

How to give a great presentation

Tips, tricks, & tools

Dr. Tomáš Glomb

Dr. Martin Lang



Academic presentation



- Purpose?
- What is a good presentation?

Types of presentations I

Standard ~20 min presentation

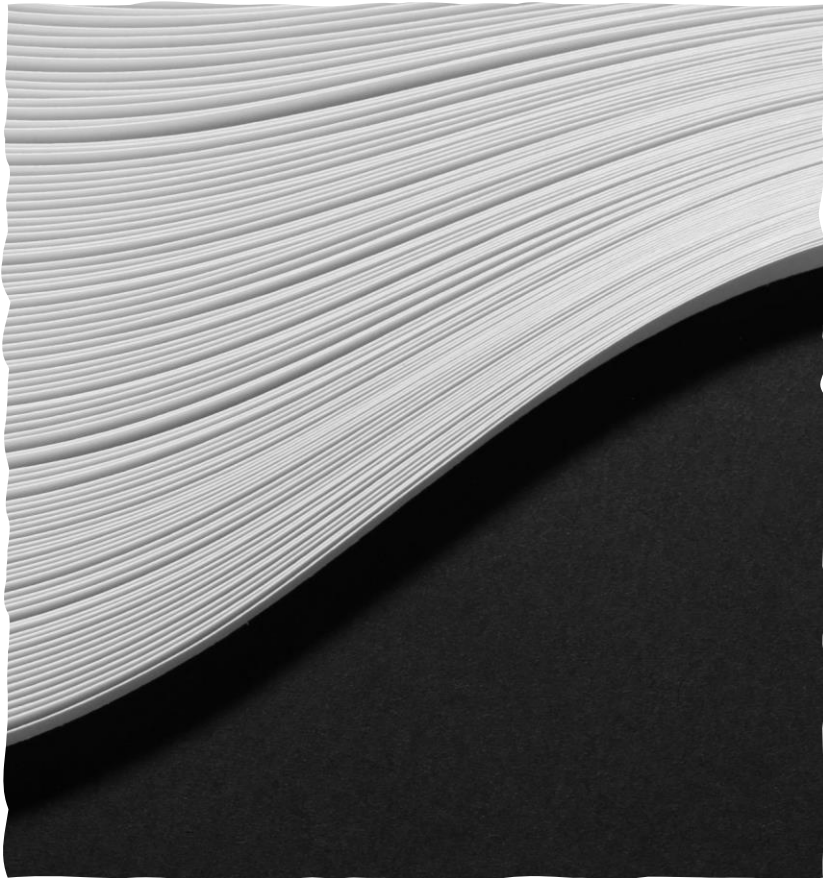
- Usual conference format
- This is what we will train
- Presentation with slides on your original research + a few minutes of Q&A

Panel presentation

- Often a series of talks on a similar topic
- Open/close panels
- General discussion after panel ends

Lightning talk

- Can be as low as five minutes
- Attract people to learn more – often entertaining



