Tips for Speaking

- PRACTICE! Get some of your friends to listen to your talk, and and have them offer you feedback. Listen carefully to what they say, and try to apply it to your delivery.
- Be neat: check your grammar, spelling, and legibility.
- Avoid overcrowding a slide. Use one or more slides for each key concept. Be sure that the audience can follow the flow of the talk across the slide.
- Be brief: shorten your ideas to phrases or keywords.
- Never cover your slides. If you need suspense or want to dynamically add a second line to a graph, use an overlay or a completely new slide.
- Use a large font. No text on your slide should be smaller than 16 point font, and titles should be twice that large. 24 point is a good size for most text. *Make sure that any graph labels adhere to this rule as well.*
- Use color to highlight important concepts. Avoid using too many colors or too much color and thereby distracting the audience from the content of the slide.
- Illustrate key ideas with figures and graphs. Avoid large tables of data, as the audience can not easily read a table.
- Use a 0 intercept for the y-axis of all linear graphs (*i.e.*, the x-axis should fall at $y = 0$).
- Try not to put more than two or three lines in a graph. Do your best to weed out unimportant details from your graphs.
- Make eye contact with your listeners. Don't stare at the ground, the slides, the screen, or off into infinity.
- Skip minor points when you're running short on time. If possible, give the high-level point for each slide, but avoid going into detail. If really pressed, skip to your summary, give your conclusions, and end the talk.
- Avoid standing in front of the screen. Move to the side after placing a slide, and return only when you're ready for a new one.
- Be aware of your nervous habits (e.g., pacing, playing with a pen) and try consciously to avoid them.
- Pause after important points, allowing the audience to fully grasp each idea before moving on to the next. Beware of speaking too quickly.
- Speak loudly and clearly.
- Avoid constantly uttering filler words such as "uh," "um," "you know," "so," "basically," "essentially," "actually," and "like." If you can't remember what to say next, take a deep breath and compose a complete sentence.
- Try to make your slides flow in consistent directions, and try to place figures and text in the same relative locations when possible.
- Provide a common framework for the audience by placing the title and border of each slide in the same place. If you use one slide per idea, you can express the ideas at the bottom of each slide.
- PRACTICE SOME MORE!