

## 82 THINGS (NOT) TO DO OR SAY FOR YOUR DISSERTATION DEFENSE

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- 1) "Ladies and Gentlemen, please rise for the singing of our National Anthem..."
- 2) Charge 25 cents a cup for coffee.
- 3) Describe parts of your thesis using interpretive dance.
- 4) "Musical accompaniment provided by..."
- 5) Stage your own death/suicide.
- 6) Lead the spectators in a Wave.
- 7) Have a sing-a-long.
- 8) "You call THAT a question? How the hell did they make you a professor?"
- 9) "Ladies and Gentlemen, as I dim the lights, please hold hands and concentrate..."
- 10) Have bodyguards outside the room to "discourage" certain professors from sitting in.
- 11) Puppet show.
- 12) Sell T-shirts to recoup the cost of copying, binding, etc.
- 13) Imitate Groucho Marx.
- 14) "And it would have worked if it weren't for those meddling kids..."
- 15) Charge a cover and check for ID.
- 16) Smoke machines, dramatic lighting, pyrotechnics...
- 17) Use a Super Soaker to point at people.
- 18) Surreptitiously fill the room with laughing gas.
- 19) Door prizes and a raffle.
- 20) "Please phrase your question in the form of an answer..."
- 21) Present your entire talk in iambic pentameter.
- 22) Whine piteously, beg, cry...
- 23) Switch halfway through your talk to Pig Latin, or Finnish Pig Latin.
- 24) Use the Emperor's New Slides ("only fools can't see the writing...")
- 25) Pass the collection basket.
- 26) Hire the Goodyear Blimp to circle the building.
- 27) Defense by proxy.
- 28) "There will be a short quiz after my presentation..."
- 29) Halftime show.
- 30) "OK - which one of you farted?"
- 31) Post signs: "Due to a computer error at the Registrar's Office, the original room is not available, and the defense has been relocated to (Made-up non-existent room number)"
- 32) Hang a piñata over the table and have a strolling mariachi band.
- 33) Make each professor remove an item of clothing for each question he asks.
- 34) Rent a billboard on the highway proclaiming "Thanks for passing me Professors X,Y, and Z" - BEFORE your defense happens.
- 35) Have a make-your-own-sundae table during the defense.
- 36) Make committee members wear silly hats.
- 37) Simulate your experiment with a virtual reality system for the spectators.
- 38) Throw a masquerade defense, complete with bobbing for apples
- 39) Use a Greek Chorus to highlight important points.
- 40) "I'm sorry Professor Smith, I didn't say 'SIMON SAYS any questions?'. You're out."
- 41) Dress in top hat and tails.
- 42) Hold a pre-defense pep rally, complete with cheerleaders, pep band, and a bonfire.
- 43) Detonate a small nuclear device in the room. Or threaten to.
- 44) Show slides of your last vacation.
- 45) Put your overheads on a film strip and designate a professor to be in charge of turning the strip when the tape recording beeps.
- 46) Go around the room making a different person read the pre-written text for each picture or slide.

- 47) "OK, everybody - heads down on the desk until you show me you can behave."
- 48) Call your advisor "sweetie".
- 49) Have everyone pose for a group photo.
- 50) Laugh maniacally.
- 51) Talk with your mouth full.
- 52) Answer every question with a question.
- 53) Moon everyone in the room after you are done.
- 54) "Laugh, will you? Well, they laughed at Galileo, they laughed at Einstein..."
- 55) Hand out 3-D glasses.
- 56) Give your entire speech in a "Marvin Martian" accent.
- 57) "I don't know - I didn't write this."
- 58) Before your defense, build trapdoors underneath all the seats.
- 59) Swing in through the window, yelling a la Tarzan, or swoop in with a cape and tights, Superman style.
- 60) Lock the department head and his secretary out of the defense room. And the coffee lounge, the department office, the copy room, and the mail room. Heck, lock them out of the building.
- 61) Roll credits at the end. Include a "key grip", and a "best boy".
- 62) "I could answer that, but then I'd have to kill you"
- 63) Get a friend to ask the first question. Draw a blank-loaded gun and "shoot" him. Have him make a great scene of dying (fake blood helps). Turn to the stunned audience and ask "any other wise-ass remarks?"
- 64) "Well, I saw it on the internet, so I figured it might be a good idea..."
- 65) Wear clown makeup, a clown wig, clown shoes, and a clown nose.
- 66) Play Dissertation Mad Libs.
- 67) Try to use normal printed paper on the overhead projector.
- 68) Do your entire defense singing opera style.
- 69) Have your parents attend and fawn over you. ("We always knew he/she was such an intelligent child")
- 70) Flash "APPLAUSE" and "LAUGHTER" signs.
- 71) Have cheerleaders. ("Gimme an 'A'!!")
- 72) Bring a sportscaster in to do color commentary.
- 73) Introduce the "Eyewitness Dissertation Team". Near the end of your talk, cut to Jim with sports and Alison with the weather.
- 74) Live radio and TV coverage.
- 75) Hang a sign that says "Thank you for not asking questions."
- 76) Bring a microphone. Point it at the questioner and conduct the defense talk-show style.
- 77) Use a Teleprompter
- 78) Refuse to answer questions unless they phrase the question as a limerick.
- 79) Start giving your presentation 15 minutes early.
- 80) Use any past or present Saturday Night Live catchphrase. Not.
- 81) Stand on the table.
- 82) "You think this defense was bad? Let me read this list to show you what I COULD have done..."