ON EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS
OR, WHAT TO DO AND NOT TO DO WITH POWERPOINT

Keith Smith
University of the Pacific
What are your biggest presentation pet peeves? Put them in the chat.
GOALS

• Explain the theories behind effective presentations
• Describe some of the characteristics of effective presentations
YEAH, BUT WHY?
THE PLAN

• A little brain science
• A little psychology
• Effective strategies
• Presentation Dos
OUR BRAINS
THE DIFFERENCE?
THE DIFFERENCE?

Reading
I’M MORGAN FREEMAN
AND YOU JUST READ THIS IN MY VOICE
READING
Broca's area

Left inferior frontal gyrus

Wernicke's area
COGNITIVE LOAD THEORY
Intrinsic load
Intrinsic load

Germane load
A QUICK SUMMARY
PRESENTATION STRATEGIES
• Audience determines content.
• Audience determines content.
• Tell a story.
- Audience determines content.
- Tell a story.
- Keep the focus on you.
PRESENTATION DOs
AVOID OBNOXIOUS THEMES
AVOID OBNOXIOUS THEMES

- Here is a sample text.
- The font is simple, where you expect it, and clearly distinguished from the background.
- There are no funky images to distract you.
- There are no dancing monkeys.
AVOID OBNOXIOUS THEMES

• HERE IS A SAMPLE TEXT.
• THE FONT IS SIMPLE, WHERE YOU EXPECT IT, AND CLEARLY DISTINGUISHED FROM THE BACKGROUND.
• THERE ARE NO FUNKY IMAGES TO DISTRACT YOU.
• THERE ARE NO DANCING MONKEYS.
AVOID OBNOXIOUS THEMES

• Here is a sample text.

• The font is simple, where you expect it, and clearly distinguished from the background.

• There are no funky images to distract you.

• There are no dancing monkeys.
AVOID OBNOXIOUS THEMES

Here is a sample text. The font is simple, where you expect it, and clearly distinguished from the background. There are no funky images to distract you. There are no dancing monkeys.
A DANCING MONKEY
CHOOSING A THEME
USE A LEGIBLE FONT SIZE
USE A LEGIBLE FONT SIZE

• This is 32 pt.
• This is 28 pt.
• This is 24 pt.
• This is 20 pt.
• This is 18 pt.
• This is 16 pt.
• This is 12 pt.
• This is 8 pt.
USE A LEGIBLE FONT SIZE

• This is 32 pt.
• This is 28 pt.
• This is 24 pt.
• This is 20 pt.
• This is 18 pt.
• This is 16 pt.
• This is 12 pt.
• This is 8 pt.

Minimum legible font size
• They are distracting.
SKIP SLIDE TRANSITIONS

• They are distracting.
• They add nothing.
SIMPLIFY YOUR SLIDES
VOTING BY MAIL

- People vote by mail for lots of reasons

**Why Are We Requesting An Absentee Ballot?**

- 11% Oversized-form fetish
- 13% Just like requesting things
- 19% Still exhausted from voting in 2008 election
- 9% Need to use stamps
- 25% Fourth tour of duty authorized by guy we voted for last time
- 23% Thrill of entrusting democratic process to U.S. Postal Service

**Table 2. Reasons Given for Absentee Voting in 2003 California Recall Election**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ease/Convenience</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to get around/Handicap</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too busy</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveling</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precinct not convenient</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always vote absentee</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get it over with</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received ballot in mail</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** California Absentee Voter Survey, 2003 (Loyola Marymount University 2003). **Note:** N = 300.
RULES OF THUMB

• One point per slide
• One element per slide
MAXIMIZE DATA TO INK
MAXIMIZE DATA TO INK
PRUNE WORD CHARTS
If you put too much text on the slide, your audience generally will read the slide rather than listen to you. I’ve stopped using slides like this in class because my students will ignore me and write down whatever is on the slide. Plus, slides like this one create a Broca-Wernicke bottleneck. (Remember, we talked about that earlier.) Additionally, you can overwhelm the audience with text. A big block of text can be intimidating. Moreover, some in the audience won’t be able to finish reading the text before you need to move on to the next slide. Hi there. Are you doing well this evening? Want to know a secret? I eat puppies. I find they’re best with ketchup. No, I don’t really eat puppies; that would be cruel. Who could think such a thing? Really, though, don’t use these.
PRUNE WORD CHARTS

• ≤ 8 words per line
SIGNAL TOPIC CHANGES
A TRANSITION SLIDE
USE IMAGES NOT WORDS
The number of new COVID-19 cases in California has generally trended upward and has increased markedly over the last three weeks.
New Confirmed COVID-19 Daily Cases

seven-day average

Data: Johns Hopkins CSSE; Updated: 07/11/2020

INCOSE Presentation
USE SPELLCHECK
USE SPELLCHECK

• Mispelled words
  • Distract the audience
  • Reduce your credibility
  • May cause you to stumble
PRACTICE
BE PREPARED
SUMMING UP
EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS
Use one input
Use one input and reduce cognitive load
EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS

Use one input and reduce cognitive load to help audiences process information.
BEFORE I END
Objectives
• Use a single input stream.
• Simplify to ease intrinsic load.
• Reduce noise in extraneous load.

Strategies
• Let audience determine content.
• Tell a story.
• Keep the focus on you.

Tactics
• Avoid obnoxious themes.
• Use a legible font size.

Tactics (Cont’d)
• Skip slide transitions.
• Simplify your slides.
• Maximize data to ink ratio.
• Prune word charts.
• Signal topic changes.
• Use images not words.
• Use spellcheck.
• Practice.
• Be prepared.
RESOURCES