

Notes on how to review a paper at a CASPR or IHUT meeting

At our meetings, we commonly have a team member present an important paper from the literature of our field. Here are some guidelines for doing this.

- (1) We're looking for a 20-minute oral presentation with a 1-page handout.
- (2) Control the length of your presentation. Practice it in advance.
- (3) Make your handout informative – not just a list of things you are going to mention. Put information on it.
- (4) Your goal is to present the important ideas, not “go over” the whole paper paragraph by paragraph. It's OK – even desirable – to skip sections. Do not go through long lists item by item. Organize the information for us – do not just reproduce the pre-existing organization.
- (5) You must understand the paper you are presenting, of course. This may require considerable work, reading it and also reading enough background literature that you understand where it's coming from.
- (6) Think hierarchically:
 - a. What (in ONE sentence) is the MAIN idea of the whole paper?
 - b. What (in half a dozen sentences) are the main ideas of the sections, or the steps in the logical argument?
- (7) Your presentation should generally be in simpler language than the paper you are reviewing. (That's what teaching is all about.) Your job is to understand it and present the ideas to us as clearly and simply as possible. Generally, putting something into simpler language is a stiff test of whether you understand it.
- (8) *Do not* simply pass along an author's words without understanding them.
- (9) Think critically. Do not assume that a published author is all-wise or 100% correct. You *will* notice things that the author didn't notice; you may find gaps in logic, or even outright mistakes. Criticism and questioning are welcome.