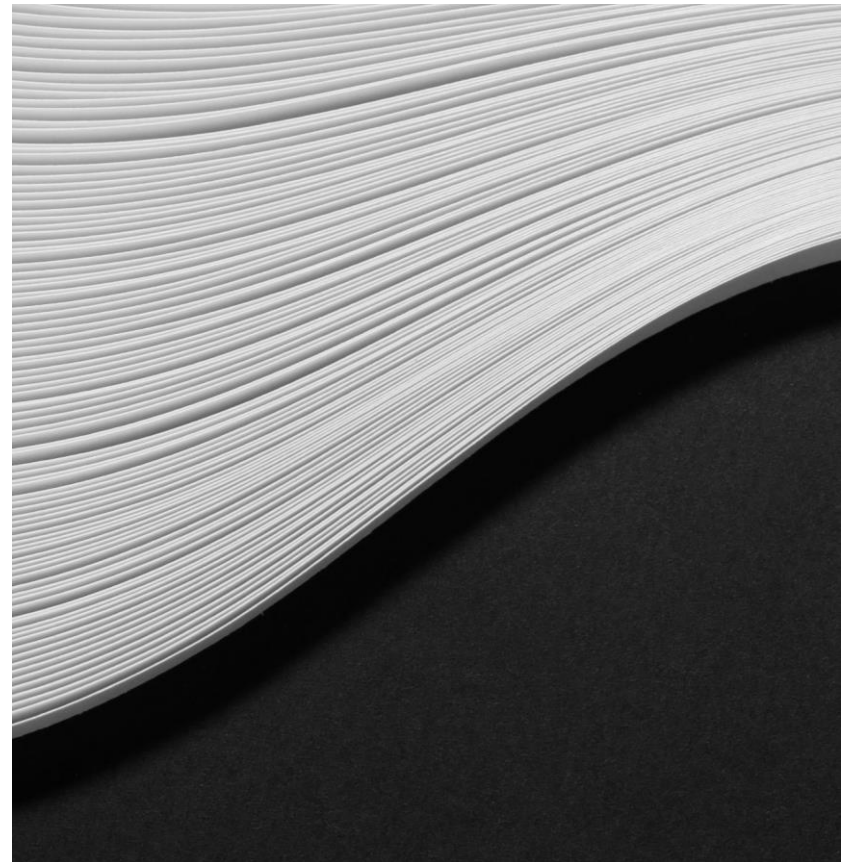
Types of presentations II

Keynote talk

- Formal, highlight of the conference
- Comes with status and duties – be around for others, drive discussion
- Great for visibility

Poster presentation

- A specific format that would require a separate lecture
- Often part of a conference, yet many people think it is inferior
- But a great way to engage with younger colleagues, get feedback, interesting discussions, and icebreaker!



Tips...



Know your audience

Disciplines

- Structure of the presentation – disciplinary genre
- Ratio of previous theory to your contribution skewed a bit more towards the former
- Explain and define basic terms
- Avoid jargon

