

Communication in Computer Science

Wrap-up

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Key points of this seminar (1/2)

- form and content
- definitions
- questions
- titles
- critique
- related work
- quotes
- acknowledgments

On clarity of thought

Question: What's E.T. short for?

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Form matters.

Poor form hints at muddled thinking.

Form and content

If it **looks** bad,
then it **is** probably bad.

Content and form

There is **what you meant**,
and there is **what you say / write**.

Form and content

There is **what you said / wrote**,
and there is **what is understood**.

Definitions

Can you define / explain what you are doing?

- Can you do it at all?
- Can you do it so that it is understandable?

Questions

- Don't rush answering as if at an exam: the question might be open.
- Repeat the question because most of the time, the questioner didn't say exactly what he meant.
- Before answering a question, show you understand it.
(If you can't repeat it, you don't understand it.)

Q & A session

- Have transcribers.
- Be a transcriber for others.

Titles of scientific papers

Titles have structure:

- Identify this structure.
- Compose your own title accordingly.

Peer reviews

- They are an offering.
- Show you understand the paper you reviewed.
- Show you appreciated your review:
your reviewer will start from there.

Phil Wadler: “It is a mistake to see depth
where there is merely obscurity.”

Related work

- Provides shoulders on which you stand, not feet on which you walk.
- Says whether you did your homework.

“Related work should be celebrated.”

– Simon Peyton Jones

Quotes

- Only if they motivate, support, and/or propel your message.
- Need to be personal to you, not second hand.

Acknowledgments

- The only part of your dissertation that is about the messenger.
- Written as the gravitational forces of your dissertation writing are receding slowly
 -

Key points of this seminar (2/2)

- you and your PhD advisor
- your elevator pitch
- your talk
- your paper
- killing your darlings

You and your PhD advisor

- Probably got you your PhD grant.
- Has esteem for you at the beginning.
- Will have respect for you at the end.
- Will write letters of reference.

“Mentors have a way of seeing more of our faults than we would like. It’s the only way we grow.”

– Princess Amidala

Your elevator pitch

A mean to expand your scientific network.

- Can you deliver the essential in 1/2mn?
- Can you keep it fresh?

What do you make of someone else's pitch?

Your talk

- Planning it.
- Targeting and delivering it.
- Handling its aftermath.

Your paper

- Planning it.
- Composing it.
- Trying to get it published.
- Getting it published.
- Handling its aftermath.

Killing your darlings

“Write the story,
take out all the good lines,
and see if it still works.”

– Ernest Hemingway

Common points of all the exercises

- To understand something.
- To do / achieve something.
- Goal: Joseph Williams's **clarity and grace**.

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- To understand something.
- To do / achieve something.
- Goal: Joseph Williams's **clarity and grace**.

In the following final exercise,
let's try to reach **the converse**,
for vaccine value.

Examples (from “Planning your paper”)

- “The Ethernet nowadays permeates each and every single aspect of our daily lives today, to say nothing of tomorrow.”
- “Let β be an homeotonic dispersion isofactor in an α -stable wireless stochastic wifi network, without loss of tomographic generality.”
- “There is a general consensus that it has become cosmically important to be provided more privacy in our day-to-day social networks.”

The problem with these opening sentences

- mindless (“the Ethernet” instead of “the Internet”)
- repetitive (“nowadays”, “daily”, “today”)
- bloated (“each and every single aspect”,
“There is a general consensus that”)
- insignificant (“to say nothing of tomorrow”)
- redundant (“wireless”, “wifi”)
- obscure (“homeotonic”, “tomographic”)
- pretentious (“cosmically important”)

Exercise

In the same playful spirit, write either of

- an anti-title
- an anti-abstract
- an anti-beginning of talk
- an anti-beginning of a review

in another area than that of your PhD studies.

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To transcend something
you first need to understand it really well.