

Guidelines for designing scientific presentation slides

(adapted from Alley & Neeley, 2005* and Garr Reynolds Presentation Design Tips, 2013[^])

The two most basic rules for creating presentation slides are to design with *simplicity* and to design with *intent*. Always keep in mind that your slides should supplement your topic, and should never distract the audience by being too cluttered or colorful. No presentation should ever have elements that are superfluous or redundant.

Style

Use a *sentence headline* to begin every slide (excluding the title slide) that states the slide's main assertion; *left justify* the headline in the upper left corner.

For the body, *visually present* the supporting evidence in the form of images, graphs, figures, or flowcharts.

Avoid low-quality (stretched-out, blurry, or grainy photographs) and cheesy (ClipArt!) graphics.

Avoid excessive use of animations and slide transitions.

Typography

Use a typeface that is *readable* when projected (e.g., Arial, Helvetica, Cambria)

Use ~28 point type for the headline and 18-24 point type for body text.

Use a *uniform typeface* for the entire presentation.

* Alley, M. and Neeley, K. A. (2005) A case for sentence headlines and visual evidence. *Technical Communication*, 52, 417-426.

[^] Reynolds, G. (2013) *Top ten slide tips*. Retrieved July 16, 2014, from <http://www.garreynolds.com/preso-tips/design/>

Layout

Be generous with *white space*! To avoid cluttering of text, allow for some white space between blocks of text and graphic elements as opposed to white space along the slide's borders.

Reduce blocks of text to *one or two lines*.

Reduce list lengths to *three or four items*.

Avoid squeezing too much data (or *chart junk*) on to a single slide.

Organization

For the title slide, include an image or graphic that is related to the talk's *subject*.

Limit the number of slides so you can spend at least 1 minute narrating each slide.

End with the *conclusion slide* (not with a blank or 'filler' slide) as it summarizes the key points of the talk.

This list of guidelines is certainly not finite nor absolute, and some of these guidelines may not work for everyone. However, always keep in mind that the audience's clear understanding of your message is the top priority.

One more important rule of design is to always analyze the *context and situation* of your presentation, and adjust your designs accordingly.