

Presenting Yourself to Others

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What are we doing?

- practice writing and speaking an Elevator Talk of your research
- learn common mistakes made when trying to translate research to a general audience

The Audience



- “General Public” = too vague
- Our focus: the 17 year-old
- Methodology vs. Results
- Style: Write as you speak

The Elevator Talk



Imagine that you walk into an elevator.
Someone asks, “What do you do?”
You have 30 - 60 seconds.
Now what?

1. What is the field I work in?
2. What is the research I do?
3. Why is it important?

“I model the diffusion of drugs through the skin, using a method called finite elements. This is to understand better how transdermal drug delivery works and also to help improve their performance.

The complex structure of the skin makes this quite challenging, and I’m looking at the diffusion on both molecular scales to molecular dynamics simulations and also at the macroscopic scale through finite element calculations.”

THIS ELEVATOR
MUST STAY ON THE
1ST FLOOR.
THANK YOU.

GIL SHAPIRO

After the Elevator Screeches to a Halt...

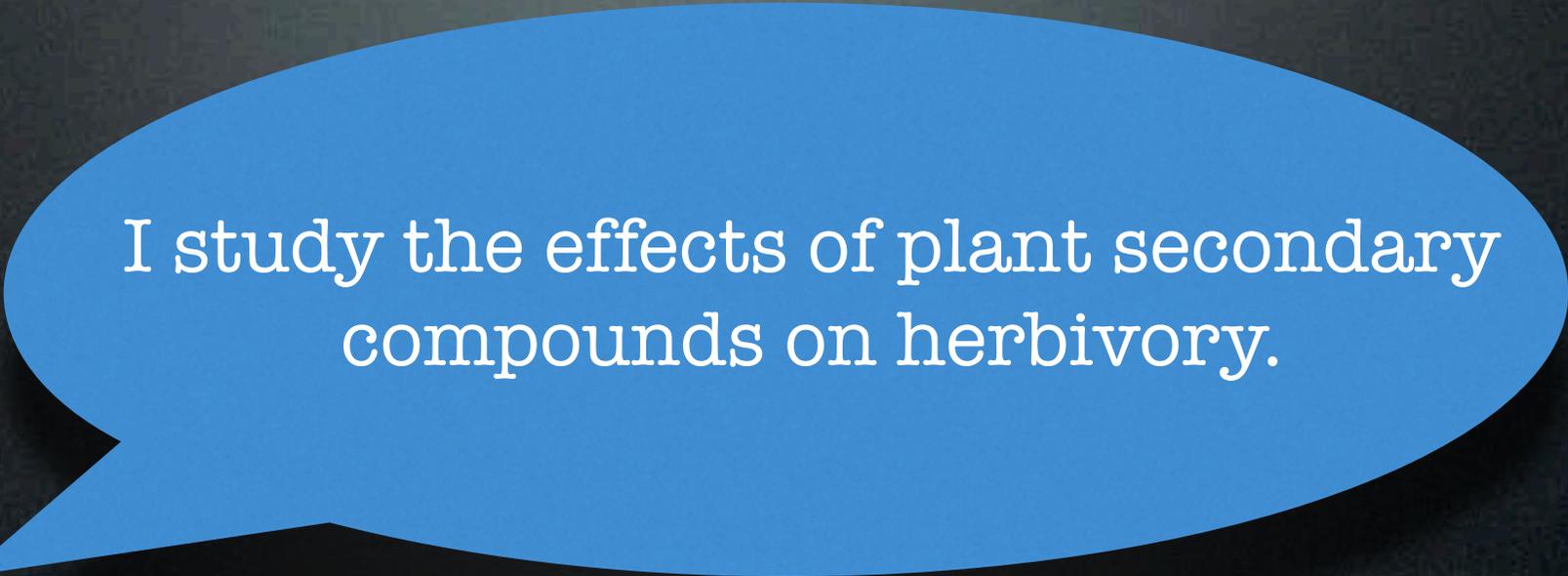
I model the **diffusion** of drugs through the skin, using a method called **finite elements**. This is to understand better how **transdermal** drug delivery works and also to help improve their performance.

How to Fix

- One technical term, max
- Shorter sentences
- Begin with a puzzle, story, or something concrete that a person can connect with
- Test with someone outside of your field



Less is Not (Always) More



I study the effects of plant secondary compounds on herbivory.

