

Selecting the Most Effective Design Style for Your Presentation

As mentioned in the Technical Assistance Bulletin *Creating Effective Presentations*, the manner in which PowerPoint presentations are created and delivered has evolved to be more illustrative with less text and bullets. Experts in the creation of effective oral presentations that provide research-based—particularly scientific—information recommend the use of the Assertion-Evidence slide design. This slide design is a learning perspective and is viewed as a more effective alternative to the traditional bulleted text approach.¹ It is one of several presentation slide designs that avoid the use of bullets.

The purpose of your presentation will help you determine which design is most appropriate. Confident presenters do, however, combine aspects of two or more slide designs to create their ideal, no-bullet presentation.² Table 1 provides brief descriptions of a few design options.

Table 1. Presentation Slide Design Options

Slide Design	Creator	Description	Additional Information
Assertion-Evidence Slide Design	Michael Alley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text primarily included is a single, short, full-sentence headline which introduces the idea the presenter wants to emphasize.³ That sentence needs to be supported with visual aids (e.g., photos, images, charts, diagrams) in order to explain pertinent information. The sentence is short but not so short that it is cryptic. Mr. Alley suggests that the sentence should only take one or two lines, and should consist of only 8 to 14 words in 28-point font. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Rethinking the Design of Presentation Slides: The Assertion-Evidence Structure.</i> Available at: http://www.writing.engr.psu.edu/slides.html
Presentation Zen Style	Garr Reynolds	This style has many elements in common with the Assertion-Evidence format, but from a design perspective rather than a learning perspective. The slides include high-quality photos with single words, short phrases, or quotes. ⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Presentation Zen.</i> Available at: http://www.presentationzen.com <i>Presentation Tips.</i> Available at: http://www.garrreynolds.com/Presentation/index.html
Beyond Bullets Points	Cliff Atkinson	This style is also similar to the Assertion-Evidence format. It is the only format that consciously takes into account Richard Mayer’s multimedia learning principles. ^{5,6}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See <i>Beyond the Bullets Approach in Action.</i> Available at: http://www.sociablemedia.com/thebook_tutorials.php4
Slide: Ology	Nancy Duarte	This style converts concepts, ideas, and facts into visuals to help the audience understand and grasp complex concepts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I Can’t Change the World.</i> Available at: http://www.duarte.com

Slide Design	Creator	Description	Additional Information
Lessig Method	Lawrence Lessig	This slide design is not an official slide design per se. ⁷ The developed design relies on super-accurate synchronization between the presenter and his or her slides. The design focuses more on the method rather than the message. A key word or phrase for each sentence is used on a slide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Free Culture</i>. Available at: http://randomfoo.net/oscon/2002/lessig/free.html
Identity 2.0	Dick Hardt	This slide design is based on Lessig method, and it makes use of many photos. It is more like a very quick 35 mm slideshow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Presentations</i>. Available at: http://dickhardt.org/presentations
Ethos3 Story-telling Style	Scott Schwertly	In order to use this style, you need to determine the point you wish to get across. A story is then created with a set of characters who introduce the message using high quality photos.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Resources</i>. Available at: http://www.ethos3.com/resources
Comic Style		The Comic style combines text and pictures with humor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Takeaways and Quotes</i>. Available at: http://www.slideshare.net/garr/brain-rules-for-presenters?type=powerpoint • <i>Sowing the Seeds of Enterprise in a Global Organization</i>. Available at: http://www.slideshare.net/revells/sowing-the-seeds-of-enterprise20-in-a-global-organization?type=powerpoint

- 1 Marshall, M. 2010. Becoming an Effective Presenter of Engineering and Science: Guidelines and Video Examples. Penn State University. Available at <http://www.engr.psu.edu/speaking/Visual-Aids.html> (Accessed December 1, 2010). (Adaptation).
- 2 Mitchell, O. 2010. The Top 7 PowerPoint slide designs. Available at <http://speakingaboutpresenting.com/design/powerpoint-slide-design-7-styles/>. (Accessed December 1, 2010).
- 3 Grant, B. 2010. Pimp your PowerPoint. *The Scientist* 24:(3). Available at http://cte.lsua.edu/Libraries/Resource_Documents/Pimp_Your_Powerpoint.sflb.ashx. (Accessed December 1, 2010).
- 4 Mitchell, O. 2010. The Top Point Slide Design: PowerPoint Slide Design #2: Classic Presentation Zen. Available at <http://speakingaboutpresenting.com/design/powerpoint-slide-design-7-styles/>. (Accessed December 1, 2010).
- 5 Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, USA. Developed of the Cognitive Multimedia Learning Theory that posits that optimal learning occurs when both visual and verbal material are presented simultaneously. Available at <http://www.learning-theories.com/cognitive-theory-of-multimedia-learning-mayer.html>. (Accessed December 1, 2010).
- 6 University of California-Santa Barbara. Richard E. Mayer Biography. Available at <http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/people/faculty/mayer/index.php>. (Accessed January 6, 2011).
- 7 Reynolds, G. 2005. The "Lessig Method" of presentation. Available at http://presentationzen.blogspot.com/presentationzen/2005/10/the_lessig_meth.html. (Accessed December 1, 2010).