Formality

- Casual vs dignified? (think of Tom vs Joseph)
- Appropriate language/attire

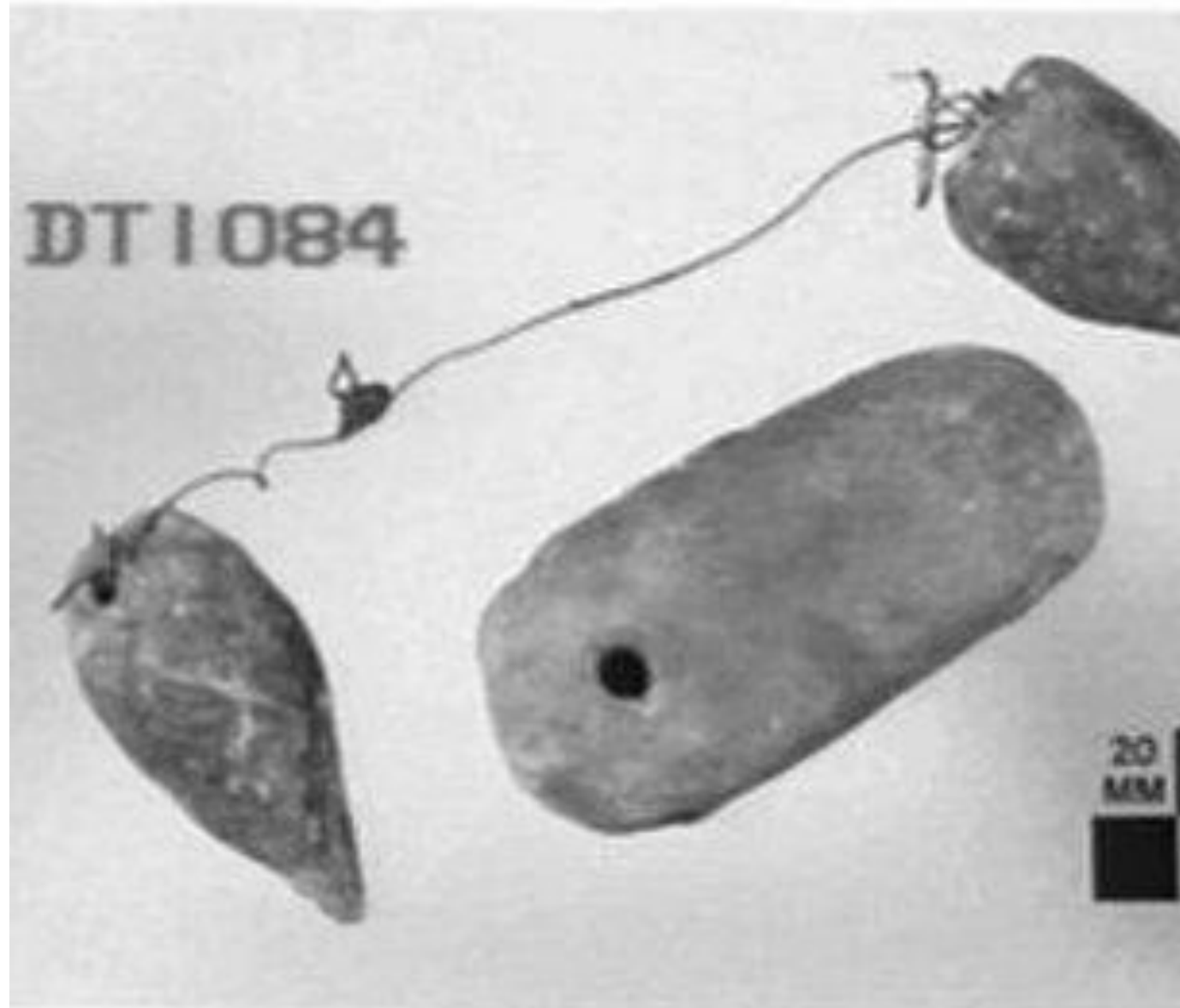
Familiarity

- Do you need to introduce yourself and/or your lab?
Can give more behind-the-scenes of your research
- Appropriate for jokes, personal anecdotes?



How to hook your audience?

- Be energetic, passionate
- Start with a real-life intriguing example (dark therapy)
- Include rhetoric questions or instructions for the audience (e.g., guessing results)
- Include jokes



A word of caution...

- We often talk about sensitive topics, especially during public talks
- Here, know your audience is doubly important
- Might be good to preface your talk
- Be sensitive to how you frame your research



INTERIOR PLUG  
@kizento_

Harvard trained beggar



Non-verbal communication

Seating/standing

- Can affect how energized/bored the audience will be
- Often depends if you need to interact with the PC (clickers!)
- But running there and back may seem too chaotic – depends on the formality of the setting

Posture and eye-contact

- May express confidence
- Try to find some nodding heads in the audience and talk to them (and likewise reciprocate this service!)
- Smile!

Hand-gestures

- Good to underscore a specific point
- But too much may seem chaotic

Fluency

- May affect how knowledgeable the presenter is
- Short pauses, especially if planned, are desirable because they give people time to think (but you need to be confident in those pauses)
- Also ok to make a pause to drink water

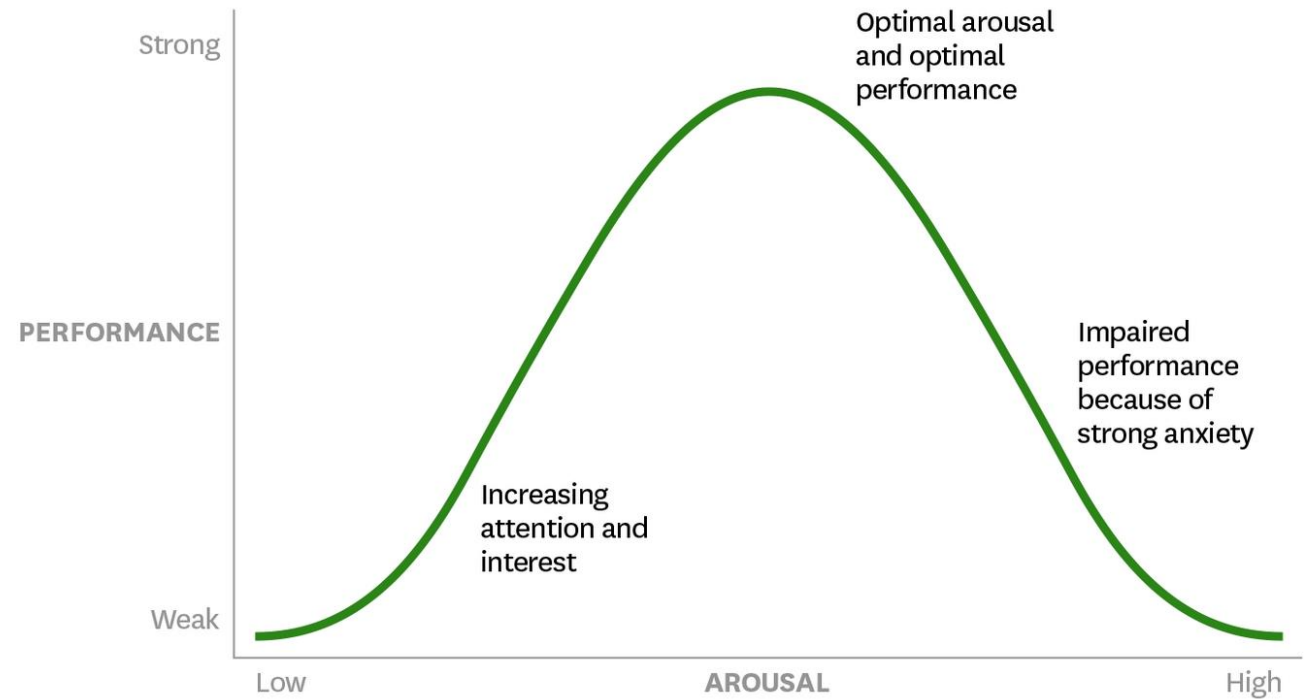
BUT you do you!