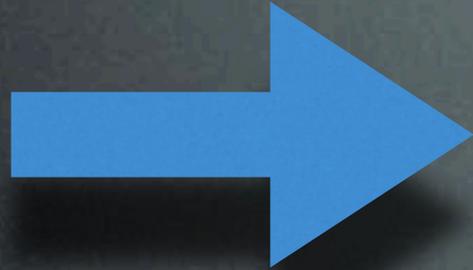
Less is Not (Always) More

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secondary
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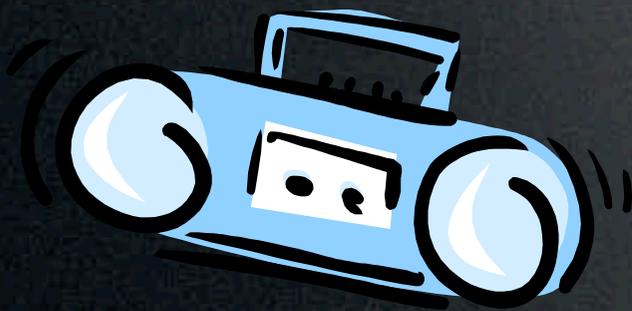


Have you ever wondered
why certain plants taste
really bitter? It's
because they produce
these bitter compounds
to protect their leaves
from being eaten. This
explains why certain
plants are eaten more
than others.

A Word on Analogies



- Start with something concrete, then progress to the abstract



- How do you explain a radio?
- Think internationally: Tinkertoys vs. Legos

Exercise

- Read your paragraph out loud -- or simply attempt an elevator talk aloud -- to your partner or group
- The listener should try to repeat what the first person said. No notes, no questions.
- Does it make sense? What is clear, what is not?
- The first person should try to better explain what is not clear
- Repeat with next person

Let Your Verbs

Do the Talking

The child kicked the ball.

The ball was kicked by the child.

Focus on an action. Attempt I vs. we.

