(Opinionated) Common Issues with Slides – David Fouhey, EECS 542 – University of Michigan

Presenting to an audience is not natural and a skill and giving good presentations is hard. I've listed a set of common issues with presentations on papers. When you're done with your presentation, make sure you can sincerely say no to all of these (ones marked with a * are computer vision specific)

[ ] **Too small font.** Anything smaller than 24 point in Powerpoint is probably a bad idea: nobody can read it and it encourages you to write too much text on slides. As a rule of thumb: *If you don't think your font size is potentially too big, then your font is probably too small.*

[ ] **Too small diagrams.** Keep in mind that: most people can't see too well. As a rule of thumb: *If you don't think your diagram is too big, then your diagram is probably too small.*

[ ] **Pixelated diagrams.** If you screencap a diagram, do it at high, high resolution. On many unix systems you can install pdfimages to get all the images in a pdf. *Do not save diagrams as jpgs*; use a png or pdf.

[ ] **Walls of text / too few visual explanations.** Some text gives redundancy, but all-text slides are almost always bad. Text is a recent addition to your brain; your visual system is built on old parts of your brain.

[ ] **Limited story/narrative.** People *love* stories and researchers are people. A great presentation needs a story: there must be an overarching narrative with a point and each slide must follow logically. Until you master storytelling, tell simple stories – *Cat in the Hat*, not *Game of Thrones*.

[ ] **Distracting visuals.** Things shouldn't fly around. Each time the layout changes, it's like you entered a new room and forgot what you were going to do. When you introduce a diagram in parts, build it in place.

[ ] ***Slides that need a pointer.**** Using a pointer is an admission the slide is bad. Nobody can see the Google slides pointer; a physical pointer shows your hand shake (if the audience can see it). Use an arrow or a box.

[ ] **Unexplained things.** If it appears, it should be explained. This is true about figures, text, numbers, etc. It is better to show less and show it well. People who are really seen as smart are often great explainers, who can find the essence of the idea and communicate it well and cleanly.

[ ] ***Unexplained math.**** This is an especially crucial case. Briefly walk through each equation.

[ ] ***Unnecessary outline.**** Opening with "1. Introduction / 2. Related Work / …" signals that your talk will be bad, and people will start doing their taxes instead of listening to you.

[ ] **Stuff doesn't line up / constantly changing format**. Make it look good. Make things line up – use the alignment buttons in Powerpoint; don't eyeball it. Pick 3 text sizes total and stick with them. Pick what **bold**, *italics*, and underline mean and stick with them.

[ ] **Over-time.** Going over time is one of the worst sins in presentations. Practice your presentation, including talking to an empty room. No more than 1 slide per minute. Anymore and you will regret it!

[ ] **Monotony.** Modulate your voice. If you don't, people will get bored. *Treat a presentation like acting –* pretend you're telling a story or pause deliberately at various points and ask questions.