

PREPARATION OF SLIDES FOR 1987 ASA MEETING

Successful use of slides requires careful preparation. Unless your slides clarify ideas, emphasize important points, help you to organize your talk, and increase the interest and attention of your audience, your slides will only put your audience to sleep. THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF FAILURE IN SLIDES IS PRESENTATION OF TOO MUCH MATERIAL ON A SINGLE SLIDE. Frequently, your major problem will be deciding what not to present. Introduce your topic; present the main points in a logical, step-wise sequence; and, most importantly, tie together your presentation in a conclusion. The conclusion should present or reinforce the message that you wish each member of the audience to take home.

Planning Your Talk and Your Slides

Plan the visuals essential to presentation of your paper. One approach is to take a series of 4" x 6" plain index cards and draw a horizontal 4" x 3" box in the left hand corner. A 4" x 3" box represents the dimensions of the image on a 2" x 2" slide. In each box, rough out what that slide will show. This might be a crude sketch, a rough table, or a short statement. Drafting slides in this manner forces you to consider each element of each slide. The cards then can be arranged and rearranged in the order that best suits your presentation. Ask a series of questions concerning each potential slide.

- a) Is this slide necessary? Will it help me attain the objective of my presentation?
- b) Is there good continuity between this slide and that preceding it?
- c) Will this slide aid the audience in receiving my message?
- d) Does this slide focus attention on a single idea? Is this idea clear?
- e) Is the slide free of extraneous or distracting elements?
- f) Is this slide the most effective for presenting the material?
- g) Can the information in the slide be read and understood when projected on a screen and viewed from a distant corner of a large room?
- h) Are my spoken commentary and the slide mutually reinforcing?

Any slide that does not meet ALL of these criteria should be deleted or replaced.

Always assume that you will be showing your slides to an audience sitting in the last row of a very large room that is quite bright because the curtains are transparent. Furthermore, assume that the screen will be no more than 5' wide and that you will have no light at the podium to see your notes. If you prepare your talk so that it can be delivered effectively and received well under these conditions, your presentation cannot help but be improved when you are blessed with the more desirable setting available at our meeting.

A total of 6 to 10 slides is ideal

Preparation of Slides

The most common error in making slides is to assume that if material is legible in the printed form, it will be legible as a slide. This assumption almost always is wrong. It seems unlikely that the printing on a slide can ever be too large. Lettering frequently can be too small. Under ideal conditions, the maximum viewing distance of a slide should be about 12X the height of the projected image. To prejudge the success or failure of your slides, place your typed material at a distance 12X the height of the table in your original (allowing space for the margins when it is copied onto a slide) and view it from that distance. If the material is readable from a distance of 12X its height, type of that size will be suitable for projection in a room when the farthest viewer will be seated at a distance of 12X the height of the projected image. Many of your initial concepts for a slide will not pass this test.

The color of the background of your slide should complement your subject matter and not conflict with it. Large expanses of white often cause glare while some pastel colors may look washed out. One drawback of a negative slide is the "popping" which occurs with all cardboard mounted slides, but is most obvious with negative slides. This problem is worse if the lines have been tinted with color(s). The negative slide can be mounted as a glass rather than a cardboard slide.

Statement Slides

A successful typewritten statement slide must fit in a space no larger than 3" x 4". There are several cardinal rules for statement slides. These include:

- a) One line is superb, three is good, five is fair, and nine is the absolute limit.
- b) Make the lines short--no more than 25 letters, numerals, or spaces.
- c) Center the copy so that it is balanced and provides reasonable margins.
- d) Use a horizontal format whenever possible (your slide can be seen over people).
- e) Consider the use of capital letters throughout except for expressions such as mm, ml, or other abbreviations. Capital letters take no more space on the slide, but are twice as large and, hence, twice as legible as lower case letters.

Tables

The typed table must fit in a space 3" x 4". Try very hard not to exceed nine lines (double spaced). Obviously, complex headings and footnotes cannot be used. Actually, they are unnecessary, since you will tell the audience what the table is about. The headings for columns and rows should be simple, but self explanatory if possible. Data should be presented so that most numbers contain two digits with only a few one- or three-digit numbers. Inclusion of decimal points simply wastes space. Data can be manipulated by multiplying by an appropriate power of 10, although conventional expressions of measures should be used when possible. In most instances, presentation of the standard error of the mean or standard deviation is unnecessary. Only if you are interested in stressing the lack of variation or the abnormally large variation, is it necessary to present a measure of dispersion. Statistical significance can be designated by superscript letters or, in simple tables, by the use of *(P<0.05) or **(P<0.01). Use a series of similarly formatted tables (or figures) to cover all of the data.

Graphs and Charts

Emphasize one idea in each graph and keep your graph simple. A graph projected as a slide cannot be studied in great detail as is true in the printed form. Circle or bar graphs are more legible than line graphs. Multiple comparisons can be presented best in a series of charts drawn in the same manner and presented as successive slides rather than as a single, complicated slide.

Many graphs or figures that are satisfactory in a published manuscript are atrocious as slides. Graphs used for slides should be drawn in a simplified manner. The ordinate and axis should be labeled at not more than 4-5 points. Ideally, all lettering is horizontal. Up to four curves might be presented in a single slide if the curves do not overlap or intersect. If the curves are complex, presentation of more than one or two curves on a slide can lead to disaster. Always plan for maximum legibility. If in doubt, go for clarity, even if it means less information per slide.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. Use 2" x 2" slides. Design all slides with a horizontal format.
2. Have slides with a dark-colored background, as it minimizes the effects of dust and dirt and is restful on the eyes.
3. Only one idea on each slide. Several slides may be used to present one idea, but never present more than one idea on one slide. Instead of using one slide to list five points, use five successive slides and add one point to each following slide.
4. Limit each slide to 15 to 20 words or 25-30 elements.
5. Do not include material that you do not plan to discuss.
6. Use duplicate slides if you need to refer to the same material at two different points in your talk.
7. Plan your slides for a good visual pace in your presentation. Don't leave a slide on the screen after you have discussed it. If necessary, use a blank slide.

Note: You will put your own slides into a carousel tray at the meeting and, obviously, can not blame the projectionist if your slides are out of order, backward, or upside down. It will be your