A Quick and Easy Guideline to a Successful 10-Minute Talk
Adapted from: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/presentation-mistakes.htm

Having solid skills in giving a 10-minute talk are important. At some point in your professional career, you will need to do this. Below are guidelines to help you maximize this time in the spotlight.

Organization is key when giving a successful 10-minute talk. Time is extremely limited so you need to know exactly what you want to convey and what information is necessary to convey it. The talk should have no more than 10-12 slides - that means only about a minute to talk about each slide. And don’t load more information onto one slide just to have fewer slides.

Start with a clearly defined problem and progress through the talk in a logical manner. State a question/problem (“I was interested in the following question…”). How did you go about answering it? (“This is the strategy I used to answer the question…”). What did you find? (“These are my results…”). What do the findings mean? (“This is how I interpreted the results…”)

Do not linger on the introduction and/or summarize the entire history of the field. You should provide enough information to give a general understanding of why you are asking the question you are asking. The introduction should last no more than 1-2 minutes and consist of 1-2 slides.

Data should be the bulk of your talk. The point of giving the talk is to present your data. Therefore, spend as much time as possible doing so. Do not be afraid to jump right into the data – limiting the use of transition slides allows for a smoother presentation. You do not need to go into extreme details of the methods used unless it is absolutely critical for proper interpretation of the data. If people are curious about how you did something, they will ask. Data should be limited to 3-6 slides and last 6-8 minutes.

Show only relevant data - anything more will just confuse the audience. Help the audience by ‘walking through’ each table or figure with a pointer. If you say “look only at this column” then take the other columns out!

The conclusion is the part of the talk in which you interpret your results in light of the question posed at the beginning of the talk. An effective conclusion can fit onto 1 slide and be stated in 1-2 minutes.

Practice! Practice! Practice! This cannot be stressed enough. Go through the talk at least 2-3 times before actually giving it. You will be surprised how long it will be the first time around. Practice out loud, and edit the talk until you can do it in less than 10 minutes. This will give you breathing room for questions and any technical difficulties. Practice with friends, other students, or even your advisor—they will have invaluable feedback.

Six Steps to Successful Power Point Presentations
1. Have one main point per slide. Do not show a collection of assorted data.
2. Make slides simple, clear, and easy to understand. If the audience is trying to figure out what the slide is showing, then they are not paying attention to what you are saying.
3. *Slides should be free of nonessential information*- other data will only distract and confuse. Do not show a table with comprehensive data; just show the important stuff. Save the rest for the paper!

4. *Avoid abusing Power Point animation*. A successful talk should rely on data, not Power Point prowess. More often than not, animation is distracting and sometimes even condescending.

5. *Use Arial font*. No gradient backgrounds (light backgrounds and dark text always works best). Most people use white background since colors show best (some use white/yellow text on a blue background). Use common sense with visual contrast: no black text on blue background.

6. Finally, the most important piece of advice anyone can give is to *stay within the time allotted!* At best, going over the time limit will cut into the question-and-answer period (a vital part of the talk). At worst, you will be yanked from the podium before finishing. That is both humiliating and nullifies all of the hard work invested in the talk.