

Communicating Science— How to Give Better Talks



Celia M. Elliott
Department of Physics
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

© 2018 Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois
All rights Reserved



Today, we'll look at some ways to enhance the communications value of your slides and some tips to avoid humiliation.

The standard software for most scientific talks is MS PowerPoint. Like it or hate it, that's what nearly all AV systems at conferences are set up to use. If you are determined to be an iconoclast and use some other presentation software, fine, but be prepared for last-minute technical difficulties that will annoy your colleagues and cut into your presentation time. If you demand to use something other than PPT, take a PDF version of your talk that you can use when the computer in the seminar room can't run *Photoshop* or *LibreOffice*.

Alexei Kaptarev's *Death by Powerpoint* is an Internet classic not to be missed:
<http://www.slideshare.net/thecroaker/death-by-powerpoint/>

Disclaimer 1: The opinions expressed in this talk are solely the author's and are not necessarily shared or endorsed by the Department of Physics, the College of Engineering, or the University of Illinois. But they should be.

Disclaimer 2: I am not a scientist—I'm a science writer and technical editor—and all of my experience has been in physics and nuclear engineering. I think these suggestions are broadly applicable to communicating in the physical sciences and engineering, but your mileage may differ.

**One thing I've learned in physics,
you have to satisfy both the theorists
and the experimentalists...**



...so this talk has two parts:

- I. a theory of what makes good talks**
- II. the nuts and bolts of making
effective, meaningful slides**

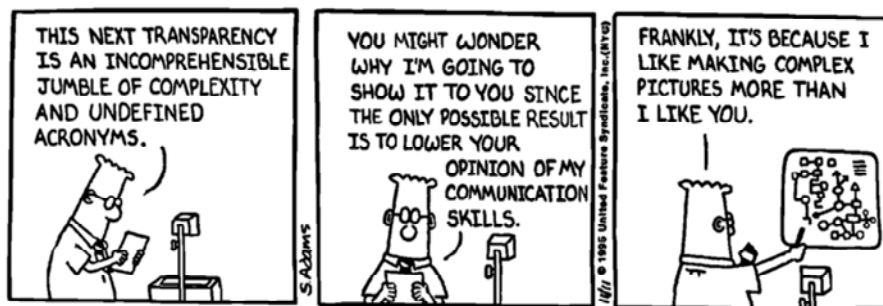


A hotly debated issue among speakers is whether or not to use an outline slide. For short talks, they're unnecessary, but for longer (\approx 1-hr) talks, an outline is helpful to let the audience know what's coming.

First, the theory...



Before you turn on PowerPoint



Determine your goal(s) for the talk

Consider your audience

**Before you start the first slide,
decide what your ultimate goal is**

Disseminate a new result

Provide an overview of the topic

Reinterpret existing results

Propose a new experiment

Explain a new concept or method

Stimulate new collaborations

Educate the audience on a specific concept

Get a job

**Overarching goal: Tell a memorable story &
teach the audience something interesting**



A common error that beginning researchers make is that they emphasize what they found most interesting, or what they spent the most time doing, and not what the **audience wants to know**.

Know thy audience! It's absolutely critical to producing a successful talk or paper (or anything else).

For many of the talks you will give or papers you will write as a scientist or engineer, nobody listening or reading will know as much about the subject as you do. You don't have to dumb-down your messages, but you do have to draw your listener in and explain things in terms s/he can understand.

So the first rule of effective scientific communications is understand your audience. Who are they? What do they want to know? What do they already understand? What is going to confuse them? What will engage their interest?

Good advice from Elmore Leonard: "Try to leave out the part that readers tend to skip." (Elmore Leonard's Rules for Writers, 24 Feb 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/feb/24/elmore-leonard-rules-for-writers>)

Another consideration as you analyze your audience: think about cross-cultural implications. The use of humor, references to popular culture, and sports analogies are very culture-specific. Will your audience understand your reference to the 2018 Super Bowl or an American sitcom?

**Close your eyes and picture in your
mind your favorite childhood storybook**



Think about what made it so attractive

What made a good story when you were 5?

Words you understood

Interesting, engaging pictures

A simple, direct storyline

Clear connections and transitions

A satisfying ending

**Ideas that expanded your horizons and
captured your imagination**

An enthusiastic narrator

Guess what!

Nothing has really changed since then.

Think about what made a good story when you were 5 years old. The same elements that attracted you as a child still work—interesting pictures, words you understand, simple, direct storyline, a logical structure, analogy, an enthusiastic narrator, something that stimulates your imagination and makes you think.

If the first rule of giving a successful talk is to know your audience, the second rule is ***tell a good story.***

Your biggest constraint: How much material can you cover in the time allotted for your talk?

Elliott equation:

$$p = \frac{t}{8}, \quad [1]$$

The amount of time you're allotted determines how much material you can cover in your talk.

It takes about 6 to 8 minutes to adequately introduce, explain, and summarize one major idea or point in a scientific talk.

