Rethinking the Design of Presentation Slides: An Evidence Based Approach

Joanna K. Garner, Ph.D.
College of Education
Old Dominion University

Workshop Goals:
1. To rethink assumptions about how to use presentation slides
2. To apply multimedia learning principles to the analysis of weaknesses in commonly used slides
3. To understand the foundation for the assertion-evidence (A–E) slide structure
4. To learn the key steps for creating A–E slides
Guidelines for Assertion–Evidence Slides*

Style
1. Begin each body slide with a sentence-assertion headline that is left justified and no more than two lines
2. Support the assertion headline with visual evidence (photographs, drawings, graphs, films, or words and equations arranged visually)—avoid bullet lists
3. In the body of the slide, use words only when necessary—design your slides so that the audience reads no more than 20 words per minute

Typography
1. Use a bold sans serif typeface such as Calibri
2. Use 28 point type for the headline, 18–24 point type for the body text, and 12-14 point type (not bold) for reference listings
3. Avoid setting text in all capital letters, in italics, or with underline

Layout
1. Keep blocks of text, especially the headlines, to no more than two lines
2. Keep lists to two, three, or four items
3. Use small margins on the sides, so that you can insert sufficient white space between elements—for instance, leave at least one half-inch of white space below the headline

![Xenon headlights illuminate signs better than halogen headlights do]

[Stevens, 2008]

PowerPoint Templates:
http://writing.engr.psu.edu/AE_template.ppt
http://writing.engr.psu.edu/slides.html
* The Craft of Scientific Presentations
Example Assertion–Evidence Layouts

This sentence headline makes an assertion on the first topic in no more than two lines

Image(s)
supporting
above assertion

If necessary, identify key assumption or background for audience—keep to two lines (18–24 point type)

This sentence headline makes an assertion on the second topic in no more than two lines

Image or equations supporting the headline assertion

Call-out, if necessary: keep to one or two lines

70
Example Assertion–Evidence Layouts (continued)

This sentence headline makes an assertion on the third topic in no more than two lines

As a summary, this sentence headline states the most important assertion of the presentation

Supporting point (no more than two lines)

Another supporting point (parallel to the first)
References

Stelzer, Manning, “Failure Analysis of an Ice Detector in the Austria 13 Helicopter,” presentation (Farmington, CT: United Technologies, 30 April 2004).