Advice from Graduate Students

- Slow down!
- Speak up!
- Have backups (USB, email yourself your slides, etc.).
- Practice with an audience.
- Practice in front of people in your research area (experts on your topic).
- Practice in front of people outside your research area.
- Watch good presentations and pay attention to what works.
- Critique the presentations you attend.
- Make sure any visual elements or animations are tasteful and not distracting.
- Minimize the number of words on your slides. You don't want your audience to spend time reading your slides instead of listening to you.
- What you *say* as a part of your presentation should be distinct from what's on your slides. Don't just read your slides aloud.
- Minimize the number of equations in your slides.
- Prepare slides or at least thoughts that respond to potential questions. You can have extra slides after the end of your real slides, that you only jump to if you get those questions.
- Don't run over time (practice helps!).
- If you use the board, make sure your handwriting is legible (practice helps!).
- Practice joke delivery and timing. Make sure you give your audience a chance to laugh.
- Make eye contact.
- Get out from behind the podium.
- Think about your audience. What do they already know? How will you motivate them to listen to you?
- Take your hands out of your pockets.
- Don't play with things, your hair, your clothes, etc. while you speak.
- Don't shift your weight or step back and forth.
- Look out for distracting physical habits (hand gestures). Learn what your verbal tics are, and minimize them if they're distracting (do you say "um", or "like", or "sort of" too much?)
- Have someone listen to you give a talk and watch out for "upspeak" (making your sentences/words sound like questions). It makes you sound unsure.
- Think about what you wear and how you present yourself visually. You don't want your clothes or jewelry to distract your audience, and you want to think about how their perception of you affects your ability to achieve your goals.
- Think about what you will cut out if you're low on time. How will you know you're low on time? You need to set time goals for parts of the talk, and practice well.