
How to give a BAD TALK?

Speaker: Pao-Ann Hsiung

Adapted from David A. Patterson's
"How to give a bad talk?", UC Berkeley, 1983.

Ten Commandments

- Ten commandments
 - (with annotations gleaned from Patterson's talk by Mark D. Hill):



Commandment I

- **Thou shalt not be neat**

Why **waste research time** preparing slides?

Ignore **spelling, grammar** and **legibility**.

Who cares what 50 people think?



Commandment II

- **Thou shalt not waste space**

Transparencies are **expensive**.

If you can save five slides in each of four talks per year, you save \$7.00/year!

10 slides and **100 slides** in Microsoft Powerpoint file normally differs by a LARGE size (**100K???**)!

Commandment III

- **Thou shalt not covet brevity**

Do you want to continue the **stereotype** that **engineers can't write**?

Always use **complete sentences**, never just key words.

If possible, use **whole paragraphs** and read every word.

Commandment IV

- **Thou shalt cover thy **naked slides****
You need the **suspense!**
Overlays are **too flashy.**



Commandment V

- **Thou shalt not write large**
Be **humble** – use a small font.
Important people sit in front.
Who cares about the **riff-raff**?
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Commandment VI

- **Thou shalt not use color**

Flagrant use of color indicates **uncareful research**.

It's also **unfair** to emphasize some words over others.

Commandment VII

- **Thou shalt not illustrate**

Confucius says “*A picture = 10K words,*”
but Dijkstra says “*Pictures are for weak
minds.*”

Who are you going to believe?

Wisdom from the ages or the person who
first counted goto's?

Commandment VIII

- **Thou shalt not make eye contact**
You should **avert eyes** to show **respect**.
Blocking screen can also **add mystery**.



Commandment IX

- **Thou shalt not skip slides in a long talk**

You prepared the slides; people came for your whole talk; so just talk faster.

Skip your summary and conclusions if necessary.

Commandment X

- **Thou shalt not practice**

Why waste research time practicing a talk?
It could take several hours out of your two years of research.

How can you appear spontaneous if you practice?

If you do practice, argue with any suggestions you get and make sure your talk is longer than the time you have to present it.

Most Important?

- Commandment X is most important.
 - *Even if you break the other nine, **this one can save you.***