Stress management

- Stress is good!

The Yerkes-Dodson Law

How anxiety affects performance.



SOURCE ROBERT M. YERKES AND JOHN D. DODSON

© HBR.ORG

Stress management

- Imposter syndrome
- BUT, remember, audience is your friend!

Stress management

“The audience is your friend. They want you to give a good talk. This is because most people are kind, and also because a good talk is in their own interests.

They want to spend the next 20 or 30 or 60 minutes being informed, challenged, amused, and so on—and hope very much you will succeed at doing this.

If they feel like you are working towards that end, that you want this too and are trying your best, they will forgive your slip-ups and cheer on your successes.”

<https://smallpotatoes.paulbloom.net/p/how-to-give-a-better-than-average>

Stress management

- Sometimes admitting that you are stressed at the beginning of your presentation can make other people more sympathetic and they will try to help you
- You can joke about your nervousity
- Credit people in the room

Stress management

- You are most important to...you!
- Spotlight effect
- “when you find yourself mortified or overly worried about the impression you'll make, remember that other people simply don't pay as much attention to you as you think they do”

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/are-we-born-racist/201206/the-spotlight-effect>

Stress management

- But there are more practical things you can do..
- Be prepared – train at home and be confident you know what you want to say
- Sleep enough, avoid caffeine
- Wear comfortable cloths
- Be early at the presentation spot, familiarize yourself with technology
- Before presentation – breathing exercises, visualizations

English

Science is trans-national, it's ok if your English is not perfect (but your science should be!)

Tips:

- Simple language is good and preferable over jargon
- What if I can't recall a particular word?
- Czenglish – (way how, Spanish village, sympathetic)
- Filler words (some, like, you know)

Time management

- Try it at home – it will be slower than you think!
- But be careful in powerpoint on the auto-slide function
- No one ever complained about presentation ending before allocated time
- What if I get a time warning?

Presentation visual

Software

- Many out there – we “recommend” PowerPoint (sometimes required)
- We have license, a lot of advice online
- Pretty simple, actually
- But may be disciplinary specific!
- Show how to record

General advice

- Slides are for audience, not you (you have notes – how to use them?)
- For each illustration, think why it is there (support or distract?)
- Each illustration should be legible – especially graphs and text
- Key points rather than full sentences (“PowerPoint karaoke”)
- “Less is more”

Specific advice

- Where to get illustrations? Be aware of copyright! (Picture banks, AI, Clipart)
- When explaining graphs, describe Y and X axes – focus on key graphs
- Be mindful of accessibility – color contrasts, font size

