

IGNITE-STYLE EXPERTISE SPEECH

So-called “lightning talks” with automatically advancing slides have become a popular format for public speaking in a variety of fields from computer games to architecture to biotechnology. Lightning talks often showcase very new research or very new forms of technology, but they can also be used to educate the public about many different topics.

For this assignment you will present on a topic that showcases a specific area of your expertise. The area of expertise can be related to your academic research area at UCSD or it can be an area of expertise related to an area of study unrelated to your major, an off-campus organization, or a personal interest.

Keep in mind that “expertise” is often considered to be different from “knowledge” or “skill,” because an expert is someone who communicates information to others. In other words you may *know* something because you learned about it through study or you may be able to *do* so expertise represents more than learning information or being able to apply it practically or instrumentally. You don’t need to be a world-renowned scientist or celebrity chef to be an expert, but you do need to have a sense of audience.

Often someone who acknowledges the boundaries of his or her expertise is actually considered to be more trustworthy than a more grandiose speaker. Look at how many of the TED speakers use humor or acknowledge the complexity of their research areas. You also don’t need to be a professional to be an expert. For example, Mehal Shah, who appears in one of our sample Ignite speeches, where he gives a talk about Scrabble strategy, makes his living as a software development engineer not as a champion in competitive board games.

To make your expertise speech effective, it will be necessary to compose it in stages.

In Week 6 you will turn in a rough draft of your expertise speech. This will allow you to get feedback on your writing style from your discussion leader and to explore possible avenues for revision with your peers. Aim to write a draft of 800-1000 words and to provide a general outline of possible slides to accompany your speech.

In Weeks 8 and 9 you will perform your speech in section. You will probably need to cut words to keep pace with the automatically advancing slides. (In PowerPoint, use the “Slide Show” menu to set timing of your 20 slides to 15 seconds each.)

Remember this advice from “Giving Lightning Talks” as well.

One of the best tactics is to make your point as early in the talk as humanly possible. You might need to set up the problem space, explain why you were doing what you were doing before you can explain your point. Fine, but do it quickly. You really shouldn't spend more than a minute explaining the background before you make your first point. If you haven't explained the main point by minute three you're probably up the proverbial creek without the paddle.

In Week 10 we will see the finalists selected from each section who will win a Sixth College Upper-Division Writing award.