N.B. Equation [1] is also about as complicated as anything you'd want to show in a talk. Think about how long it took you to process and understand the point that was being made in this slide, using an equation. Do you really want to tackle

$$\left. \frac{\partial f}{\partial t} \right|_{\text{coll}} = \iint g(\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{p}', \mathbf{q}) [f(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p} + \mathbf{q}, t) f(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p}' - \mathbf{q}, t) - f(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p}, t) f(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p}', t)] d\mathbf{p}' d\mathbf{q} ?$$

Your biggest constraint: How much material can you cover in the time allotted for your talk?

Elliott equation:

$$p = \frac{t}{8}, \quad [1]$$

The number of main points you can make in an oral presentation

Your biggest constraint: How much material can you cover in the time allotted for your talk?

Elliott equation:

The time allotted in minutes

$$p = \frac{t}{8}, \quad [1]$$

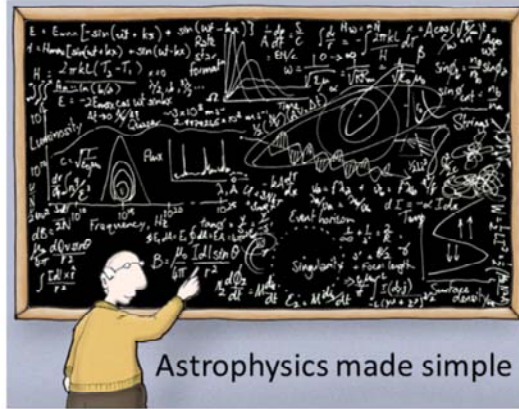

TIP: It takes at least 6 to 8 min to adequately introduce, explain, illustrate, give examples of, and summarize a major point in an oral talk

Eschew amateur mistakes

**Covering too much
material**

**Including excruciating
detail**

**Compensating by
skipping slides or
talking faster**



Don't try to tell "the whole story"*



*Your objective is to get the audience interested enough to remember your name and read the paper

Distill your talk to a few key points (q.v. Eq. 1)

Present only enough data to

Illustrate your main points

Support your conclusions

Demonstrate the originality of your work

A talk is not your paper projected onto the wall.


Your job as a speaker is to thoughtfully select the important points in the paper and convey them in a way that is meaningful and memorable for the audience.

How many slides should you prepare?

$$S = \frac{t}{2}, \quad [2]$$

The amount of time you're allotted also determines the number of slides you should prepare. In general, allow at least 2 min per slide, and more time for slides that present equations, plots, complex figures, or tabular data.

How many slides should you prepare?


$$S = \frac{t}{2},$$

[2]

The number of slides you can reasonably
show in an oral presentation

How many slides should you prepare?

$$S = \frac{t}{2}, \quad [2]$$

The time allotted in minutes

How many slides should you prepare?

$$S = \frac{t}{2}, \quad [2]$$

**A good “rule of thumb” is to allow about
2 minutes per slide**

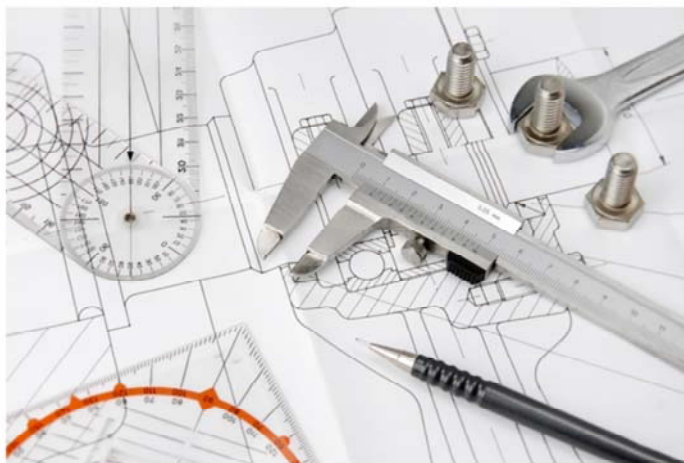
**Allow more time for equations, complex
plots, complicated figures, tabular data**

**Tip: You cannot show 44 slides in a 15-min
presentation, *no matter how fast you talk***


Here endeth the theory




**Now, putting together effective,
memorable slides...**

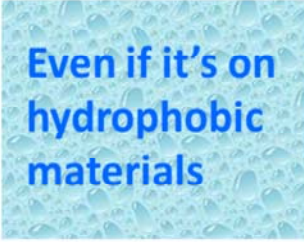



Don't use photographic or "fill" backgrounds

 **Yes, it's Illini Orange, but nobody can read the text**

They're distracting
They make your text too hard to read
They get boring after the first two or three

 **Even if your talk is about koalas**

 **Even if it's on hydrophobic materials**

 **Even if you think it looks really cool**

Just don't do it!


Don't use photographic or textured backgrounds—just don't do it. They're distracting, they get boring after you've seen the first one, and the superimposed text is often impossible to read on them.

Don't use one of the PPT templates
They take up too much real estate with meaningless graphics
They force you to devote 25% of the slide to the "title"
They trivialize your message by promoting style over substance
Many are just butt-ugly



The image shows three examples of PPT templates, each with a red circle highlighting a specific feature. The first template has a large green background with a bar chart and a title box at the top. The second template has a purple background with a bar chart and a title box at the top. The third template has a blue background with a bar chart and a title box at the top. The red circles highlight the title boxes and the bar charts, indicating that these elements take up too much real estate and are unnecessary.

