

COMP 516

Research Methods in Computer Science

Dominik Wojtczak

**Department of Computer Science
University of Liverpool**

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Lecture 21: Best Presentation Award and Final Tips

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with material from Ullrich Hustadt and Rahul Savani

Best presentation award: Honourable mentions

Ahmad Omar	Viability of Telecommuting in Today's Society
Oliver Owens	Understanding Denial Of Service attacks and the strategies to defend against them successfully
Claire Parker	Protecting Against Cross-Site Scripting Attacks

Best presentation award: The main prize

Paul Owen	The use of internet health information for self-diagnosis: A help or a hindrance?
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Feedback on presentations

- No need for full sentences
- Don't put too much text on a slide
- Timing: some of you spent too much time describing the background
- It was very important to explain your research question
- Use simple direct language
- Often, less is more

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Feedback on bibliographies

- Given a source, **categorize it**: journal, conference paper, book etc.
- Make sure all the bibliographic data is included
- Choose an appropriate style and then ...
- ... make sure bibliographic entries are presented **consistently**
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- Our goals

Clarity, coherence, authority, and readability

- Keep sentences short

- Keep your sentences 15-20 words long on average

- Rule of thumb: only two lines for a sentence

- Use only one idea in a sentence

- Prefer the simple to the complex

- Go for simplicity in writing: simple words and simple ideas

- The KISS principle, Keep It Simple and Straightforward

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Words that sound good without conveying information; they obscure precision.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weasel_word

- salt and pepper words

- beholder words

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Salt and pepper words

Look and feel like technical words, but convey nothing.

Examples: various, a number of, fairly, quite, ...

Sentences that cut these words out become stronger

- Bad: It is quite difficult to find untainted samples.
- Better: It is difficult to find untainted samples.
- Bad: We used various methods to isolate four samples.
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Examples: interestingly, surprisingly, remarkably, clearly

- Bad: False positives were surprisingly low.
- Good: To our surprise, false positives were low.
- Even better: To our surprise, false positives were low (3%).

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Are inserted to avoid making a quantitative characterization.

Make the science feel infirm and unfinished.

Worst offenders: very, extremely

Never use these in technical writing

More examples: several, exceedingly, many, most, few, vast

■ **Bad:** There is a very close match between the two semantics.

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The right frame of mind: 'Less is more'

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- Bad: Termination is guaranteed on any input.
(hides relevant information)
- Good: Termination is guaranteed on any input by a finite state-space.
(includes the relevant information, but misplaces the emphasis)
- Even better: A finite state-space guarantees termination on any input.
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Lexical illusions

Read the following text:

Many readers are not aware that the
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Read that same text again, but with different line breaks:

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Duplicating words is a phenomenon of electronic composition.

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Final tips

- Have a break before you try to polish your essay.
- Read it slowly, and force yourself to think like a reader.
- If English is not your mother tongue, **read it aloud**.
- Finally, give it to someone else to read

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`http://www.csc.liv.ac.uk/~leszek/COMP702/#writing`

- Each slide corresponds to advice from a different member of faculty.

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- include both high-level information (aims of the project etc.) and sufficient technical detail
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- Much better:

start each subsequent presentation with a gentle reminder of what the project is about

- Key skill = **empathy**

being able and willing to consider the perspective and position of the audience members

(who may, e.g., have many presentations to assess)

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- <http://cgi.csc.liv.ac.uk/~pwg/2012-studentships.htm>

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