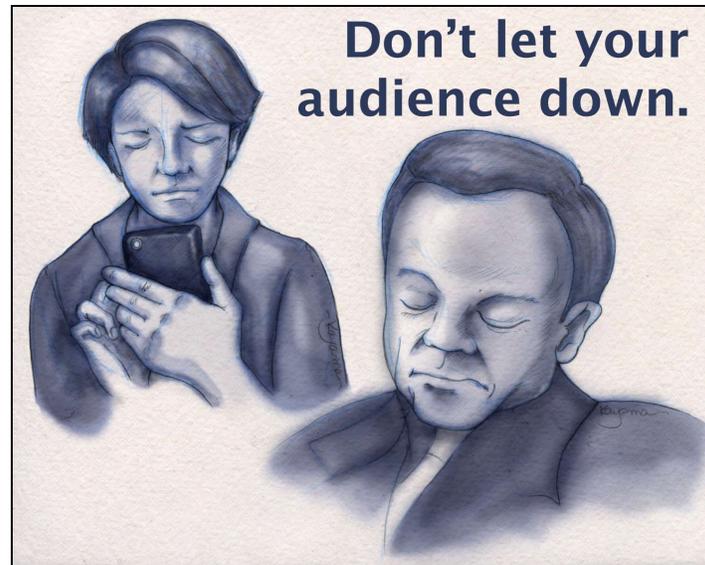


10 Design Mistakes That Ruin a PowerPoint Presentation



Everyone is a little bit guilty for taking a power nap during a PowerPoint presentation. If you are the one on the podium, that's demoralizing. After all, you spent months writing abstracts and proposals, setting up experiments, gathering data, analyzing data, generating enough material to submit for an oral presentation slot, being accepted, and stayed late putting together a PowerPoint presentation.

So why are they taking naps? They personally made the decision to come to see you speak.

Consider your slides. Did you put some thought into the design of it? Did you just use the default, or use whatever everyone else is using?

Take a minute and recall back to your latest presentation you attended. What do you remember about it? Most likely, there were lots of numbers and some graphs. They might have used rainbow colors. The last slide showed a sunset which was memorable because that slide was on the screen during the Q&A.

Why Design is Important

Presentation slides are visual tools incorporating words and images that are created and developed to accompany the speaker. After all, a picture is worth 1000 words.

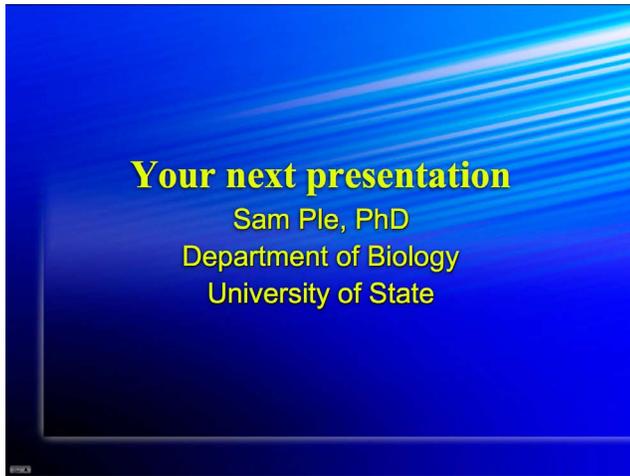
The question is, is your picture telling the right 1000 words?

When the right message is not delivered from your slides, people tend to become uninterested, confused, or bored. They won't remember your presentation if they are uninterested, confused, or bored.

The good news is, most of the design fixes are simple! Set yourself apart and make a memorable presentation that is sure to gain more attention.

Here are the **10 most common design mistakes that ruin a PowerPoint presentation.**

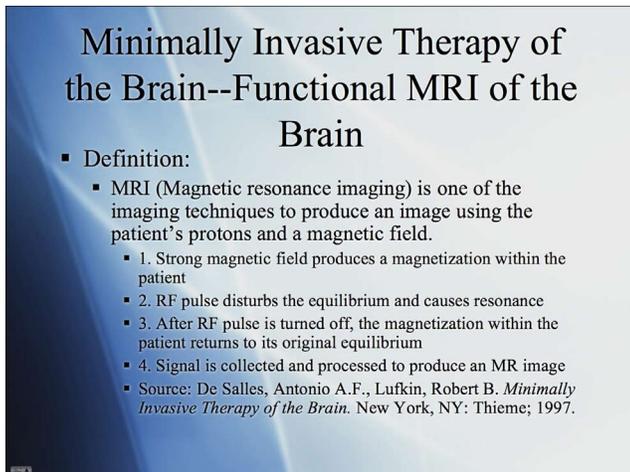
1. Poor color choices



When people encounter unpretty things, they either ignore it or pay attention to something else...like their iPhones. Blue/Yellow PowerPoints are not pretty!

