

## Introducing a Speaker

Even if you are only introducing a speaker, and not necessarily hosting him/her during the entire stay, your job starts well before the actual introduction. First, meet the speaker and make sure that you are pronouncing his/her name correctly. ASK! Ask twice! Presumably, you will already have his/her c.v. handy, but ask a little more about his/her professional (not personal!) background and current position. Maybe he/she is looking for graduate students, field assistants, technicians, or collaborators, which would be something useful to mention during the introduction.

Several hours before the talk, visit the room (by yourself) to ensure everything works and that there is a replacement light-bulb for the projector. If there is not one, find one! Open the windows if it is too hot, or close them if it is too cold; pull the shades if you think brightness might be disturbing, etc. About 20-30 min before the scheduled start, BEFORE the audience begins to arrive, take him/her to the seminar room and explain how everything works: computers, lights, projectors, pointers, etc. Discuss the optimum light level and any other idiosyncrasies of the room (you have been there before; he/she has not). Ask if anything else is needed (water, soft-drink, a donut/power bar for energy, or a even short nap) and how he/she likes to prepare during the 10 minutes just before the start (mingling as people walk in, or away in a “green room”, trying to relax, or trying to get pumped?).

When introducing a speaker first get the audience’s attention and then get out of the way any announcements related to the seminar series. Refrain from adding any other information just because everyone is conveniently gathered at one place. Then start with the speaker’s name; explain why the speaker is qualified to speak to this audience (qualifications, relevant experience, recognition by others, education, and credentials), continue with the topic, its importance, how the audience will benefit (if possible), and end with the talk title and the speaker’s name, again, spoken clearly and enthusiastically.

Of course, you may add the odd humorous remark, if you have one, depending on how well you know the speaker, and how comfortable you are with humour. PLEASE resist the urge to go into a comedy routine. Humour should be there simply to help the audience wake up and relax a little, not to show off. Your goal is to help the speaker shine, not to show off how funny you are.

As usual, you should speak loudly and clearly, facing the audience, the last row of the audience, not only the first row or the departmental chairman, and certainly not the blackboard or your shoes (or even the speaker, except for the occasionally glance). When you say the speaker’s name DO NOT turn towards him/her. Say the name, clearly and loudly while facing

the AUDIENCE (the speaker knows his/her name!), THEN turn to the speaker, smile, and move out of the way.

Your introduction should take 2-3 minutes. Do not try to wing it, PREPARE IT

For example, in introducing me, one might say something like: “Good afternoon!! (Loudly and pausing until you have the audience’s attention). It is my distinct pleasure to introduce today’s seminar series speaker: Dr. George A. Lozano. [THEN perhaps turn towards the speaker, pause for effect, turn again and face the audience, and continue]

Dr. Lozano [or George, depending on how well you know me] obtained his B.Sc. at the University of Guelph (At the time he thought he wanted to be a vet and the University of Guelph had a good veterinary programme. However, upon completing that degree he had changed his mind and instead went into behavioural ecology their loss was our gain). He continued his education at the University of Western Ontario with an M.Sc., and then earned his Ph.D. from McGill University.

A funnier version of that goes like this “he earned a B.Sc. from the University of Guelph, was awarded an M.Sc. at the University of Western Ontario, and holds a Ph.D. from McGill University”

He followed that up with post-docs at the University of California, Riverside, Simon Fraser University, and Patuxent Wildlife Research Centre, and teaching posts at Memphis, Ottawa, UNBC, UBC, Korea, and the Cayman Islands. Currently he is a research fellow at the University of Tartu

George has worked with tree swallows, yellow warblers, guppies, chicken and ruffs and on topics such as territoriality, parental care, female mate choice, effects of parasites on behaviour, immunoecology, and lately human evolutionary biology. His theoretical work has been particularly influential in the field, spawning dozens of graduate theses and incorporated into many research programs. Today he will be talking about “...whatever the topic or title happens to be.....”. Please help me welcome Dr. George A. Lozano”. (Applause or not, depending on local tradition).

Your job is not over yet. Take a seat in the front row by the edge. Be ready to assist should anything go wrong during the presentation (like the infamous burnt bulb).

At the end of the presentation, make sure you have at least one question ready, especially if the presentation was not the most exciting ever and there is a possibility that nobody else has any questions. Your question might get the ball rolling.

Keep in mind that at this point you are still only the facilitator, so do not steal the show. Do not take over center stage and start fielding the questions while squeezing the speaker to the sidelines. Stand or remain seated, as you wish, but remain at the edge, facing both the speaker and the rest of the audience, and interject only if necessary, for example if the speaker is only looking at the first few rows and potential questioners at the back are being ignored, or if the questions and answers are not loud enough for everyone to hear (stand up when you do interject, if you were sitting). Otherwise, let the speaker handle everything; he/she knows how to handle an audience during question period.

Make sure the question period does not go on forever. About 10-15 min. should be about right for a typical 45-50 min. talk, but there is no need to actually use the 15 minutes. Like in show business and certainly in comedy, one must end on a high note and leave the audience wanting more. There will be lots of time for more questions afterwards. Watch for the flow of questions, whether people are getting restless and starting to leave, and whether the speaker is getting tired (maybe have a secret signal). Your timing is critical; at some point stand up (if you were sitting) and announce, still from the sidelines, that there will be only one or 2 more questions.

Remain standing while the speaker answers those 2 questions. If the first one is really good or takes a long time to answer, do not allow the second one. Then, take the floor. At this point you may take a more central position, if you wish, with the speaker (share the stage do not squeeze him/her out) or remain at the sidelines. Spend 20-30 seconds thanking the speaker on behalf of the group. When thanking a speaker, mention relevant information (e.g., “the speaker will be around until tomorrow at noon if anyone wants to talk with him/her; the itinerary is at the main office, and right afterwards we are going for dinner/drinks at O’Malley’s”), and if possible, relate a specific reason why the speaker’s presentation was interesting and relevant to the audience. DO NOT make any announcements not related to the speaker or the seminar series. If you had any, and you HAD to mention them, you should have done so at the start, BEFORE introducing the speaker. Be enthusiastic but brief and not too cute; you do not want to steal the show. The audience should leave remembering the speaker and his/her message, not you.

After a brief applause (depending on local tradition), as the audience starts to leave, turn around and personally thank the speaker again, with a hand-shake, and explain what will be happening, if anything (e.g., dinner/drinks – he/she might not know where O’Malley’s is or how to get there!), and, if not yourself, who will be in charge. If that is the case, introduce the speaker to the person in charge. **NOW your job is over, and you have done a great job!**