

You've started your presentation, mastered your delivery, and prepared the perfect organizational scheme to convey your thesis. Then you decide to add slides to your speech assuming that having some words behind you will automatically help your presentation. They don't! You end up having an audience not pay one wink of attention to you. Instead, they are only trying to read your word-heavy, bullet-pointed slides. At the end of the speech, you hear murmurs of people asking why they had to watch your speech when you could have simply handed them the slides. This happens all the time in the world of public speaking and it all breaks down to one major fault, you forgot that **you are the speaker**; you are the *main feature*.

In order to avoid this situation and to achieve the goal of presenting your speech with effective Visual Aids (VAs), you should follow the 3 D framework: **Define, Design, Deliver**.

Define

The very first thing to consider when using VAs is not "How do I start designing the slides?" but rather, "Should I have any VAs to begin with?" It is common for many people to have the urge to create slides for every presentation simply because "it is the way things are done." This leads to presenters who create text-heavy, bulleted slides that are inevitably used as a crutch to read their presentation. Although this method has the positive element of never forgetting one's speech and being able to make one's presentation obviously organized, it fails in being effective as a speech and tends to bore audiences very quickly.

In remembering that you are the main feature, it is important not to create slides that present your information. Instead you want to create slides that *represent what you are trying to present*. If your speech doesn't need anything to be represented, then you are the perfect candidate for have a VA-less speech. So when one asks themselves, "Should I have any VAs with this speech?" the answer lies in whether or not your material can be substantially enhanced by adding slides. For instance, if one is giving a report presentation, and simply needs to present their conclusion, it would not make sense to have any slides. Instead, if that same presenter is asked to present their analysis and data, it might make sense to have slides that are conducive in showing their data. Also, if one doesn't have the time to prepare effective slides, then it is better to have no slides at all; having poor slides hurts an otherwise good presentation as it takes away from the effectiveness and credibility of the speaker.

The aforementioned argument of only having slides represent your information, instead of present, can, and has, been argued by many people. In some industries, it is commonplace to have slides that are later submitted as reports, and therefore, it is common to see slides that are overwhelming and overflowing with information. In these cases, although it is the status quo, it can be argued that reports and presentations are different in nature and should be communicated differently; reports should be thorough and complete while presentations should be succinct and highlight the important information.

Reasons to Use VAs

- Retention rate increases from 14% to 38% when listeners see as well as hear. *
- Time required to present a concept is reduced up to 40%. *
- They enhance understanding of spatial, visual, or conceptual topics.
- They help simplify complex models or processes.
- The audience is drawn closer to a topic with photos, sounds, and/or videos.
- VAs can add variety to an otherwise verbal presentation!

When to use VAs?

- An excellent speech can be ruined by poor VAs; even a few bad slides can offset the message.
- Use them to enhance the content of your presentation and help guide the audience through your major points.
- Use them to emphasize and reinforce key concepts.
- They can aid in reducing confusion, misunderstandings, and inaccuracies.
- Use them to illustrate any topic that could be better understood with visual representations or models.

Design

Once you have decided to actually use VAs because they will enhance your speech, you are now ready to design the slides. It is well worth your time to create good effective slides, so be sure to spend the extra time that it will take. In order to save yourself from having a bad presentation, it would be advisable to remember the SAVE approach to designing slides: Simple, Aesthetic, Visual, and Effective.

A special note to consider is the difference in slides depending on your intended audience. You want to cater your slides depending on the audience you are addressing. In some instances, you are giving speeches to an educated, informed audience that knows exactly what you are talking about. In these cases, it is fitting to have technical details and well-laid out slides that concern your topic. In other cases, you are dealing with a lay-audience, where you don't necessarily know what they know or care about. For these situations, it is better to use slides that are more picturesque and "artsy" in their approach. To some extent, these slides should be more artistic and less informational.

In the example below, the first slide looks more professional, while the second slide is very artistic. Both slides are catered to completely different audiences. If the speech was a report on the effectiveness of tools, it could easily be seen how the first slide (with some credible information and statistics) would be more appropriate. Instead, if the speech was intended for a general audience, then the second slide would be more effective.