You want the audience to be thinking about what you're saying and looking at the evidence you're presenting, not swooning (or snickering) over your artistic taste.

No  **unless you're presenting an actual list**

Status of Projects

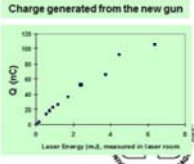
HEP at ANL

Theory

- Connection with UC through Carlos Wagner (app) has brought two thesis students to
- New Assistant level theorist (Tim T)
- 7 international workshops organized
- Broad participation by students
- Active work on organizing international workshops held at
- Physics highlights

Accelerator Physics

- Breakthroughs in laser wakefield acceleration, electron beam configurations, and major developments of the
- Achievement of acceleration to 100 MeV in 1m
- Facility required a major upgrade of their facility, especially the electron gun and laser system
- High power tests of externally powered dielectric loaded waveguides in collaboration with Naval Research Laboratory
- 2 new physics processes affecting electron acceleration discovered (and published)



Charge generated from the new gun

Q (pC)

Laser Energy (mJ, measured in Laser Room)

PROPERTY OF ORNL

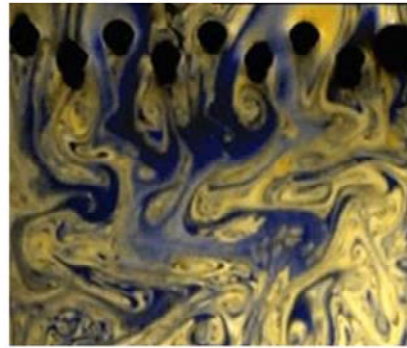
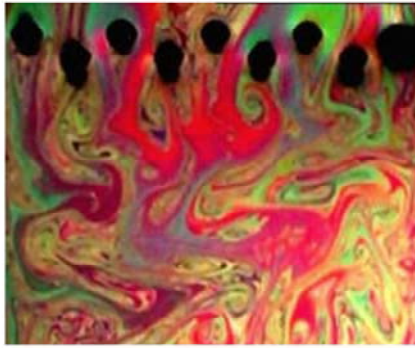
24

I recommend turning off the “bullet list” format, which is the default in PPT. Presenting ideas in bulleted lists implies hierarchies or relationships that may not, in fact, exist.

“Lists can communicate only three logical relationships: sequence (first to last in time), priority (least to most important, or vice versa), or simple membership in a set (these items relate to one another in some way, but the nature of that relationship remains unstated). A list can show only one of those relationships at a time.” Gordon Shaw, Robert Brown, Philip Bromiley, “Strategic Stories: How 3M is Rewriting Business Planning,” *Harvard Business Review* 76, 42–44 (1998).

Turning off the bullets also gives you more slide real estate to work with.

Don't use red or green to convey important information*



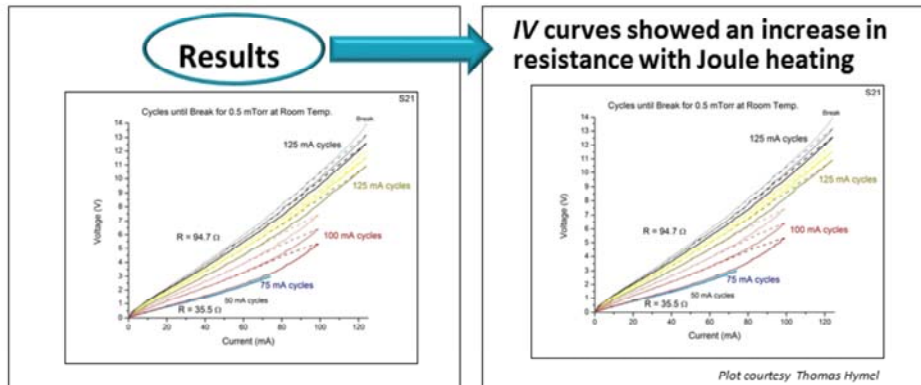
Development of turbulence in a soap film as its surface is raked
by a wire comb. *Courtesy Nigel D. Goldenfeld*

***Between 8 and 12 percent of white males are red-green
colorblind—who's your audience?**

If you use color to convey information, make sure that information transfers as you intended it and is accessible to everyone in your audience.

Another good resource is <http://www.colourblindawareness.org/colour-blindness/>.

