (and fun) part of your talk

First

- Think about likely questions before hand
  - You should be able to predict most questions
- Structure talk to avoid/get the questions you don't/do want
  - Audience manipulation is good (that's what a talk is)
- Last gasp - leave/don't leave time for questions

# More ideas for handling questions

## Next

- What is really being asked??
  - Eye contact
  - Listen (don't interpret at first)
  - Engage the questioner
  - Follow up
- Difficult questions (these are the ones you can learn from)
  - Think first ( a little silence is fine)
  - Speculate (but unless you are confident make it clear that you are speculating)
- Don't ramble
  - Repeat but try new word or a new analogy (foreign language...)
- Be willing to cut off extended question
  - "...let's talk about that afterwards..."

# Dealing with Questioners

- The good ones
- Don't get defensive
  - ◉ In general don't get aggressive (though...)
  - ◉ Use humor
  - ◉ Be self deprecating but **not apologetic for content**
- The bad ones
- Don't get defensive
  - ◉ Use humor (but be careful)
  - ◉ "...let's talk about this later..." "...interesting point..." "...and your point is?..." "...I'm sorry, I'm afraid you misunderstood my talk..."

# Posters: The good, the bad and the ugly

- You have time to really talk to people and explain your work (**good**)
  - Structure poster so you can be explaining the most interesting/involved part while others are reading the "basic story"
- You have time to really be talked to by people and have your work explained to you (**bad**)
  - All question issues can be magnified
- You might be talking and standing for 3 or 4 hours (**ugly**)
  - Flow control (make sure to give tours to those who need it)
  - Crowds attract crowds

# Telling a story

- Decide on the story first then put your talk together...don't put all your data in a talk and then try to decide on the story
- **Do** give an executive story summary => before, during and at the end of your talk/poster
- **DON'T** try to make too many points (and show everything you've done and give the history of your work and show all the blind alleys and all the neat software you've found and.....)