# Guidelines for Giving an Engaging Research Talk

Your goal is not to walk through your paper word-for-word. It is to spark curiosity, show the "why" behind your work, and make others want to learn more. Here is how to structure a research talk that invites engagement and leaves a lasting impression.

# Start with What Makes Your Research Interesting

* Lead with the hook: Why does your research matter? What does it help us understand? What is unexpected or thought-provoking?
* Give away your findings: Present the key insight or takeaway up front. This builds curiosity about how you arrived there.
* Highlight the novelty: Clarify what makes your approach, dataset, or framing unique.

# Work Backwards to Build Curiosity

* After presenting your main idea, walk your audience through the process that led to your findings.
* Let them experience the logic, choices, and turning points in your research.
* Be strategic: You do not need every detail. Focus on what helps the audience understand your contribution and think with you**.**

# Keep Theory, Background & Methods Ready — But Do Not Lead with Them

* Prepare a few slides that cover theory, background, or methodological details.
* Only use them if directly relevant or if the audience asks.
* This keeps your talk from feeling like a literature review or methods section, which they can always read on their own.

# Prioritize Clarity, Engagement, and Conversation

* Use language that welcomes everyone in the room, not just specialists in your subfield.
* Speak to implications: What does your research offer to others? What collaborations or next steps might it invite?
* Leave space for Q&A and dialogue. The conversation afterward is often where the magic happens.

# Q&A Tips

* Have some conversation topics ready in case the Q&A session is quiet at first. After a lot of listening, the audience may need a jumping-off point to start engaging. You can gently prompt the conversation with questions related to your findings, future directions, or the

audience's experiences and thoughts on the topic. This can help spark meaningful dialogue and encourage participation**.**

# Final Thought

Your job is not to prove how much you know — it is to make others curious enough to want to read your work.

**Example 20-Minute Research Talk Planning Grid**

**Use this grid as a planning tool to outline your talk and keep your audience engaged.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Main Content** | **Why This is Essential OR Exciting** |
| **0–2****min** | **Introduction & Hook with Context & Importance** | Start with a surprising fact or question that makes the audience curious about your research. Explain why your research matters and its real-world relevance. |
| **2–4****min** | **Key Research Question or Hypothesis** | Present the key question or hypothesis that drives your research. This sparks interest by highlighting what is unknown and what your research aims to solve. |
| **4–9****min** | **Key Findings** | Share the most important findings. This is exciting because it is the reveal—what you have discovered or proved. |
| **9–11****min** | **Methodology & Approach** | Briefly explain your approach. The excitement comes from showing why your method is unique or especially effective for the problem at hand. |
| **11–14****min** | **Conclusion & Future Directions** | Summarize the key takeaways from your research and its implications. Highlight how your findings contribute to the field and propose potential next steps or open questions that could guide future research. End by inspiring curiosity about the ongoing relevance and impact of your work. |
| **14–20****min** | **Lead a Q&A Session** | Leave space for questions and engage in dialogue. Prompt the audience with conversation topics if the session is quiet at first. |

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| **14–20 min** |  |  |