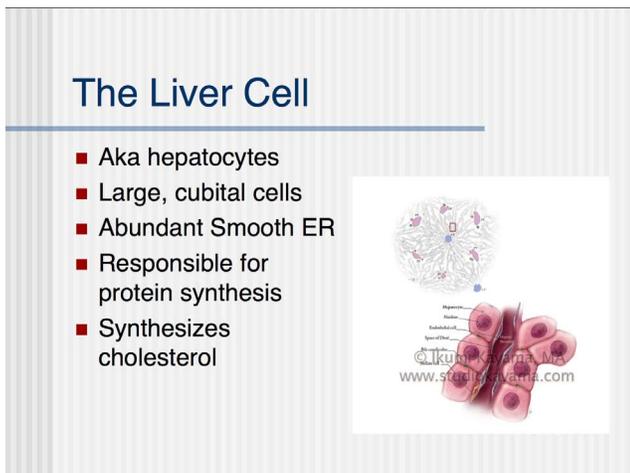
Red/Green, Yellow/Purple, Blue/Orange combos are generally not recommended. Also, a rainbow is beautiful, but not when it's used in a graph. Pick one central color and create slides around the central color.

2. Small letters



Since the speaker is an expert, they will have a lot of things to say in a short amount of time. When there's too many words on the slide, PowerPoint will help by shrinking the letters. Actually, that's a bad thing. If the person in the back of the lecture hall can't read the slides because the letters are too small, they will stop paying attention to you. Keep the letters big.

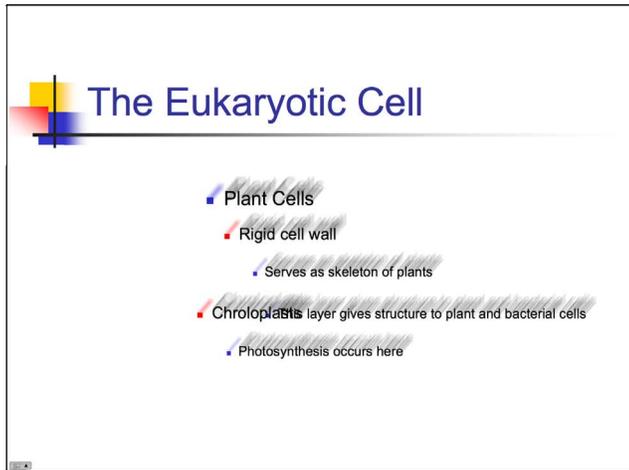
3. Small images



Images are great. They save time and space when explaining a topic. The problem is, the only good image available didn't fill the presentation slide. So it's small, taking up about 1/2 of the space of the slide. Now the labels are too small to read to be helpful.

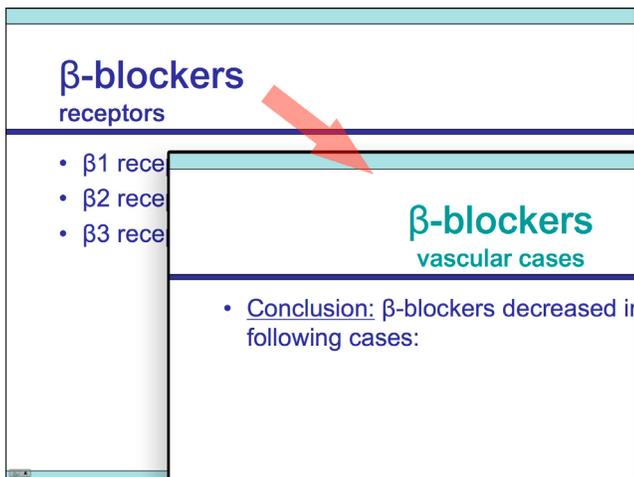
(continued)

4. Animation



Moving objects keep people's attention, right? No, it actually does the opposite. When the words fly in as you speak, the audience gets distracted and stop paying attention to spoken words. If your slides look boring, add a relevant image. Don't animate your text.

5. Inconsistent layout



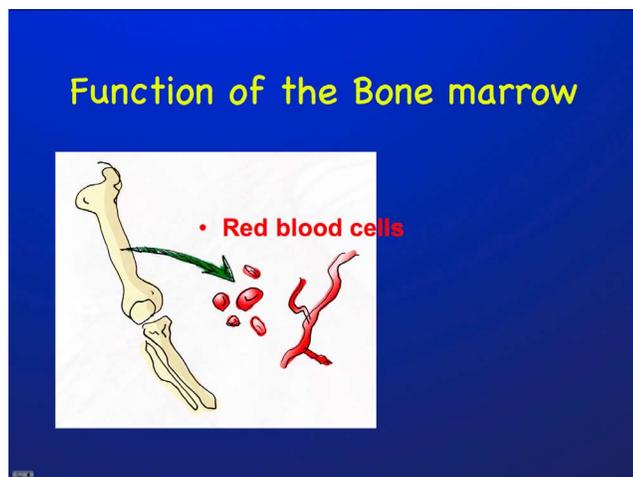
When the title of the slide jumps up and down from slide to slide, it's very distracting to the viewer. Try to keep the title in a consistent length and keep it in a consistent size. Also, don't change the background image unless there is a really good reason to do so.

