Giving a Journal Club Talk

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What’s a journal club?

Journal club talks are different than other scientific talks; their primary purpose is not to present your results, but rather to:

- Learn about different fields
- Keep informed about new developments
- Foster discussion and interaction
- Help students (you!) develop presentation and critical analysis skills
Have a look back at lecture on “Reading a Paper” as a guide to getting started.

Remember that you will need to read all of the paper to give a coherent report on what it’s about, probably several times.

Read the article critically but carefully. It will take time and effort to sensibly conclude something in the paper is questionable.

Follow the references for background material.

Seek out local experts or me (≠ expert) if you have questions.

Talk with your team members! Trying to explain concepts to each other is an excellent way to test your understanding.

Basic Outline

• What is new about the paper? Where does it fit in the context of prior work? Why is it important? (Introduction: Background & Motivation)
• What methods were used? (Methods)
• What were the primary results? (Results)
• What do the authors think these results mean? (Conclusions)
• What is your assessment of the paper? (Critique)
Consider: Questions to answer

Who, What, How

Provide detail
What did the authors do?
What did they measure or calculate?
What technique did they use and what is new about it?
What is their result?

Consider: Questions to answer

Why?

“30,000 ft view”: The Big Picture

What is the research about?
Why is it interesting?
What previous work does it follow from?
Consider: Questions to answer

What does it mean?
Has something new been learned? What?
Is it consistent with previous results and/or expectations?
What conclusions do the authors draw?
Does the work point to further research?

Advice

Track down the author’s web site
Feel free to “borrow” slides, images, etc.
But make sure you acknowledge...
Google terms or phrases you don’t understand
Remember that you are not an expert either—it is not your work. Don’t worry if you don’t get all the details. Just try to get the essential points.

Don’t put things on your slides that you don’t understand!