Structure

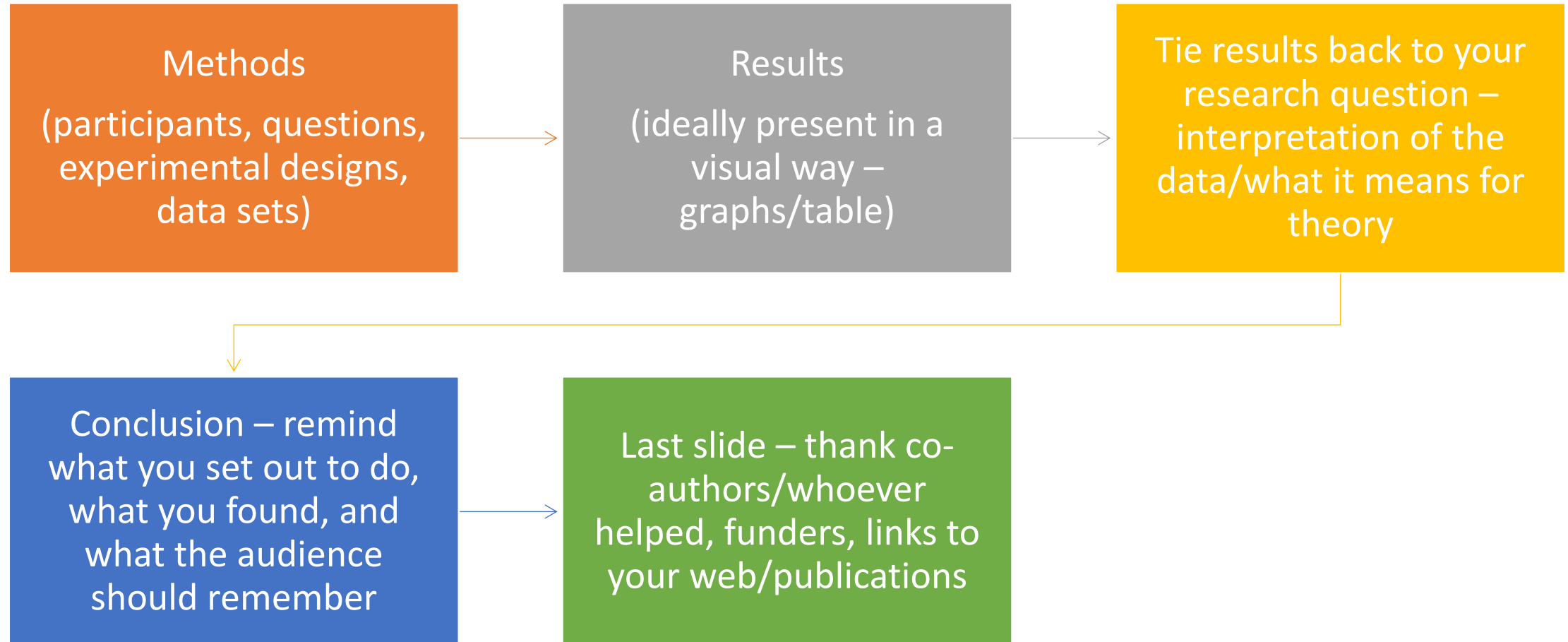
- “Tell them what you’re going to tell them. Tell them. Tell them what you’ve told them.”

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2015/02/20/how-to-win-at-academic-presentations/>

Structure I



Structure II



Handling discussions

- You can prepare answers to expected questions
- Not understanding question: “I am not sure I follow, could you please re-state your question?”
- Not knowing what to answer: “I hadn’t thought about that, that’s really useful. Could we perhaps discuss this during the coffee break?”
- More of a comment than a question
- Offensive question/criticism – “I believe that this is orthogonal to our discussion here and would be happy to discuss more over coffee”
- Sometimes nobody asks

Chairing sessions

- Introduce each speaker – look up their websites, or at least their affiliation and title of the talk in the book of abstracts
- Check time, give 5 min warnings and when someone is overtime, perhaps passive aggressive
- Give people time to think about questions
- Prefer underrepresented groups (JM research)
- Have a question prepared in case there are no questions

Elevator pitch

- 30-60 secs
- Who you are, what you do, and what you want to do
- share your expertise and credentials quickly and effectively
- Should be shaped based on whom you talk and what you may want
- Be positive (about things you want to do)
- Practice, practice, practice