DO replace the content-less PPT “title” with a meaningful motivating statement



Tip 1: Write the statement as a sentence and left-justify it

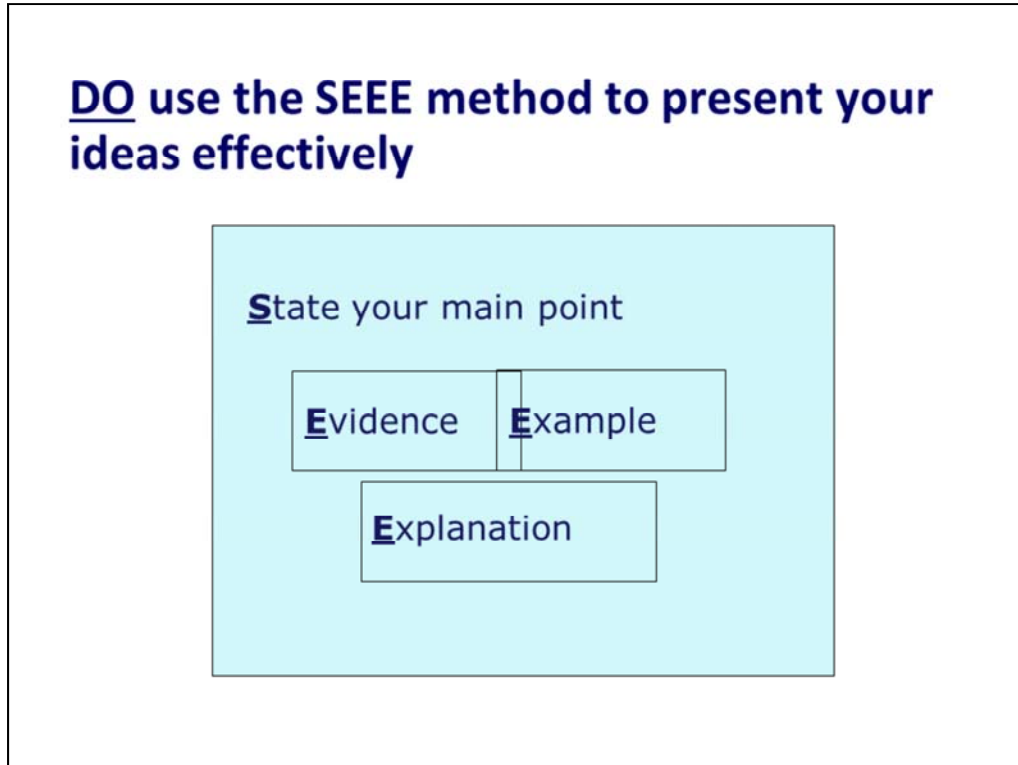
Tip 2: Turn off the “auto-correct” feature in PPT that reduces the font size if you exceed the number of characters MS thinks you should have on a line

The default for PowerPoint slide “titles” is centered. Change it to left-justified.

Turn off the automatic “fitting” functions in PPT to avoid having PPT reduce your font size if you exceed the number of characters MS thinks you should have on a line.

In PPT 2010, right click inside the text box, then select “Format Shape” from the drop-down menu. In the dialogue box, click on “Text Box” on the left navbar, and then turn on the “Do not Autofit” radio button in the “Autofit” section.

In PPT 2013, from the “File” menu, click on the “Options” link, and then select “Proofing” from the menu. In the dialogue box, click on the “Autocorrect Options” button. When that dialogue box opens, uncheck the “Autofit Title” and “Autofit Body Text” boxes.



Put a motivating statement at the top of your slide that summarizes the point of the slide.

People pay attention when something changes in their environment—for instance, when a slide changes. Take advantage of that sharpened attention to articulate your message in an immediately identifiable, memorable way.

Use the rest of the slide to explain, give evidence for, or provide examples of the idea presented in the motivating statement at the top of the slide.

DO use the SEEE method to present your ideas effectively

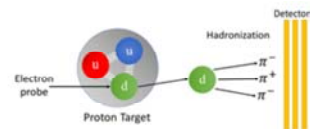
State your main point

Evidence

Ex

Explanatio

Study of nucleon spin structure requires high-timing-resolution detector



$$p = \gamma m_0 \beta c$$

$$\sigma (m^2) = 2E_e^2 \frac{\sigma_T}{T}$$

High timing resolution \rightarrow high mass resolution
 \rightarrow better particle identification

Goal: To develop a cost effective multigap resistive plate chamber (MRPC) having high timing resolution.

Courtesy Jun Hui See Toh

Use the rest of the slide to explain, give evidence for, or provide examples of the idea presented in the motivating statement at the top of the slide.

The slide contains the following text:

- Use a simple sans serif font
- Calibri, Helvetica, Arial, Tahoma, Corbel, Verdana
- Serif fonts don't project as well because the narrow parts tend to fade
- Eschew weird fonts (in *italics**)
- Use one main font. At most, one contrast font for emphasis
- Use one font size. At most, one contrast font for emphasis
- Use mixed upper and lower case for text—**WRITING IN ALL CAPS LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE SHOUTING** (and it's much harder to read—and proofread!)
- *or risk professional ridicule

A large red stamp with the word "REJECTED" is placed diagonally over the middle of the slide.

Do as I say, not as a do. This slide, while typical of an academic lecture to facilitate note-taking, has **w-a-a-a-a-y** too much text on it for a science talk.

Keep text to a minimum—use just enough words to orient the audience to what they are seeing. You want them to be listening to you, not reading a novella off the screen.