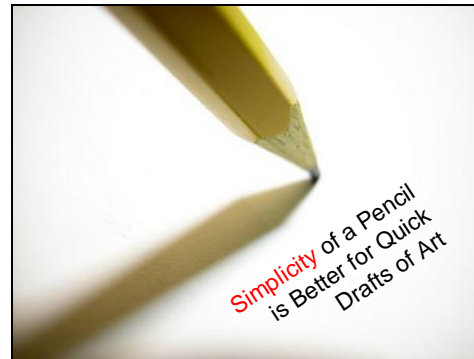
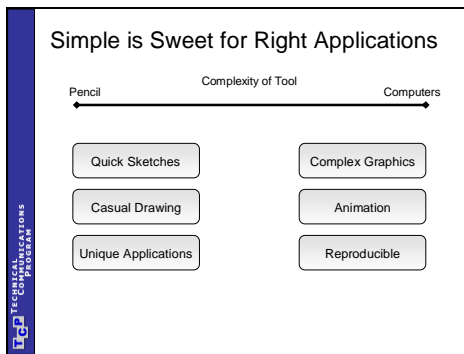


Figure 1: Example of Technical vs. Non-Technical Slides

Simple

The most important thing to remember is to have simple slides. Slides that are too busy or complicated are prone to doing one of two things: boring the audience or distracting the audience from paying attention to you as the main feature. Therefore, it is always best to keep your slides simple. Simplicity of one's slides can be created by constantly reviewing if a slide has too much information for the audience to comprehend at one quick glance. In order to achieve this simplicity, it is better to have words or short phrases to describe your content. In general, a good rule of thumb is to limit your slides to the 6x6 rule: 6 words across and 6 rows of words. In addition, you can be more effective by using animations and builds to help control the audience's eyes. You want to make sure the audience is only looking at what you want, when you want. By maintaining control of your audience, you create the perfect situation to remain the main feature.

Simple slides are also slides that have eliminated extra lines and information. This is especially applicable to tables and graphs. As seen in Figure 2, for tables, it is better to eliminate the borders and to use limited grid lines to show the differences. In order to help people understand the data without the lines, effective use of colors can help differentiate sections.

Eliminate Unnecessary Lines

NFL Quarterback Statistics in 2006 for 16 Game Season

Player	Team	G	Att	Cmp	Pct	Yds	TDs	Int	Rate
Peyton Manning	IND	16	557	362	65	4397	31	9	101
Drew Brees	NO	16	554	356	64.3	4418	28	11	96.2
Donovan McNabb	PHI	10	316	180	57	2647	18	6	95.5
Tony Romo	DAL	16	337	220	65.3	2903	19	13	95.1
Carson Palmer	CIN	16	520	324	62.3	4035	28	13	93.9
Tom Brady	NE	16	516	319	61.8	3529	24	12	87.9
Steve McNair	BAL	16	468	295	63	3050	16	12	82.5
David Carr	HOU	16	442	302	68.3	2767	11	12	82.1

Add Color

NFL Quarterback Statistics in 2006 for 16 Game Season

Player	Team	G	Att	Cmp	Pct	Yds	TDs	Int	Rate
Peyton Manning	IND	16	557	362	65	4397	31	9	101
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Figure 2: Eliminate Lines and Add Color to Simplify Information

In the case of graphs, the same rule applies for unnecessary lines; it is best to eliminate the gridlines and borders, and even to reduce/eliminate the axes. It is better to show the range or to highlight the information of the graph instead of showing the axes with labels. Although having all the axes and labels would be effective in a report, in a presentation it is better to simplify and to only write down the information that is necessary and/or pertinent. Another simplification technique in the case of graphs is to remove the legend completely and to label the pertinent elements on the graph itself. It is very hard for an audience member to view the graph in a quick glance and see the legend in the same view. They typically have to spend more time digesting the information on the graph, which leads to their paying less attention to the main feature. In the end, the rule of thumb for graphs is to make them as simple as possible so that the audience has to dissect less of the information, and instead is given only the pertinent information. If they are interested in getting more information, you can happily point them to your data or talk to them more at-length after the presentation. An example of simplifying graphs is shown in Figures 3 and 4: Figure 3 simplifies a pie chart, while Figure 4 shows how to simplify and highlight a curve.