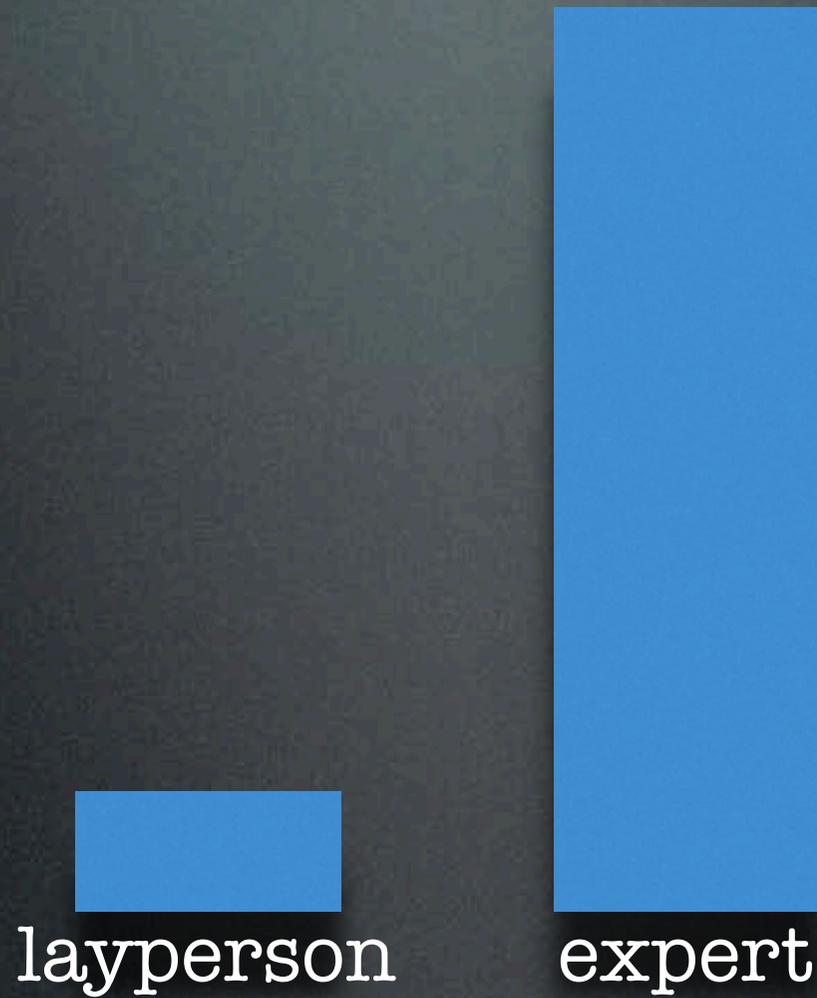
Advice

- Don't take the time literally
- Think of a radio program
- It's a bridge for further discussion
- Avoid starting with "My research is..."

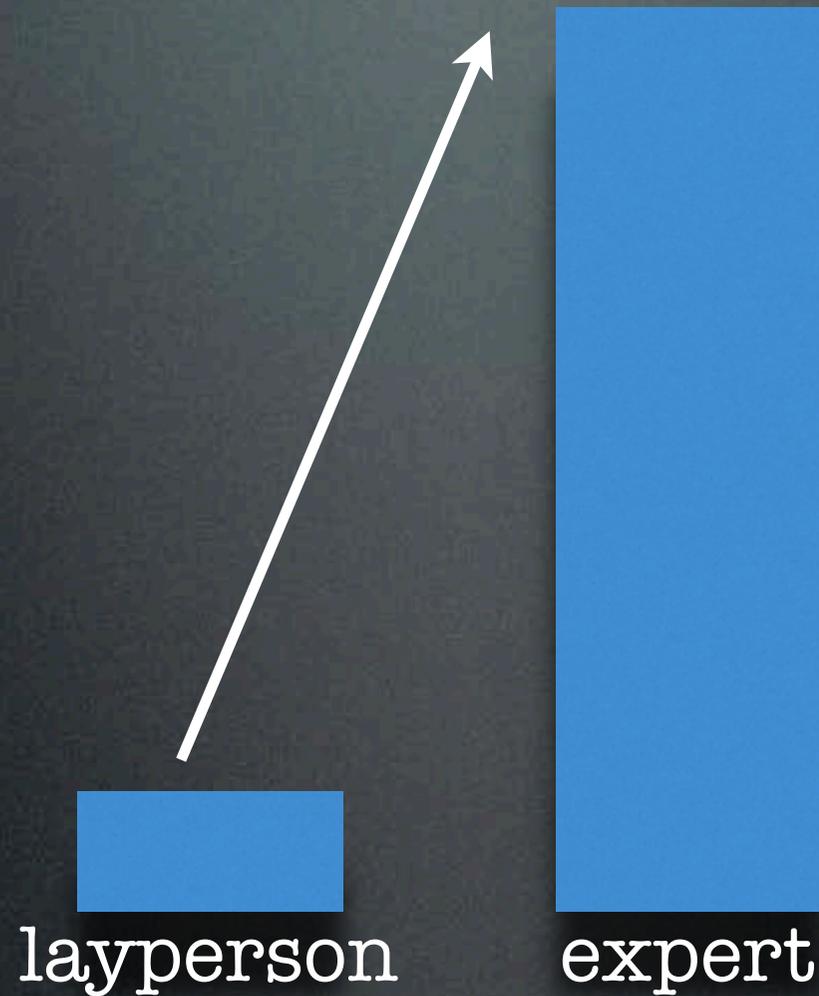
Imagine what you could do with an airplane if you didn't have to have a pilot in it, but you still could make it behave as if there were a thinking person inside. You could send the airplane on dangerous missions, it could fly for a very long time, and the human constraints will not impose on the design of the plane (for example, g-loads).

How this could be done is what I try to figure out.