“Embed” special fonts in PPT to avoid embarrassing surprises at the conference

your computer

The Strickler–Berg relation opens the door for comparing measured spectral quantities

$$1/\tau_0 = 2.880 \times 10^{-9} n^2 \langle \nu_f^{-3} \rangle_{\Delta \bar{\nu}_a} \int_{\epsilon} (\nu) d \ln \nu$$

Different computer—Voilà! Pencils!

conference computer

The Strickler–Berg relation opens the door for comparing measured spectral quantities

$$\frac{1}{\diamond} = (2.88 \cdot 10^{12}) \cdot (n^2) \cdot [\bullet]^{-1} \cdot \int_{\epsilon} (\bullet) d \bullet$$

Every computer has its own individual “library” of fonts; if PPT cannot find a font when you open your presentation on a different machine, it just arbitrarily substitutes a font that it thinks is “close.” Often, it isn’t...

Choose a neutral background and a high-contrast color for the text

Use a light-colored background with dark text

Use a dark background with light text

This isn't high-enough contrast

Neither is this

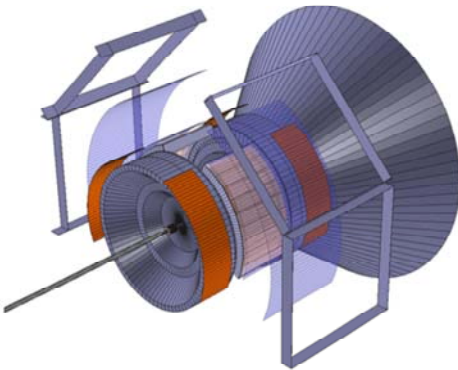
Don't ever put red on blue

Or blue on red

And avoid using gradient fills, too

Be aware that colors that look bright and crisp on your monitor may look entirely different when projected. In particular, pastel colors and thin lines fade away. Use bright, primary colors, bold fonts, and thick lines.

**Most people will remember your
images better than your words...**



**Figures promote audience
interest, provide supporting
evidence, help explain
complex ideas and
relationships quickly, and
give the audience something
to remember**

**...and they'll look at the
figures first, too**

Use engaging, visually interesting figures to draw a reader in to your story and give them something to remember.

Illustrate each of your main points with an engaging image.

“Graphic excellence is that which gives to the viewer the greatest number of ideas in the shortest time with the least ink in the smallest place.”—Edward Tufte

**Who can tell me the four reasons to
include figures in your talk?**

Three reasons?

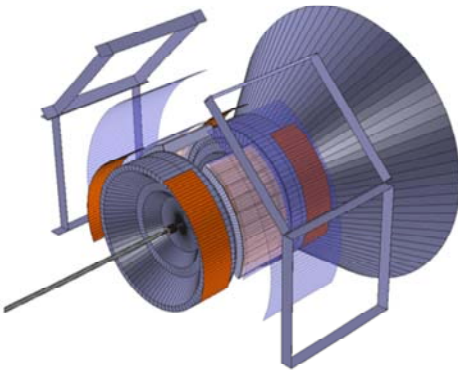
Two reasons?

**Who remembers the image shown on the
previous slide?**

I rest my case...

People remember pictures much longer and better than they remember words.

**Most people will remember your
images better than your words...**



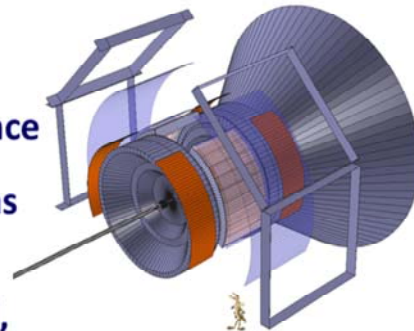
**Figures promote audience
interest, provide supporting
evidence, help explain
complex ideas and
relationships quickly, and
give the audience something
to remember.**

**...and they'll look at the
figures first, too**

Let's look at this slide again. If its purpose was to convey the four reasons why speakers should include figures in their talks, the slide was set up from the beginning to fail because of the way the information was presented.

Figures serve four purposes in talks

1. Engage the audience and capture their interest
2. Provide supporting evidence
3. Help explain complex ideas and relationships quickly
4. Give the audience a visual, memorable “hook” to hang your key ideas on



PHENIX detector at the
Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider
Courtesy M. Grosse Perdekamp

Tip: Add a brief caption to orient the audience immediately—they’re going to look at the figure before you explain it—and always add a scale

First, change the motivating statement at the top of the slide to emphasize the idea that there are **four** reasons to use figures. In the original slide, the message in the title is “remember the figure,” and the subtitle is “look at the figure first.”

Present the points in a numbered list—easier to process (and remember) that there are four reasons than to sort them out from narrative text presented in paragraph style.

Most Western languages are read from left to right and top to bottom. Place your important points strategically—at the top of the slide and along the left margin. Put your illustrative pictures at the right and lower down on the slide.

Put important ideas in a contrasting color—people look at color first, too.

And always, always, always include a scale for any illustration.

Visual images should inform, explain, or persuade, not merely decorate

Improving the Cooling of Blades and Vanes in Gas Turbine Engines

- To increase efficiency, gas turbine engines have to run at higher power
- Better cooling schemes can dramatically affect the life of blades and vanes in gas turbines



While a spectacular and captivating photo (of a vapor cloud forming around an F-18 Super Hornet as it approaches the sound barrier), this image has **nothing** to do with cooling schemes for gas turbine engines. Instead of explaining or amplifying the talk, the photo competes with it.