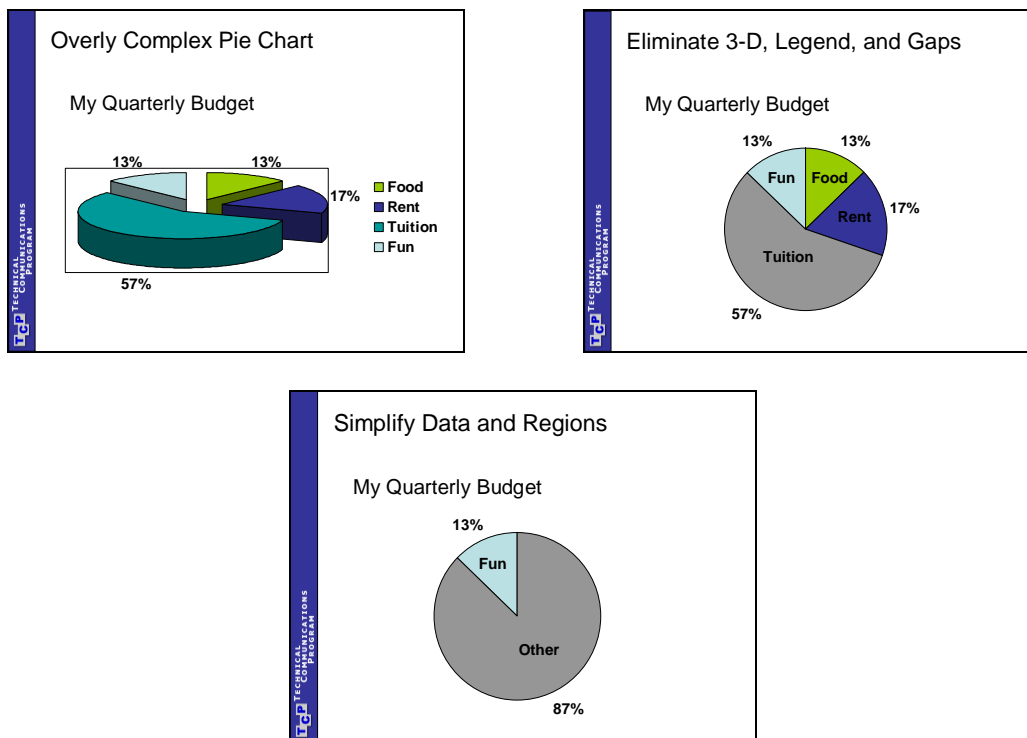


Figure 3: Simplification of a Pie Chart

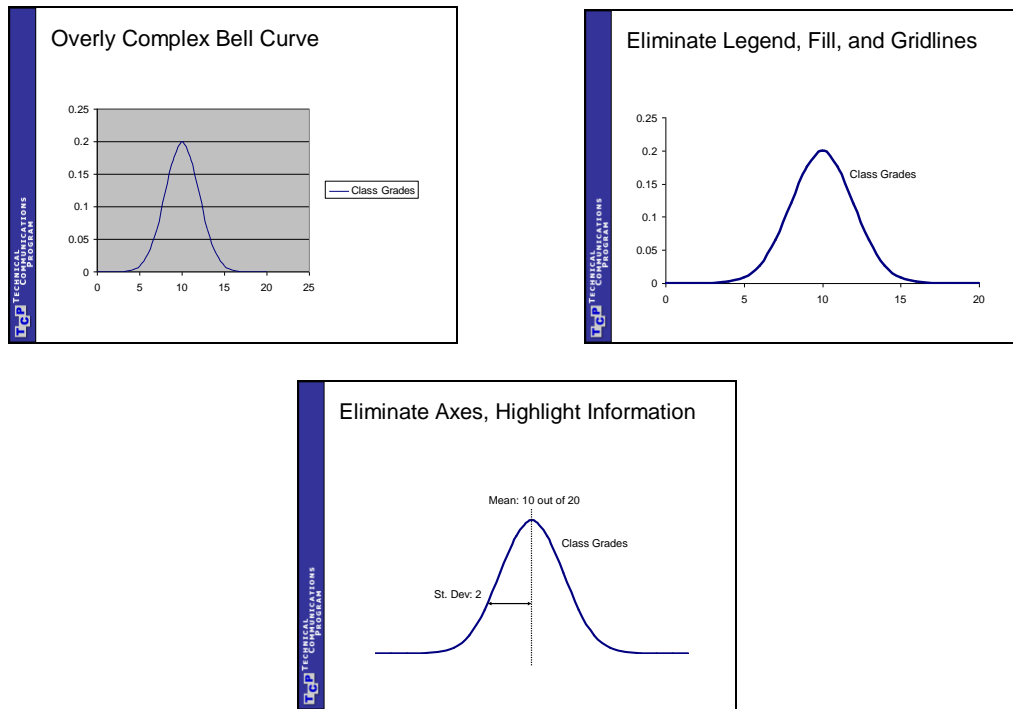


Figure 4: Simplification of a Graph

Aesthetic

Aside from having simple slides, it is also of extreme importance to have aesthetic slides. Slides which are boring to look at show lack of professionalism and reflect poorly on the presenter. In order to add to the attractiveness of slides, some common tips to use are:

- Use contrasting colors; similar foreground and background colors are difficult to see and typically are not attractive
- Use a limited number of colors; having too many colors looks tacky
- Avoid the use of clip art; it is better to use more professional looking art
- Avoid the use of WordArt; it tends to distract audiences more than it adds to your speech
- As mentioned before, note your audience and cater the aesthetics to your analysis of the situation
- Maintain fonts, font sizes, borders, image location...etc. Having consistency in your slides is a beautiful thing.

