



AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Presentation Slides in a Nutshell

General Tips

- Preferred aspect ratio: 16:9 (this makes better use of screen real estate than 4:3).
- Use a consistent slide design, i.e., background, fonts, and colors; use the same font size and style for similar headings, and the same color for similar elements; use logos sparingly.
- Follow the “1 for 1” rule: prepare approximately one slide for each minute of your presentation.
- Mix text and graphics; let text support graphics on some slides, let graphics support text on others.
- Have a backup of your presentation and any associated movie files on a USB thumb drive.
- See [“How to Un-Suck Your PowerPoint Slides”](#) by veteran science communicator Dennis Meredith

Slide Design

- Use a dark, plain background, and use light-colored text (white or yellow is best); dark text on a white background is difficult to read when the slides are viewed online.
- If you use slide transitions and/or custom animations, use a limited number, and use them consistently.

Headlines & Text

- Each slide should have a succinct headline that summarizes what’s on the slide.
- Slides should be uncluttered; follow the “7 x 7” rule: max. 7 lines of text, max. 7 words per line.
- Make sure the font size is large enough to be legible; start at 36 points for headlines and 24 points for text, and go bigger (but not smaller) if possible.
- Use a common sans serif font, such as Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, or Verdana; check for correct display of symbols and special characters.
- Avoid paragraphs of text; instead, use a headline and a short list of bullet points, all of which relate to the headline. Avoid nesting bullets, i.e., use bullets and sub-bullets, but not sub-sub-bullets.
- Don’t use single spacing; put some space between lines to enhance readability.
- Round off numbers wherever possible to make them easier to comprehend at a glance.

Graphics & Movies

- No more than one or two photos/charts/illustrations/movies per slide; make it/them as large as possible.
- Break up multiple-panel graphics; two or more simple slides are better than one complicated slide.
- Make labels clear and easy to read; when pulling graphics from other sources, enlarge the labels.
- When presenting data, use graphs/charts rather than tables if possible.
- Be prepared to cite your sources if asked, but don’t clutter your slides with citations and/or URLs.
- Use only JPG/JPEG or PNG format when inserting photos into PowerPoint or Keynote.
- Place your presentation and all movie clips in the same folder before inserting movies. Then, run your presentation from that folder (else the movies might not play properly).