

Tips for Presenting a Paper Discussion

You can choose to present in whatever way you like, although, presenting some slides is usually helpful. The following will hopefully help you streamline your discussion outline.

1. Plan on talking for about 20 minutes. Another 20–30 minutes should be used for discussion, which will happen interactively. You won't talk straight for 20 minutes then wait for questions; it will be more of a discussion.
2. When reading a paper, consider the following questions as a rough outline for how to guide your approach to reading a paper and creating your presentation:
 - What did they (the authors) do?
 - Why did they do it? (motivation)
 - What was/were the primary hypothesis(es) or objective(s) of the paper?
 - How did they achieve the objective(s)? (methods)
 - What could they have done better? (limitations, faults)
 - What did they learn? (conclusions)
 - What new questions, if any, did they raise?
3. You need not explain the methods in gory detail, but you want to be familiar enough with them to explain how what the authors did allowed them to reach their conclusions.
4. When writing a paper, authors often tell a story using their figures. You may likewise find it helpful to guide your discussion around the paper's figures. Feel free to "draw" on the figures to help communicate your message.
5. Try to weave together a story. If certain figures don't help you tell that story, don't include them. Essentially, if you have doubts about whether your presentation needs certain material, then you can probably do without it.
6. Echoing the above note, make everything you show have a purpose. If you're not going to discuss something or if it's not critical to your discussion, don't show it. You can also put that kind of material on extra slides that you can display if needed.
7. Reduce the word count on your slides as much as is reasonable; i.e., don't use words as a crutch.