Visual

Your slides are simple; they fit the 6x6 rule; they look clean and consistent. You think you have developed a great slide deck, but for some reason, your slides are still missing something. They are completely written in bullet points and are not conveying everything you want them to convey. This is where it is handy to remember the old saying: “A picture’s worth a thousand words.” The same rule applies for slides.

When dealing with slides, you want all of your slides to be visual in their nature. Although PowerPoint defaults to the use of bullet points, this is *rarely* in your best interest. The only time a bulleted list is actually the proper tool to use for your speech is if you are listing off an unorganized, random list. There are two major problems with bulleted lists: they don't show relationships and they lazily oversimplify content. Instead you are better off using arrows, diagrams, and pictures to fill in the gaps that bullet points create. An example of this is seen in Figure 5.

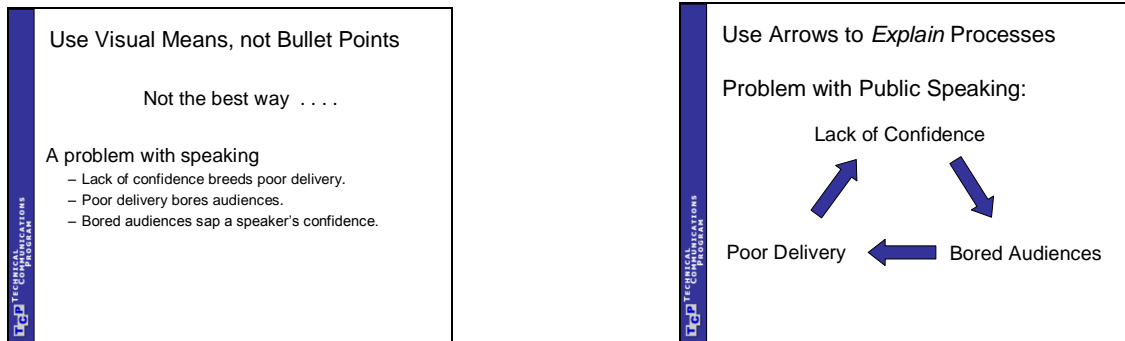


Figure 5: Make Information Visual, not Textual

Often, when someone says to make slides visual, speakers equate this with using pictures. The use of pictures is completely encouraged, with one tiny proviso. *Don't use unlabeled pictures!* If you are going to use pictures and photos in a slide deck, make sure you label what you want the audience to realize or learn from the picture. An unlabeled picture leads the audience to sit and ponder about the speaker's use of the picture and what message they intended. Confusion of intention leads to less attention on the main feature. Labeling can be done using a box and arrow or a picture can be labeled in the title of the slide.

Effective

The last thing to remember when designing your slides is to create slides that are effective. By making your slides simple, aesthetic, and visual, they are already more effective than the average slide, but there is more that can be done. The first thing is to use highlight boxes or colors to accentuate the message you want delivered on each slide (Figure 6). Another effective technique is to have a title on each slide. Ideally, because the title is the first thing the audience views on the slide, it should tell the audience the message, or thesis, of the slide. It should include a verb and complete the sentence, "The user should know that..."

Highlight Information and Message

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Peyton Manning	IND	16	557	362	65	4397	31	9	101
Drew Brees	NO	16	354	256	64.2	4418	26	11	97.2
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Manning is only QB with a Rating higher than 100

Figure 6: Highlight Main Information

Organizationally speaking, you can also make your speech more effective by having organizational slides. This begins with a title slide; something that mentions the title of the speech, presenter’s name, date, event/location...etc. More importantly, organizational slides should include transition slides that help navigate the audience through the speech. It is also a great technique to have a mini-outline in the corner of a slide to let the audience know where they currently are within the speech. An example of transition slides can be seen in Figure 7 and the mini-outline can be seen in Figure 8. Although it is more effective, the mini-outline doesn’t need to resemble the actual transition slides; it is simply there to help the audience keep a track of their relative location within the speech.