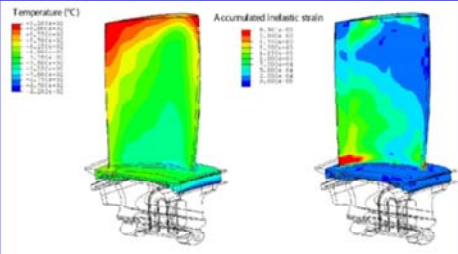
Anybody going to this talk probably already knows what a jet airplane looks like. All this image does is distract the audience from the information the speaker is trying to convey. Who wants to pay attention to the boring, dense text when they can try to figure out what kind of fighter jet this is and why a vapor cloud is forming around it?

This slide also illustrates a problem with presenting information in bulleted lists. The narrative text all runs together.

Here's how I'd change this slide:

Improved cooling increases operating lifetimes of blades and vans in gas turbine engines

- Higher power = increased efficiency
- Higher power = more heat produced
- Better cooling schemes = increased lifetimes of blades and vanes



Add a motivating statement to replace the bland “title”
Turn off the bullets for more room
Write short phrases instead of full narrative sentences
Increase the interline spacing for improved readability
Show some data!

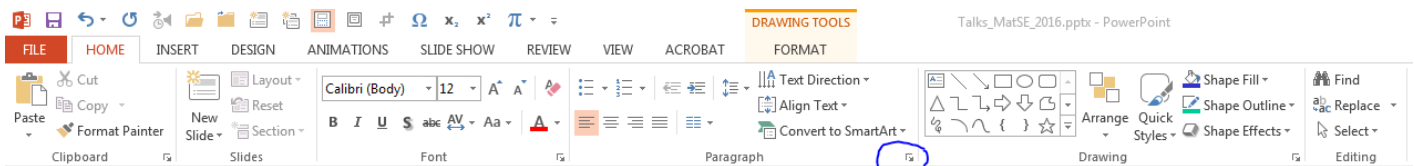
Here's how to improve this slide:

Change the centered title to a left-justified statement.

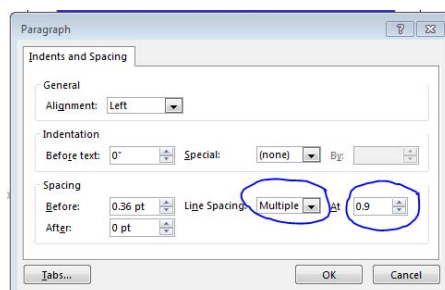
Turn off the bullets, “hanging indent” the text, and add extra space between items to make the text easier to read.

Write short phrases, not full narrative sentences, to make the text easier to read.

Change the interline spacing to make the text more compact, which allows more text per vertical inch and more inter-item spacing. On the “Paragraph” section of the ribbon, click on the down arrow to open the dialog box:




Then change the spacing to “Multiple” and type 0.9 in the box.



Improving the Cooling of Blades and Vanes in Gas Turbine Engines

- To increase efficiency, gas turbine engines have to run at higher power
- Better cooling schemes can dramatically affect the life of blades and vanes in gas turbines



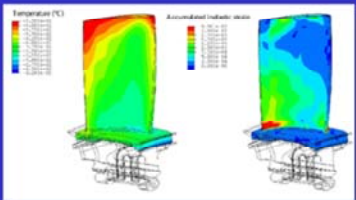
← **Before**

Improved cooling increases operating lifetimes of blades and vane in gas turbine engines

Higher power = increased efficiency

Higher power = more heat produced

Better cooling schemes = increased lifetimes of blades and vane



After →

Here's the "before" and "after" versions of the slide. Which do you think does a better job of informing, educating, and persuading the audience?

Use manual line breaks so that the text is not interrupted in awkward places

- SPring-8: electron storage ring for synchrotron radiation, 8 GeV
- LEPS = Laser Electron Photon beam @ SPring-8
- Compton back scatter 351 nm Ar (UV) laser photons off electrons
- produces 1.5-2.4 GeV photon beam



Avoid big empty spaces, too


To make a line break without starting a new item, press Shift+space bar.

Use the “Arrange” command on the “Drawing” toolbar in PPT to arrange text and figures in layers. Right click on the item you want to arrange and then click on the arrow to the left of the “Send to Back” or “Bring to Front” options to arrange layers.

Extra text boxes don’t cost *anything*. You can use more than one on a slide to maximize your slide real estate.

Here's how to do a slide make-over

- SPring-8: electron storage ring for synchrotron radiation, 8 GeV
- LEPS = Laser Electron Photon beam @ SPring-8
- Compton back scatter 351 nm Ar (UV) laser photons off electrons
- produces 1.5-2.4 GeV photon beam



Add an informative title

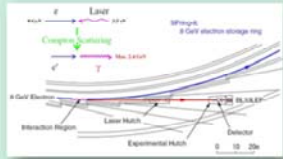
Show some data!

