

Lab Briefings

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Lab Briefings: The Basics

- 8 minutes for team to present
- 3 minutes for audience Q&A and feedback
- Briefing should cover
 - Project statement
 - Laboratory Goal and Objective
 - Technical Approach
 - Results
 - Lessons learned

Lab briefings require you to present concisely and to coordinate your presentation with your team members. Some initial planning and brainstorming will help you extract the main points of your work so that the information you present is focused, clear, and easy to follow.

Lab Briefings: How to Get There

- Project statement
- Laboratory Goal and Objective
- Technical Approach
- Results
- Lessons learned

Think of these sections as “bins” for information that you can refine and adapt to the needs of your audience.

How to Get There: Project Statement

- What did we do individually? As a team?
- What were the goals of the lab? Did we meet them?
- What did we accomplish beyond the lab's required tasks?

Your project statement should be a focused, concise statement of the objective of the lab and what was accomplished. Ask these questions to generate ideas, then come up with a 1-2 sentence summary of what was accomplished in the lab.

How to Get There: Using Video

- What does our video show?
- What do we want it to show?
- Does every second count?
- Important: make sure you load your video and run it *before* you present

The lab instructions suggest that you show videos of the differential controller working and a video of the robot driving in a square. Is it obvious what your video shows? Your video should be unedited, so that your audience sees the actual workings of your system. Avoid “dead air,” however. Make sure that the video clearly shows what you want the audience to see. Narrate the video for your audience.

How to Get There: Technical Approach

- How did you conduct your investigation?
- How much time did you spend?

When you set priorities for using your time you may not want to include this in your presentation. But be aware that your audience will have questions.

How to Get There: Results

- What do your plots tell you?
 - Make sure your graphic has an informative title.
- Which plots are the most important?
 - Include the plots that convey specific results
 - Get rid of extraneous information
- How do your plots show the results of the lab?
 - Explain your results in light of the lab's goals
 - Label units of measurement

Review the goals of the lab as you prepare your plots. What does the data show? What did you learn from the data? Are there anomalies you need to explain? Remember that you may not be able to include everything in your presentation, but be prepared to answer questions from your audience.

Your graphics should be understandable on their own:

- Use an informative title
- Label units of measurement
- Get rid of information that doesn't address your technical goals
- Make sure the graphics display well on the laptop you use to present your slides
- Number your slides so that the audience easily refer to them if there are questions

How to Get There: Lessons Learned

- What patterns emerged in your brainstorming?
- What tasks surprised you?
- What did you discover that was interesting, intriguing, or confusing?

Sometimes procedures that seem simple take much longer than expected. Sometimes our mistakes can “light us up” to do/learn more.

Lab Briefings: Consider Your Audience

- Who, specifically, comprises my audience?
- What do I want them to take away from the presentation?
- What do I want to gain from having made the presentation?

A big portion of your preparation involves knowing your lab's goals and results. As you prepare, try to switch your focus and consider your audience members. Putting aside all of the technical information and supporting data, what is the most important thing for your audience to take away? Can you name one thing that you gained from having done this lab?

Lab Briefings: When It's Live

- Avoid verbal tics
 - Plan what you'll say
 - Breathe
- Use time well
 - Budget time with teammates
 - How long is 2 minutes, really?
- Present as a team
 - Agree on transitions
 - Rehearse & improvise

Spend time talking with each other informally, as well as practicing. Make sure your talk “makes sense” to all team members. Practice points in order and out of order: if someone goes off script or forgets, what will you do?

Before you enter the room for the presentation:

- Load your video on the presentation computer and run it *at least once*
- Figure out who will stand where
- Use your laptop to show slides (we won't have a projector); position the laptop so the audience can see it
- Print out your notes or use a different laptop for your confidence monitor

Time limits are strict: 8 minutes total presentation time + 3 minutes for questions and feedback

Lab briefings: an audience perspective

- Do the speakers engage with the audience?
- Do we understand why we are being shown videos and other graphics?
- Did all team members contribute?
- Does the team seem to work well?
- Does the team answer our questions and listen to our concerns?

Practice in the room before you speak. Bring friends to help critique. Rehearse where you will stand, how loudly you'll need to speak, where you will direct the audience's attention. Try going through the presentation a few different ways so that you feel natural and conversant with the information. Does your presentation tell one seamless story? Do you need to make transitions between speakers?