

Powerpoint basics:

1. What font to use

Use a Sans Serif font:

This font is Arial.

This font is Comic Sans.

This font is Trebuchet.

Serif fonts take longer to read on a screen:

This font is Times New Roman.

This font is Courier.

This font is Didot.

Some fonts look super in **boldface**:

Arial **Arial bold**

Comic Sans **Comic Sans bold**

Trebuchet **Trebuchet bold**

Type size should be **18 points or larger** (although references or small footnotes can use 14 point font). Best to use 28 to 36 point fonts for titles, and 18 to 28 point fonts for text.

**AVOID USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS
BECAUSE IT'S REALLY HARD TO READ!**

2. Color

Use dark letters against a light background or **light letters against a dark background**.

Avoid **red-green** combinations – much of the human population is red-green colorblind.

Always check the **contrast** of your slides in black and white!

The reason it's hard to read this

is that there is not enough contrast!

3. Layout

Every slide should have a heading. Sentences are preferred if you can make a statement.

Limit text blocks to **no more than two lines each**. (When the text block goes on and on, people in the audience must make a huge effort to read the text, which precludes them from paying attention to what you are saying.)

Lists should contain no more than 3 items, with no sublists.

Be generous with empty space. If you too much into a slide and place things close to the sides, they can get cut off with a poor projector and the slide will look cluttered and junky.

Remember to use **simple** diagrams that make only the points you need to make and have time to describe. If you're not going to talk about it – leave it off!

4. Style

Try your best to include an image on every slide. We are visual animals!

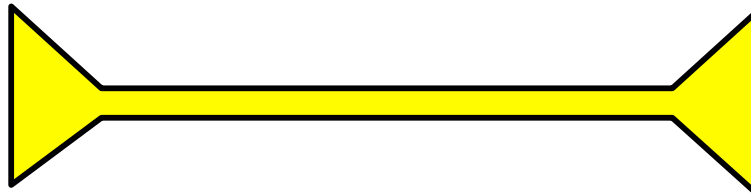
Design a “home slide” that you'll come back to at each major transition in your talk.

Limit the number of items on each slide.

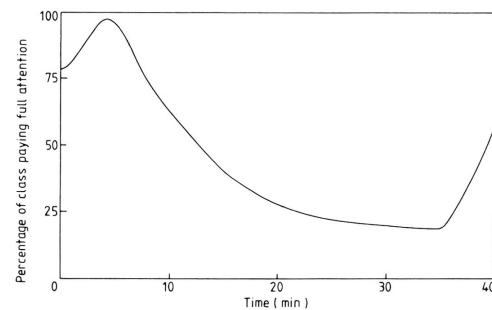
Don't show too many slides!

Structuring your talk:

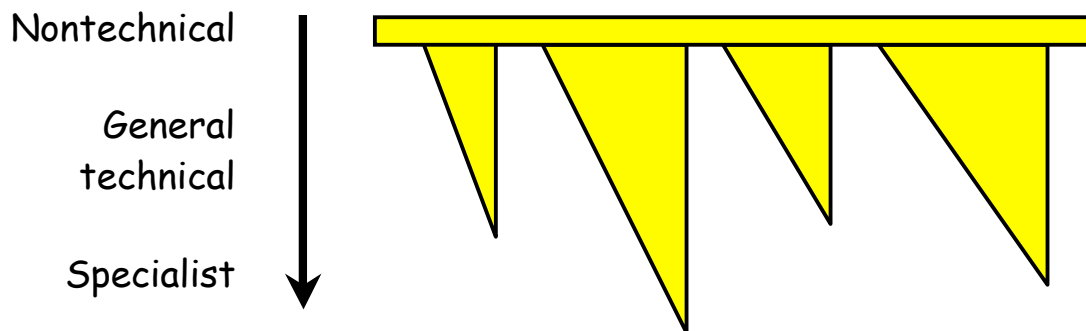
1. Start with the broadest concepts and provide introductory material that gradually becomes more and more specific to the particular problem under study



2. The bulk of your talk will concern your data – but audience attention falls off dramatically after 10 minutes!



3. Think of longer talks as containing **episodes** in which you dive down into greater depths, but then periodically emerge to reorient the audience, review where you've been and where you're going, then dive down once more into detail.



4. Audience attention perks back up when they get the signal that “**the end is near.**”

It's important to avoid “false endings” in which the audience thinks the talk is about to wrap up, but in fact it will go on for a substantial additional period of time.

Your concluding section should start with the most specific and end with the most general conclusions – in other words, the talk should come around full circle.

Books on Speaking

Science and technology

- ✧ [The Craft of Scientific Presentations: Critical Steps to Succeed and Critical Errors to Avoid](#)
by Michael Alley
- ✧ [Dazzle 'Em With Style: The Art of Oral Scientific Presentation](#)
by Robert R. H. Anholt
- [Handbook of Public Speaking for Scientists and Engineers](#)
by Peter Kenny
- [Speaking Technically: A Handbook for Scientists, Engineers and Physicians on How to Improve Technical Presentations](#)
by Sinclair Goodlad

General (business)

- ✧ [I Can See You Naked](#)
by Ron Hoff
- [The Quick and Easy Way to Effective Speaking](#)
by Dale Carnegie

Overcoming nervousness and fear

- ✧ [10 Days to More Confident Public Speaking](#)
by Princeton Language Institute and Lenny Laskowski
- [In The SpotLight: Overcome Your Fear of Public Speaking and Performing](#)
by Janet E. Esposito