

PPT

Introduction Video (Transcript)

Maybe you've been there, maybe you've sat in that lecture theatre or been at that event ready excited for to have some new ideas coming at you, some new knowledge to be inspired for your brain cells to be firing off all the time, it's going to be fantastic. And perhaps you've been there, when the speaker walks out onto the stage, smiles at you, pushes a button

And as a whole wall of text appears, they start speaking and as they start reading the wall of text, you feel your stomach drop, out of view your excitement turns to terror to fear of that worst possible crime, death by PowerPoint.

Well, if you have been there, you're not alone. slides in academia and in research can be awful, they can be really, really bad, but can be very good as well. My name is Duncan, I'm going to help you make sure yours are really, really good. Slides are a key part of communicating information to audiences, they are really useful for communicating complicated things, or difficult stuff that your audience haven't come across before like is the case of public engagement. So getting them right really, really matters. And a lot of the way that academics are taught to do slides or the habits within research for doing slides leads to slightly rubbish slides. So in this little intro video, I'm going to give you some tips on how to make sure your slides work well how to make sure that they are effective and engage your audiences and crucially, avoid death by PowerPoint.

If I could change one thing about the way researchers and academics present slides one thing overnight and fix it and make the biggest difference, it would be this put less stuff on your slides. The single biggest problem with academic and research slides when they're presenting to any audience, but particularly to the public, who aren't used to seeing academic slides who aren't used to seeing lots of technical language up on the screen, the biggest problem is putting too much stuff on a slide because what happens is human beings are very good at taking information in but not all at once. So if you put a slide up that has lots of stuff on it, lots of graphs, lots of text, lots of pictures, Well, firstly, those graphs, and those pictures have to be quite small, so you can fit them in, which makes them quite hard to read. Secondly, if you've got loads of text there, I'm going to try and read it. And if I'm reading, I'm not listening to you as a presenter. But more than all of that having lots of visual information coming at me as an audience member, is a bit overwhelming. Maybe you've been in an audience before where you've had this where somebody put up a really complicated graph or a really busy slide, and your brains kind of gone. Whoa, that's too much. Let's shut down for a second. This kind of cognitive brain overload when we're faced with too much information, and we can't process it all at once.

That is the thing that lets down so many great research talks. And the easy way to fix it. Put less stuff on your slide. Every time you're looking at a slide ask

yourself, has it got too much stuff? Or is this the right amount of stuff?

And what you're watching for, is that kind of do you instinctively lean in and know where you should be looking and know what you should be focusing on? Or are you instinctively leaning out going woaaor? That's not nice, right? Are we leaning in? Are we aiming out? Watch out for that?

So if you're going to have less stuff on your slides, how much stuff should you have? How much stuff is the right amount of stuff? Well, crucially, it's not about the amount of stuff though less is always better. What it's about is the focus. Every single slide should have a clear focus, a clear point, something that you can look at and go right. What's the point of this slide. Okay, this slide is telling me x this slide is showing me why slides should focus on one thing, they are there to do two jobs, right slides. Show audiences things that are hard to show them otherwise; graphs, diagrams, complicated pictures, and they are there to get your audience thinking about the thing you want them thinking about. slides show, they don't tell we don't want lots of text. We are not writing a book. They are there to show our audience's stuff.

So make sure your slides have a clear focus a clear point, go through your slide deck and ask yourself this slide. What is the point the one point not the lots of points. The one key point on this slide. Human beings can take lots of information in one thing at a time. We're rubbish at taking in information all at once.

Second little tip for using PowerPoint and making PowerPoint good, make stuff. Big, there's two parts to this one human beings will instinctively look at the biggest thing in the space, I want you to decide what your focus is what the point of the slide is, make sure the thing on the slide that helps your audience get that point, make that the biggest thing on the slide. Now often, because PowerPoint decides that this is how you should arrange PowerPoint, the biggest text on the slide is the title. And often the least interesting thing on the slide is you got it the title, make the biggest thing the thing you want your audience to focus on most or other make them the thing you want your audience to focus on. Really nice and big. Now, if you cut your slides down, if you make them as simple as possible, this is much easier, right? If you've got less stuff on your slides, you've got more space to make things bigger, if you're going to put pictures up, make them full size, make them big as you possibly can, you're putting text up it has to be readable. There is no point putting text on a slide your audience can't read or legends on a graph, your audience can't read. I don't put any text on a slide that is smaller than 40 point. Usually my text is 60 points. Make stuff big.

Little tip number three, get away from bullet points. bullet points are great for planning stuff for using an a document when you're planning out, you're talking you're going on to talk about this and then listen and listen and this and under this section, this is great. Use bullet points for planning, do not use bullet points on slides themselves. There's a couple of reasons for this one bullet points encourage you to talk about more than one thing at a time. Okay, because you've got five bullet points up on the screen. That's five separate ideas, five separate points that you're just trying to think about. And you're talking about point number one, and your audience is reading point number five, and there's a disconnect there and they're going to miss stuff you're saying because they're reading point number five. If you must have bullet points up, do them one at a time to bring them in one at a time. So then at least you're talking about number five, when the audience sees number five, they can't look further ahead than you are speaking.

The other problem with bullet points is they encourage you to write phrases or text or screeds of words. Now, if you're going to have words up on a slide, the instinctive thing for your audience to do is to try and read those words. And if they're reading those words, it means that the language processing bit of their brain is occupied reading words, which means it's not listening to you speaking, because really language processing to read and to listen. And if you've ever tried to read something while listening to a podcast or the radio or somebody speaking, it's very, very difficult to read and listen to spoken word at the same time

your brain kind of splits into and it can't handle. So try and avoid bullet points. Easy way around this make each bullet a new slider zone. So rather than having five bullet points on the slide, five slides, okay, it means you're going to have more slides. But that's never been the problem. each slide is going to have a clear focus, the audience is going to know what you're talking about. The slide is going to match the words that you're saying it's going to be much slicker and better. And if you have to use bullet points, bring them in one at a time and ideally, grey them out or make them disappear once you've talked about them. But avoid bullet points if you can.

Make sure your slides each slide only has one idea on it one conceptual point that you want your audience to take away one key focus for each slide that will make your slides better it will make your audience better able to understand them to see what's going on to focus where you want them to focus. One thing, interrogate your slides every slide, what is its point. And if you can't think of its point, then it doesn't deserve to be in your slide deck. So work out every single slide should have a point, work out what they are.

So those were some quick tips about making your slides better. The big guiding principle in all of this is have less stuff. You don't want to overload an audience, particularly a public audience, when you're doing public engagement type work, they don't want to be looking at slides that are full of lots of points. They don't want to be looking at slides that are full of things that are new to them and maybe a little bit intimidating, they want to be able to digest things easily. And the best way to do that is one thing at a time, one clear focus at each point on your talk. So cut down the amount of stuff on your slides. Think about how your audience is experiencing those visuals make it as easy as possible for them to get what you mean and to get on board with what you're saying. And you're they're going to have a much better time your talks are going to go better. This applies to academic presented more broadly at conferences and stuff as well as public engagement work but it's really Particularly crucial in public engagement. So, have a look. Get an old slide deck just for 10 minutes, crack through it, see what you can cut down, see what you can change, see if you can make it clearer and more focused on each individual slide.

Enjoy