6. Decoration overload



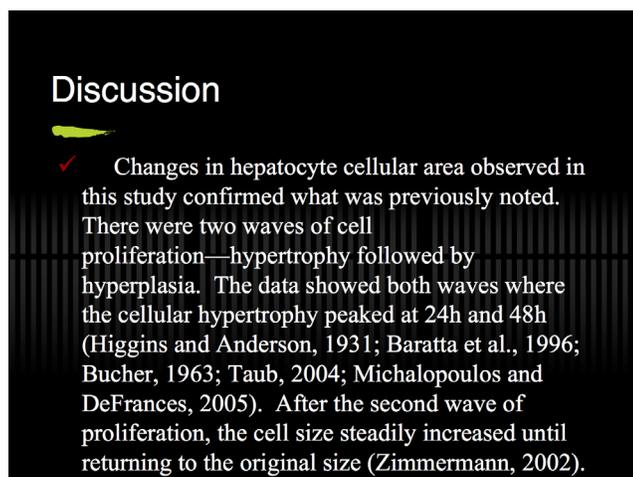
Showing many things to the audience is a good way to keep attention, right? Actually, when there are too many items to see on a slide, the audience gets overwhelmed and unfocused. Never, ever have a tiled background for the slides. Word art and stock images are decorative, and they do not add much to the content of the presentation.

7. Low quality images



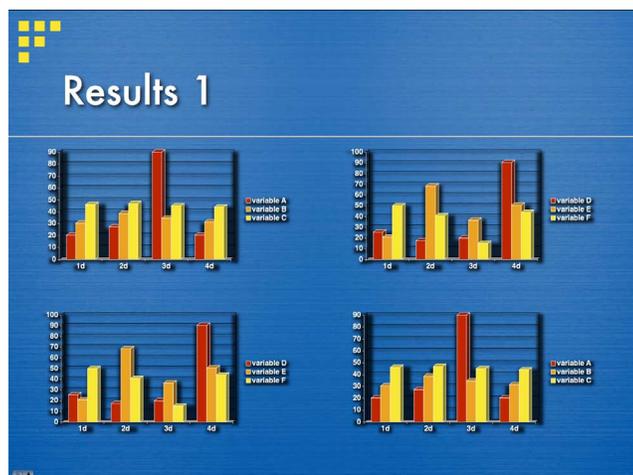
The presenter is dressed in their best professional attire, and begin their presentation. The slides...they aren't dressed in their best. Mouse-drawn shapes created in Microsoft Paint or a pixelated image from the web are equivalent to wearing flip-flops to your talk.

8. Full sentences and multiple levels of bullet points



You attend a presentation to listen to a talk. A presentation is not a place to read an article on the projected screen. Keep the bullets short to the point so that the audience can scan the information and pay attention to the speaker.

9. Emphasizing everything



It's important that a presentation is packed full of useful information for the audience. Unlike reading a paper, the audience has few seconds to look at the graph and understand what it means and how that fits in with the talk. When sharing graphs, make sure to reformat them so they are clear and legible from the back of the lecture room. Also, don't make every graph line a different color. Pick one graph per slide and emphasize ONE point per slide.

10. Ending the presentation with a sunset, a cute animal, or a group photo.



Unless the talk was about a sunset, an animal, or the group, there should not be any irrelevant image as the last picture in the presentation. Most likely, the last slide will stay on during the Q&A.

Except when the discussion calls back to a particular slide, it will stay on the projection as the backdrop. If there is an unrelated image on the screen, the audience will be thinking about unrelated things.

(image courtesy of youwall.com)

All example slides are inspired by the actual presentations I attended, but they have been modified and re-created for educational purposes.

Hope you enjoyed the 10 design mistakes that ruin your PowerPoint Presentation! As you can see, by avoiding these design mistakes, you can create more memorable talks that “WOW” your audience. Unfortunately, I know for many, time and technology constraints really keep them from giving the best presentations.

The good news is, that’s why I’m here to assist you. I offer variety of styles and customization to provide you with the best tools for effective scientific communication. Browse through the [portfolio](#) for few recent examples; if you wish to discuss your project in more detail, [click here](#) to get started!

Best wishes,

Ikumi Kayama, MA
Medical & Scientific Illustrator,
Studio Kayama, llc
studiokayama.com