

Further thoughts on Presentations

1) Graphs and Figures should be integral parts of your presentation.

A consequence of this principle is that it helps the audience to make reference to the part of the graph or figure you are talking about. You can do this in ("the green dashed line rises at x equals...") or by pointing with a laser pointer (or a yardstick).

An alternative is to use Powerpoint have color, arrows, or circles appear on the screen to draw your audience's attention to important data points or other items. This can be better than pointing, because:

- you can still face the audience

- the audience might miss you pointing to a spot on the graph, but not **this** line

2) When you are in the audience for a talk, do you often have to identify for yourself the x-axis and y- axis labels and units? In the time it takes to do that, do you miss something important the presenter said?

From this you may conclude that the presenter should always identify axis labels and units on graphs.

When you copy a graph from a paper, always consider redoing the axis labels and units in Powerpoint to better identify what is being plotted. The same goes for the legend!

3) Watch out for unexplained abbreviations on the labels, or even abbreviations that were explained once or twice before! By placing reminders of key ideas in your slides and/or in words, you can really help your audience understand your points.

4) Show, don't tell (in writing, that is).

- a) show a diagram of a process rather than describing the process with text.
- b) A specific example of (a) is to show a chemical reaction rather than write "Hg is gets oxidized" instead write " $\text{Hg}(0) \rightarrow \text{Hg}(\text{II})$ "
- c) Be brief where possible:
"concentrations of elemental gas phase mercury" versus " $[\text{Hg}(0)_{(\text{g})}]$ " ??

5) Your slide is valuable real estate

- Don't use styles that rob you of 20% of the space!
- Do move a graph or figure off-center to make room for text on the sides.
- Do move your title higher on the slide to make room for a bigger figure or more text

6) I have mixed up the style of presentation of this advice and added emphasis in certain places in order to help the points to sink in. For the same reason, it helps to use one's voice to add **emphasis** and pauses to keep the audience awake. Body language also helps.

The rule of 2 minutes per slide needs more explanation from me!

The idea is that you have ideas or information to convey whose full meaning is not obvious.

If you spend less than 2 minutes per slide, the audience does not have time to take in that meaning.

You could present less information per slide on more slides, but that creates a few problems:

- a brief moment of inattention by an audience member means they miss the entire slide
- there are so many slides that the connection between ideas (now on separate slides) is more easily lost.

So what if you prepare a slide with a text or figure and then realize you only have 30 seconds worth of words to say about it?

Either the text/figure is sufficiently trivial that you can drop it, or you should combine the text/figure with other information.