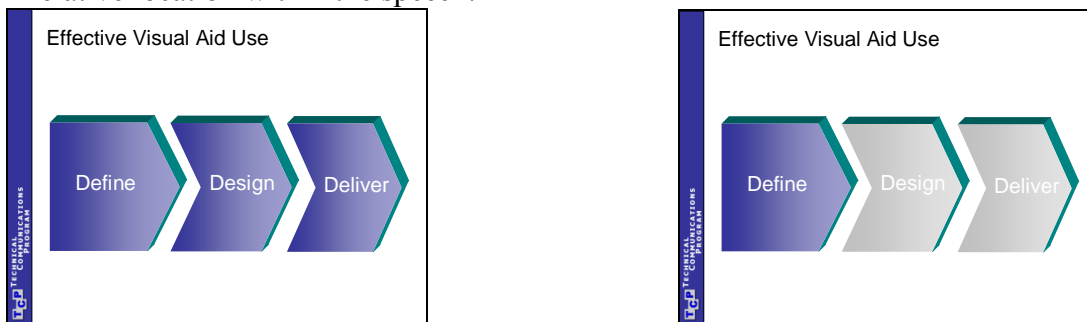


Figure 7: Organizational Transition Slide and Sectional Transition Slide

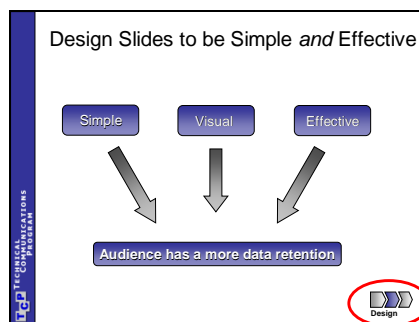


Figure 8: Use of Mini-Outline in the Corner of the Slide

Logistically speaking, you also want to make sure your speech is effective by not being ineffective. This means you want to avoid some of the things below:

- Unreadable text; if you print out 6 slides to a page and can't legibly read the font, the text is too small or is written an ineffective font.
- Sound; Sounds are typically very distracting and therefore are *very rarely* a good thing!
- Distractions such as animations, fades, word art, etc. Animation and fades can be effective, but avoid using automated or time animations and instead create presentations where the speaker controls when the effects occur.

Deliver

Having all the slides in place and prepared, you have almost won the battle of delivering a great VA speech. There is one last element: delivering the speech. Delivering the speech capitalizes on all of the techniques taught earlier and incorporates new strategies to remaining effective. In order to deliver a VA speech it is handy to remember the PASS method.

Using the PASS Method:

- **P**ress the button (or place the slide). The space bar, left mouse, and “down” arrow each moves the slides forward; the “up” arrow moves them backward.
- **A**ssess (or **A**djust the slide). Check the slide to make sure it's what you expected.
- **S**tep back to the plane of the projection, but not into the image itself.
- **S**peak through all of the PASS process! Don't let VAs take time away from your speech.

A special thing to note about the PASS method is the first 'S': Step back to the plane of projection. The key here is making sure you are delivering from the plane of projection. The audience has better information retention if they view the speaker and the slide together as one huge picture. This is as opposed to viewing the speaker and the slides in different depths and having to look back and forth between the two.

Some other tips about delivering VAs are tabulated below:

- Speak to your audience, not to your VAs; maintaining eye-contact with your audience is important to continue your connection and keep the audience engaged.
- Stay out of the light, but gesture toward the image if you like. Avoid using a stick or gesturing in front of the light. Use of a laser pointer is fine, but typically inherently highlighting information on the slide is more effective. It is also extremely effective and seems more professional if the speaker can verbally point to something on the slide, i.e. if the speaker said “On your top right, you can see that Peyton Manning was the only QB with a rating higher than 100.” (See Figure 6 for the slide in reference).
- Aim for each slide to be limited in time. Having a slide without change behind a speaker can lead to a bored audience. If you know you will be speaking at length without the use of a slide, then use the 'B' or 'W' keys in PowerPoint to blackout or whiteout the slides and keep focus on you as the main feature.

- Be prepared to deliver shorter versions of each slide as you may have to adjust for time constraints
- If you need to time adjust, summarize your info rather than speeding through its entirety.

The last note to make about delivering is to **ALWAYS BE PREPARED!** Although technology offers many great advantages, it also carries risks. As such, know how to switch the display to the projector from your laptop or computer that you will use to deliver your slides. Secondly, be prepared to deliver a speech without slides at all as technology can be finicky and fail to work on the day of your presentation. If you cannot deliver without the slides, be prepared with a backup plan: have handouts, a backup projector, cables...etc. A list form of this information is below:

- Know how to operate your video and/or sound.
- Make sure you have all cables, power adapters, extension cords, etc, etc, etc...
- Try everything out in advance, if possible.
- Arrive early to set up the equipment.
- Have some kind of backup.