Position important info strategically

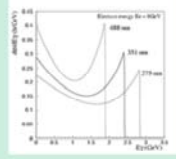
Maximize your slide real estate

Use short captions to orient the viewer immediately

Spring-8 "light" is ≈ 1 billion times more brilliant than conventional X-ray sources




Schematic view of the LEPS beamline and the Compton backscattering process



Differential cross sections for the BCS process between 8-GeV electrons and laser photons

Spring-8: Storage ring for 8-GeV synchrotron radiation
Compton back scatters 351-nm Ar (uv) laser off electrons
Produces 1.5-GeV–2.4-GeV photon beam



Here's how I would improve the previous slide.

- Add a motivating statement at the top of the slide.
- Make the obligatory aerial photo of the accelerator smaller and stick it at the lower right of the slide.
- Turn off the bullets and tighten up the prose to reduce the number of lines of text.
- Use the additional space you've freed up to show a cartoon of the physical process, a schematic of the beamline, and the energy spectra of the photons, and put those images at the top of the slide to emphasize them.

If you just *have* to show the mandatory aerial photo of the accelerator, make it smaller, move it off center-stage, and crop to emphasize the ring, not the surrounding countryside. A scale would be really nice, but although I found 48 different aerial photographs of SPring-8 on the Internet, not one showed how big it is. A label superimposed on the photo that shows where LEPS is located on the ring would be a good addition, too.

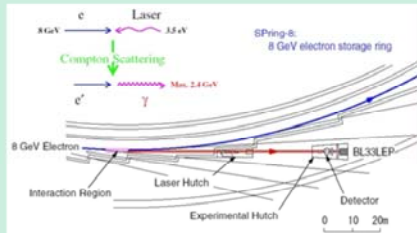
Some technical-editing changes:

- A hyphen is required between 8 and GeV in the first line, 351 and nm in the second line, and 1.5 and GeV and 2.4 and GeV in the last line of text. In every case, the number is combined with the unit to make an adjective that describes the size of the following noun; you indicate that it's an adjective by hyphenating the two components.
- The abbreviation for "ultraviolet" (and infrared) is always written lower case.
- Provide both lower and upper units for numbers in a range.
- Indicate a range by an en dash, not a hyphen.

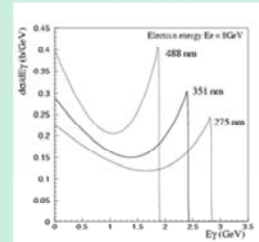
Images taken from <http://www.rcnp.osaka-u.ac.jp/Divisions/np1-b/lepsbl.html>.

Use PPT animation to control the audience's attention while you're speaking

Spring-8 "light" is ≈ 1 billion times more brilliant than conventional X-ray sources



Schematic view of the LEPS beamline and the Compton backscattering process



Differential cross sections for the BCS process between 8-GeV electrons and laser photons

**Spring-8: Storage ring for 8-GeV synchrotron radiation
Compton back scatters 351-nm Ar (uv) laser
off electrons
Produces 1.5-GeV–2.4-GeV photon beam**



When you present an audience with a complicated slide like this one, they don't know what to look at first and they try to look at everything instead of listening to you. Control their attention by using animations to present bits of information at a time, synchronized with what you are saying.

Using animations requires practice and rehearsal—we've all forgotten about an animation and then were surprised when something popped up when we were expecting that click to bring up the next slide.

Mark up your notes pages to indicate animations so you can keep track of them as you are speaking.

Use PPT animation to control the audience's attention while you're speaking

Spring-8 "light" is ≈ 1 billion times more brilliant than conventional X-ray sources

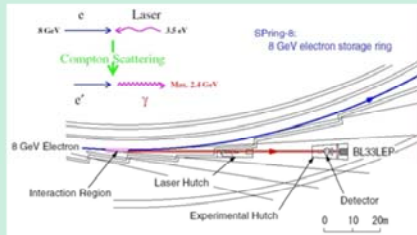
**Spring-8: Storage ring for 8-GeV synchrotron radiation
Compton back scatters 351-nm Ar (uv) laser
off electrons**

Produces 1.5-GeV–2.4-GeV photon beam

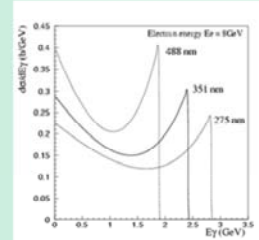


Use PPT animation to control the audience's attention while you're speaking

Spring-8 "light" is ≈ 1 billion times more brilliant than conventional X-ray sources



The Compton backscattering process and schematic view of the LEPS beamline



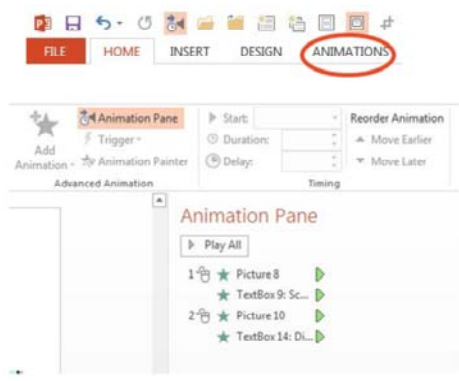
Differential cross sections for the BCS process between 8-GeV electrons and laser photons

