# Job Talks

The following tips and suggestions are helpful for “job talks” often requested during campus visits. The tips are primarily oriented toward a talk about research, but many are also applicable to teaching demonstrations.

## Tips

* Make sure you know what is expected of you. Do not be afraid to seek clarification – you cannot do well at this task until you know what “doing well” entails.
* Know and stick to your schedule.
* Know your audience.
* Anticipate the types of questions you might be asked.
  + A live rehearsal with colleagues can help with this.
* This is not a dissertation defense. In fact is not any kind of “defense” of your work. It is a *demonstration* of your qualifications.
  + Never, ever argue or become defensive with an audience member
* Practice your talk. Then, practice it again.
* Remember the importance of posture, eye contact, and use of space.
* Know your talk so well that you can adjust for time on-the-fly. This is especially important because cuts to content should come from the middle of the talk. Never cut from the end of the talk.
  + Why? The beginning of the talk should be a summation where non-specialists can understand the relevance of your work.
* Aim for *everyone* in attendance to learn something.

## Details, details

* Who is the audience and how many? What is the general make-up of the audience? For example, will it be the general student body, administrators and faculty, or faculty and graduate students from the department?
* What is the time allotted? How much time is given at the end for questions and answers?
* What are the physical arrangements - an auditorium, a lounge or a classroom? Can the location be changed if the arrangements sound terrible?
* What time of day will your talk be scheduled? Will you have some time before to collect your thoughts?
* Can the department reproduce handouts from originals you will send or must you bring along your own?
* You should know your audiovisual needs for the talk and be able to ask for them so that arrangements can be made well in advance, or know what substitutes can be made to accommodate these.
* Will you be teaching a class (or more than one!)? What levels are the students? What texts are being used? What are the sizes of the classes?

## Guiding questions for composing a job talk

* What problem have I worked on?
* Why would anyone work on this problem?
* What is significant about what I have done?
* How has my work made progress on the problem?

## Dealing with a mixed audience

Sources: “Academic Job Search,” Stanford Career Development Center, Stanford University; *Graduate Connections Newsletter* (February 2011), University of Nebraska-Lincoln: 4-7.

The following is a suggested model for a 45-minute research “job talk.”

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| Content | Time (in minutes) | Target Audience | Level of Detail / Purpose |
| Background | 15 | Everyone | Your parents should understand it |
| Your approach | 10 | People in related fields | Show you know the field |
| Your results | 10 | People in your field | Show that you are an expert |
| Summary | 10 | Everyone | Relate your results to the big picture |