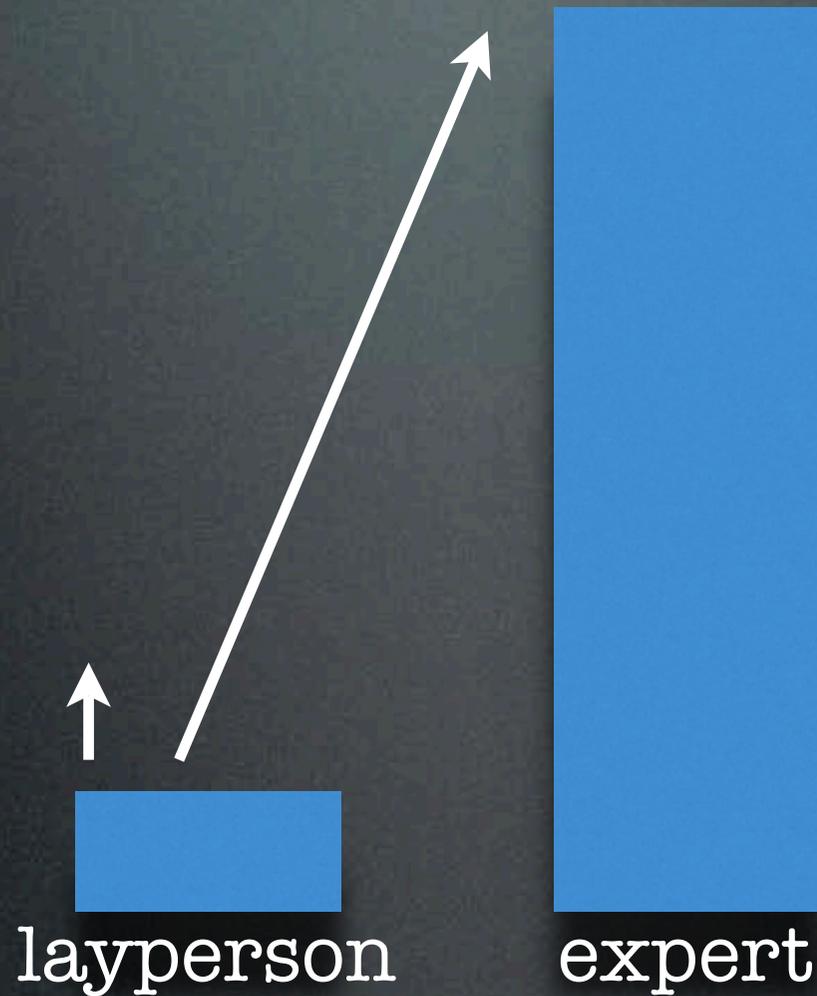
Progress, not Perfection



Progress, not Perfection



Progress, not Perfection



Build on Progress

- Audience should learn something new
- Prioritize, prioritize!
- Patience, patience!
- Goal: “Tell me more” (about your research)

How is this a problem?



How is this a problem?



Obstacles

“Peers might read this (or hear me)”

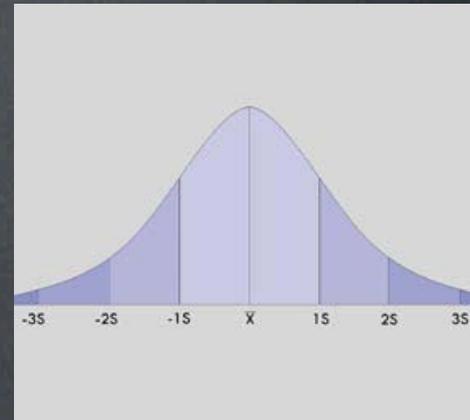
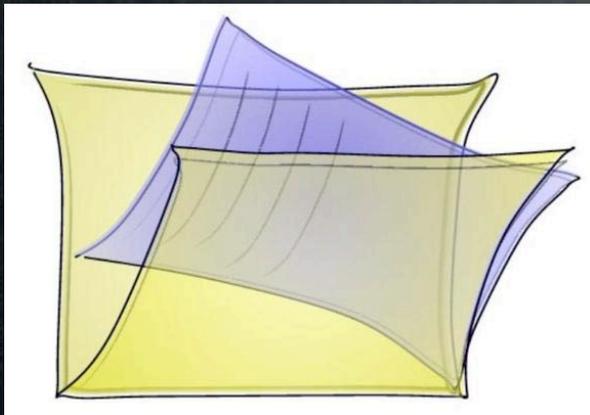
“I don’t need to speak with anyone else”

“This is easy to do”

“dumbing down”

Ideas

- The Folder of Evidence
- Patience: remember Progress!
- Start with those who are excited



Uses

- Grant proposals
- Job talks
- Connecting to the media
- Other outreach ideas