Spring-8: Storage ring for 8-GeV synchrotron radiation
Compton back scatters 351-nm Ar (uv) laser
off electrons
Produces 1.5-GeV–2.4-GeV photon beam



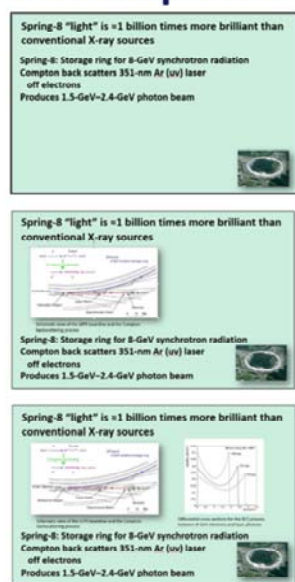
You can “build” slides in one of two ways

Use PPT animation (learning curve)



The screenshot shows the PowerPoint Animations ribbon with the 'ANIMATIONS' tab circled in red. Below it is the Animation Pane, which lists several objects with their animation status: Picture 8, TextBox 9: Sc..., Picture 10, and TextBox 14: DL... The pane also includes a 'Play All' button and a 'Timing' section with 'Start', 'Duration', and 'Delay' options.

Create multiple slides*



The three stacked slides illustrate the 'insert duplicate slide' process. Each slide contains the same text: 'Spring-8 “light” is =1 billion times more brilliant than conventional X-ray sources', 'Spring-8: Storage ring for 8-GeV synchrotron radiation', 'Compton back scatters 351-nm Ar (uv) laser off electrons', and 'Produces 1.5-GeV-2.4-GeV photon beam'. The second slide has a graph added, and the third slide has two graphs added, demonstrating how content is duplicated and then modified on subsequent slides.

***Tip: Use the “Insert Duplicate Slide” tool for smooth builds**

The animation tool gives you more control and offers a variety of special effects. However, like anything else, there’s a learning curve associated with it, and you’ll have to invest time to get good at it.

Creating multiple slides is easier—at least initially—and extra slides don’t cost a dime. For best results, do the first, stripped down slide, and then use the “insert duplicate slide” tool to make each subsequent slide. That way, you don’t have slight variations in the position of text and figures (which is distracting and annoying) when you switch from one slide to the next.

On the main toolbar in PPT, click on the “Insert” tab.

When the “Insert” ribbon comes up, click on the down arrow on the “New Slide” icon (first one on the far left), and scroll to the bottom of the menu to “Duplicate Selected Slides” and click on it. (I have no idea why MS uses this language; when you click on that item, PPT inserts a duplicate of the slide you are on—you cannot “select” multiple slides. <sigh>)

Before you leave for your talk, email an editable copy of your file to yourself, at an address you can get to from the road

Laptops fail

Thumb drives get lost

Files get corrupted

The person who was supposed to load your talk on the seminar room's computer gets sick or forgets



Tip: Print out a hard copy of the “notes” pages and take it along. Note annotations on the hard copy.

Take along a printed copy of the “notes” pages, too. Use them to rehearse on the plane. Mark where the animations occur.



Arrive ahead of your appointed time. Don't dash in at the last minute, panting and out of breath, in your coat, umbrella, galoshes, backpack, juggling a bag of exhibit-hall geegaws.

Check everything before your talk.

Check the projector:

Make sure you know how to turn it on.

See that it is plugged in and accepting the signal from your laptop.

Adjust the focus.

Check microphones, pointer, other tools.

If a clip-on mike is used, make sure it is fastened securely, check the volume, and then leave it alone.

Arrange your slides, notes, and other materials so you can reach everything without fumbling.

If the battery on your laptop dies or the bulb burns out on the LCD projector, can you still give your talk? (Here's where the hard copy of the notes pages are essential.)

Do not expect the conference organizers to take care of all of your needs if you do not tell them what they are ahead of time. Did you request an overhead projector? Slide projector? An adapter for your Mac?

TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE!!

**Never ever put *anything* on a slide
that you do not thoroughly understand**




**That figure you got from somebody else
and added at the last minute...**

...will be all the audience asks questions about



**And don't put anything on a slide that
you don't explicitly talk about, either!**

Technology presents its own challenges
Seminar and conference rooms are increasingly being outfitted with LCD monitors instead of fluorescent projector screens



Laser pointers don't work on LCD monitors

Use the built-in PPT laser pointer (awkward)
Add animated arrows to your slide to point out important features

You could point out features with your hand, but the monitors are often mounted on the wall across the room, or behind you, where you cannot easily reach them without really distracting the audience.

Don't try to use your laser pointer and then say, "Huh! The laser pointer doesn't work. Wow! Now what do I do? Well, I guess you can see what I mean..."

Turn on the built-in laser pointer in PPT. Click on it again to turn it off.

To recap:

Determine your goal(s) for the talk and analyze your audience

Decide on the major points you want to make

Design your talk to make these points clearly, concisely, and memorably

Select colors and images judiciously—pay attention to slide aesthetics

Rehearse and revise (shorten!**)**

$$p = \frac{t}{8}$$



cmelliot@illinois.edu

<http://physics.illinois.edu/people/Celia/>

Notes and Questions: