Speaking at Tech Events for Beginners

Julie Pagano
<Slide About Hosting Group>
Why are you here?
Learn how to speak at tech events!
Learn how to speak at tech events!
I am here to help!
My Credentials

• Speaking for ~2 years
• Conference organizer for 2 years
• Frequent conference attendee
• Active in local tech community
• Organize speaker support group
TECH CONF SPEAKER SUPPORT OF AWESOMENESS
This workshop is collaborative
This workshop is collaborative
This workshop will be a beginner-friendly place where you can feel safe working on and practicing a talk, even if you have never done it before.
Ground Rules
(Code of Conduct)

<insert your group's code of conduct or anti-harassment policy>

<insert link to full code/policy online>
Working Agreement
(First 3 from the Hacker School User's Manual)

No feigning surprise
No well-actually’s
No backseat-driving
Be constructive & helpful
Constructive Feedback
Constructive Feedback

1. What you did

2. The impact

3. How you can improve
Constructive Feedback

1. You spoke very fast.

2. People might miss something.

3. You should try slowing down and add some pauses.
Destructive Feedback

Your proposal sucks.

Your slides are ugly.

Your talk is bad and you should feel bad.
Destructive Feedback

Your proposal sucks.

Your slides are ugly.

Your talk is bad and you should feel bad.
If there is an issue...

• Talk to me

• Email me
  [facilitator’s email]

• Email not me
  [organizer’s email]
Let's get started!
Expectations
Management
for yourself
Suckin’ at something is the first step to being sorta good at something.
for the workshop
This workshop isn’t for general public speaking
This workshop is for speaking at tech events
This workshop isn’t for experienced speakers
This workshop is for beginner speakers
This workshop isn't going to teach you everything
This workshop is going to help you get started
Lightning Talks
Lightning Talks

3 MINS
BRAINSTORMING

WRITE PROPOSAL

OUTLINE TALK

MAKE SLIDES

PRESENT TALK
BRAINSTORMING
WRITE PROPOSAL
OUTLINE TALK
MAKE SLIDES
PRESENT TALK
BRAINSTORMING
WRITE PROPOSAL
OUTLINE TALK
MAKE SLIDES
PRESENT TALK
today's activities are time sensitive
Experience Check!

- Who has spoken at a conference before?
- Who has spoken at a user group or other local tech event before?
Break into groups!

1  2  3  4  5
Assign a timekeeper

1 2 3 4 5
Introductions

- Introduce yourself
- Name
- Why you are you here?
- Use the worksheet, as needed
- 1 minute each
Tech Setup

- We will use Google Drive to share & collaborate
- <insert shared drive link>
- Let me know if you can't use Google Drive.
- You will use whatever presentation software you prefer.
- Let me know if it's not one of the ones listed on the worksheet.

solo

5 mins
Brainstorming
I'm not an expert.
what you think you need to know
what you actually need to know
You are an expert on your experiences
Experts aren’t always the best for the job
expert
Brainstorming

• Things you work on a lot (e.g. what you do at work, subject you study at school).

• Things you work on sometimes (e.g. side project, open source work).

• Topics you are excited about.

• Topics you wish more people talked about.

• Other ideas.
Brainstorming

- Technical topics
- People topics
- Hybrid topics
Brainstorming

• Fill out the brainstorming worksheet on your own.
Brainstorming

- Discuss with your group.
- Get feedback on your ideas.
- Help generate new ideas.
- Give each other constructive feedback.
- ~5 minutes each.

20 mins
Select Topic

- Select an idea!
- You will use this the rest of the day.
- Remember that you're giving a 3 minute talk.
WRITE PROPOSAL
Elements of a Proposal
Elements of a Proposal
Elements of a Proposal

TITLE

DESCRIPTION
Proposals get your talk selected for an event.
Call
Call For P
Call For Proposals
Proposals get people to attend the event you are speaking at.
Speaking at Tech Events for Beginners
(Workshop)

Speaking at Tech Events for Beginners

Want to start speaking at tech events, but not sure where to start? Then this is the workshop for you! Code & Supply needs new speakers, and we want to help you become one of them.

This hands-on, collaborative workshop will take you through the entire process of speaking at a tech event including:

• Brainstorming ideas
• Writing a proposal
• Outlining a talk
• Developing good slides
• Presenting your talk

We will practice this process with very short presentations called “lightning talks” that are five minutes or less.

This workshop is being facilitated by Julie Pagano. She runs a tech speaker support group that is friendly to beginner speakers and recently gave a talk about supporting new tech speakers.
Proposals get people to attend your talk over someone else's.
Saturday 5:10 p.m.–5:40 p.m.

**It's Dangerous to Go Alone: Battling the Invisible Monsters in Tech**

Julie Pagano

**Audience level:** Novice  
**Category:** Community

**Description**

It can be hard to focus on your love of coding when you are regularly battling invisible issues like insecurity, anxiety, and lack of confidence. This talk will identify invisible issues programmers struggle with, talk about their impact, discuss personal experiences dealing with them, and share some tools useful in fighting back.

**Abstract**

We talk a lot about the things people can do to get the most out of being a software developer. We talk about testing, design patterns, contributing to open source, and many other topics. All of these things are important, but for some of us there’s an important piece of the puzzle being overlooked. It can be hard to focus on your love of coding when you are regularly battling invisible issues like insecurity, anxiety, and lack of confidence. These issues create hurdles that get in the way no matter how much you improve as a software engineer.

It is important that we talk about these issues because an unwillingness to admit they’re real can make it worse. It makes them feel like the adult version of the monsters under the bed. It’s scary and isolating because those monsters are threatening to show their darkness; they say ‘I am your fear in a monster under the bed. If you do not acknowledge me, I will consume you. If you acknowledge me and do not fight me, I will consume you. If you fight me, I will help you fight through them so that you can return to the safety of your bed.’
It's Dangerous to Go Alone: Battling the Invisible Monsters in Tech

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Audience level: Novice
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Description

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Abstract

We talk a lot about the things people can do to get the most out of being a software developer. We talk about testing, design patterns, contributing to open source, and many other topics. All of these things are important, but for some of us there's an important piece of the puzzle being overlooked. It can be hard to focus on your love of coding when you are regularly battling invisible issues like insecurity, anxiety, and lack of confidence. These issues create hurdles that get in the way no matter how much you improve as a software engineer.

It is important that we talk about these issues because an unwillingness to admit they're real can make it worse. It makes them feel like the adult version of the monsters under the bed. It’s scary and isolating because those monsters aren't talking to you; they're in your head. It’s a constant struggle, and it can be the thing that stops you from reaching your potential.
Elements of a Proposal

TITLE

DESCRIPTION
descriptive
“Speaking at tech events for beginners”
cute and descriptive
“I Am a Front-end Web Developer (and so can you!)”
cute

(these ones better have a good description)
“It's Dangerous to Go Alone: Battling the Invisible Monsters in Tech”
descriptive is usually better
Elements of a Proposal

TITLE

DESCRIPTION
Help the reader answer some questions:

- What is the talk about?
- Why is it important?
- What will people get out of it?
- Who is the target audience?
Ask for Help
Write Proposal

• Time to start typing. Use your name in your files, so they are easy to identify.

• Write a first draft of your proposal.

• Descriptive title.

• Description answers the questions.

• Keep it short — it's only a 3 min talk.
Review Proposal

• Share your proposals in the group folder
• Read through each other’s proposals.
• Share constructive feedback.
• ~5 minutes each.
Finish Proposal

- Finalize your proposal based on feedback.
Expectations Management for CFPs
rejection is normal
rejection is normal
(even though it still hurts)
Speaking Slots
Your Awesome Proposal
Speaking Slots
CFP Submissions
CFP Selection
Other Variables

• How do talks fit together?
• Multiple submissions with similar topics?
• What talks were given last year?
• A million other little things
Outline

- Introduction
- 2-4 high level topics or points
- Conclusion
Write Outline

• Outline group folder.
• Make a rough draft of your talk outline.
• Keep in mind you have 3 mins.
• I recommend 2 points (maybe 3) because of time.
Review Outline

- Read through each other's outlines.
- Share constructive feedback.
- ~5 minutes each.

20 mins

group
Finish Outline

• Finalize your outline based on feedback.
LUNCH!

~35 minutes
MAKE SLIDES
Keep It Simple
Slides are a prop or backdrop
Most good talks cannot be reproduced with just the slides
Typography
Find a few fonts you like
Avoid scripty or cutesy fonts. They're hard to read.
Fonts to avoid :(
comic sans
papyrus
Lobster
Lobster Two
The fonts you pick aren't as important as how you present them.
don’t use tiny text
use big text
use huge text
use
ridiculously
massive text
But
what
about
all
my
bullet
points
Don't.
• At most
• you should have
• a few bullets
• on a slide.
<code> on slides
def merge_sort(m):
    return m if m.length <= 1

    middle = m.length // 2
    left = m[0:middle]
    right = m[middle..-1]

    left = merge_sort(left)
    right = merge_sort(right)
    merge(left, right)

end

def merge(left, right):
    result = []
    until left.empty? || right.empty? do
        if left.first <= right.first
            result << left.shift
        else
            result << right.shift
        end
    end
    result + left + right
end

ary = [7,6,5,9,8,4,3,1,2,0]
p merge_sort(ary)  # => [0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]
def merge_sort(m):
    return m if m.length <= 1

middle = m.length / 2
left = m[0,middle]
right = m[middle..-1]

left = merge_sort(left)
right = merge_sort(right)
merge(left, right)
end
def `merge_sort` (m)
    return m if m.length <= 1

    middle = m.length / 2
    left = m[0,middle]
    right = m[middle..-1]

    left = merge_sort(left)
    right = merge_sort(right)
    merge(left, right)
end
def merge_sort(m):
    # Return if already sorted

    # Split into left and right

    # Sort left and right

    # Merge

end
def merge_sort(m):
    # Return if already sorted
    return m if m.length <= 1

    # Split into left and right
    # Sort left and right

    # Merge
end
def merge_sort(m):
    # Return if already sorted

    # Split into left and right
    middle = m.length / 2
    left = m[0, middle]
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    # Sort left and right

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    end
def merge_sort(m):
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    # Sort left and right
    left = merge_sort(left)
    right = merge_sort(right)

    # Merge

end
def merge_sort(m)
    # Return if already sorted

    # Split into left and right

    # Sort left and right

    # Merge
    merge(left, right)
end
Don't put important content at the bottom
Colors!
High Contrast
Crappy Projectors
Color Blindness
Project Results

- Good
- Bad
Project Results
Supporting Imagery
The Noun Project

Creating, Sharing and Celebrating the World's Visual Language
flickr
Pop Culture
ALL THE MEMES!
such meme
wow

ARE YOU COMING TO BED?

I CAN'T. THIS IS IMPORTANT.
WHAT?

SOMEONE IS WRONG ON THE INTERNET.

NO.
Don't alienate your audience
Content is King
Create Slides

• Make a rough draft of your slides using tool of choice.
• Start with the outline.
• Flesh things out.
• Focus on content first.
• Remember your talk is 3 mins.
Review Slides

- Each person should quickly walk the group through their slides.
- Give constructive feedback.
- ~5 mins each
Finish Slides

• Adjust your slides based on feedback.
PRACTICE TALK
Practice.
Practice.
Practice.
Practice. Practice. Practice.
Timing matters
Playtest your talk
Playtest your talk

June 13 - Playtest
June 25 - Real Talk
Practice Talk

• Practice your talk a few times.

• Time yourself.

• Make a few adjustments, if needed.

• Upload your slides.
PRESENT TALK
I’m afraid of public speaking.
Help me improve!

Please fill out the feedback survey!
Thank you!

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@juliepagano
Additional Resources
General Speaking Skills

• Toastmasters

• Steel City Improv
Blog Posts


• Presentation Skills Considered Harmful by Kathy Sierra - http://seriouspony.com/blog/2013/10/4/presentation-skills-considered-harmful

• http://weareallaweso.me/

• http://cognition.happycog.com/article/so-why-should-i-speak-publicly

• http://writing.jan.io/2013/05/10/how-to-give-the-killer-tech-talk---a-pamphlet.html

• http://blog.pamelafax.org/2013/08/why-do-i-speak-at-conferences.html
Talks About Talking

- Conference Submissions and Presentations by Matthew McCullough
  - Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJz4JJIchaY&feature=youtu.be
  - Slides: https://speakerdeck.com/matthewmccullough/conference-submissions-and-presentations
Presentation Tools

Many beginners may be unsure what to use to create a presentation. Below are some tools I’ve used before. I don’t think there’s a “right” tool. Pick the one that is easy for you to use and meets your needs.

- Keynote (Mac only)
- PowerPoint (Windows and OSX)
- Google Drive Presentation (browser)
- Reveal.js - [http://lab.hakim.se/reveal-js/](http://lab.hakim.se/reveal-js/) (browser)
Imagery Resources

Places to find imagery for your talks:

• The Noun Project - http://thenounproject.com/

• Flickr - https://www.flickr.com/search/?q=test&l=cc&ct=0&mt=all&adv=1

• Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
Example Early Speakers

• Nell Shamrell - Behind the Curtain - Madison Ruby 2012

• Behind the Curtain: Applying lessons learned from years in the Theatre to crafting software applications.

Example Early Speakers

- Stephen Ball - Deliberate Git - Steel City Ruby 2013

- In Deliberate Git I’ll share how to use Git to write detailed commits that craft a cohesive story about the code without giving up a good programming flow.

- https://speakerdeck.com/sdball/deliberate-git

- https://vimeo.com/72762735
My Speaking Timeline

Throughout the talk, I mention that people should start small and can progress over time. I thought it might be interesting to share a timeline of my progression as a speaker over time, but it didn’t fit in the time for the talk. I’m leaving it here in case it interests you.

You can find links to slides and videos from these talks on my site:

http://juliepagano.com/speaking/
My Speaking Timeline

- April 2012 - Lightning talk at work retreat (first talk)
- July 2012 - Lightning talk at PghRb
- August 2012 - Lightning talk at Steel City Ruby
- January 2013 - Speaking support group created
- February 2013 - Lightning talk at PghRb
- June 2013 - Conference speaker at Pittsburgh TechFest (first conference talk)
My Speaking Timeline

- August 2013 - Conference speaker (alternate) at Steel City Ruby
- September 2013 - Conference speaker at Nickel City Ruby
- April 2014 - Conference speaker at PyCon
- June 2014 - Keynote speaker at OSBridge (first keynote)
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