Designing and Revising PowerPoint Presentations

Key Questions

- What is the “bottom line” or main idea that this presentation is trying to get across?
- Do you need a visual reaching that goal? (How complex or lengthy is the presentation? Would a handout be better?)
- Who is the audience? What message does the audience most want to know?
- Does the presentation deliver the “bottom line” to the audience?

Individual Slides: Format + Content

- Does the heading follow the research-based recommendation of including a complete sentence at the top of the slide?
  » Do you have a good reason to deviate from this practice? (For example, if you changed “Methods” slides to whole sentences, you might interfere with audience expectations)
  » Can you shorten the heading? (Cut unnecessary prepositions and strengthen verbs)
- Does the slide help us process visual and verbal information at the same time?
  » Do the text and visual work together to contribute to the overall message of the slide?
  » Does the slide use document design features (positioning, color, typeface, highlighting, arrows, repetition) to clarify the relationships among information on the screen?
  » Can any text be eliminated or replaced with a visual? (e.g., photo, screenshot, figure)
  » Does any “noise” appear on the slide that might interfere with the main message? (e.g., “chart junk,” too many tick marks, distracting animations, clip art, too many words or numbers, complicated visual(s), too many different colors)
  » Are animations on this slide ultimately functional or distracting? (For example, functional animations emphasize a point, transition between points, or build a list)

Slideshow as a Whole: Form + Content

- How do all of the slides fit together organizationally? (use slide sorter or storyboarding to visualize)
  » Are the individual slides connected by an argument, narrative, or some other structure?
  » Would a slide outlining the main points help the audience comprehend the “bottom line”?
  » Would a concluding slide summarizing main points reinforce the “bottom line” message?

Presentation Delivery

- Is there a script that accompanies the presentation?
  » Does the script reinforce the main points on the slide, or just distract the audience?
- How is the presenter’s body language?
  » Do they make eye contact with the audience?
  » Do they speak at the right volume and pause enough? (If you pause, you can often cut out “filler” words such as “um”)
  » Do they seem confident and familiar with the content? Are they able to answer your Q’s?
Research has shown that PowerPoint slides with **COMPLETE SENTENCE HEADINGS AND VISUAL EVIDENCE** (diagrams/figures/charts) more effectively increase recall than traditional slides with phrase headings and bulleted lists.¹

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Q: What is the chemical representation for nuclear fusion?

Nuclear Fusion

Deuterium (H plus a neutron)

55% correct

Tritium (H plus 2 neutrons)

Q: How abundant is iron in the earth's crust?

Iron

- An abundant metal, makes up 5.6% of earth's crust
- Properties:
  - shaped, sharpened, welded
  - strong, durable
- Accounts for >95% of metals used
- First ores discovered in 1844 in Michigan's Upper Peninsula
- Soon found other ores in upper Wisconsin and Minnesota

Iron Ore Distribution

59% correct

Nuclear fusion combines deuterium and tritium to form helium and energy

Deuterium: H + 1 neutron

78% correct

Tritium: H + 2 neutrons

Iron ores make up 5.6% of the earth's crust and account for 95% of the metals used

Can be shaped, sharpened, and welded

77% correct

Is strong and durable

FIG 7

Transformation leading to improvement of test scores (55% to 78%).

FIG 8

Transformation leading to improvement of test scores (59% to 77%).

FIG 2. Revision of slides from title and bulleted list to whole sentence heading and visual evidence.