Guide for Presenters

Revised September 2024

Summary

Your presentation should convey <u>relevant information</u> to the audience in a way that they will *understand*, *remember*, and *be able to apply*.

To help you accomplish this, we provide the following recommendations:

- Before creating your presentation, consider and be able to state its purpose.

- One slide per minute is a good rule of thumb.

- Don't use tables; instead, try to think of a way to present the same information using images or graphs.

- For graphs, be sure to label axes in large, easily readable fonts, and include units.

- Anticipate which terminology the audience may have trouble understanding, and make sure that you define each acronym in spoken words the first time it is used.

- Speak clearly and not too quickly, enunciate, and project your voice so it will reach the back of the room.

- **Practice** your talk repeatedly!

Detailed Guidance

Always keep in mind your goal: to convey <u>relevant information</u> to the audience in a way that they will *understand*, *remember*, and *be able to apply*.

1. Outlining your talk

- Before creating your presentation, consider and be able to state its purpose.

- Remember that you likely know more about this topic than the majority of your audience. It is therefore important to aim the level of your talk to the audience in attendance.

- Have a structure in mind for your talk, given your goals and the questions you are addressing. Here are some ideas:

    Introduction: Why should we care about this material? Why did you undertake this project? What questions are you trying to answer? Consider making a bold statement or claim that you will provide evidence for.

    Body: Present evidence for your claim, briefly summarize methods, and present data/analysis that answers your questions.

    Conclusions: Sum up significant results and conclusions. What are their implications? Were there any surprises? What are your next steps?

- Consider listing acronyms and their meaning on the first slide.

2. Designing your slides

Put as only much information as you need to visually show on each slide, and no more. Overly technical details can be saved for the Q&A or for future publications.

Content

- One slide per minute is a good rule of thumb.

- Avoid using transition slides or fancy PowerPoint visual effects such as fade-outs between slides. They waste time and can be distracting.

- Be aware that embedded videos and other audiovisuals which run well on your computer may not work on another, so avoid these unless you have already received permission to use your own laptop.

- Be aware that Internet access may be unreliable, so avoid using live links from the Internet unless absolutely necessary. Static screen captures are a much better option.

- Don't use tables; they're hard to read and understand. Instead, try to think of a way to present the same information using images or graphs.

- If a slide includes material from a journal paper, web site, or other source, include a citation or acknowledgement of the source.

Layout

A clear, uncluttered arrangement is more important than fancy visuals. Consider putting less on each slide.

- It is best to have only one graphic, photo, or figure per slide.

- Have the slide support the important point with a picture, graph, or a few bullets, and speak to the details.

- Make the point or conclusion of a slide the title of the slide. For example, instead of a title "Light curve of alpha Ori," use a title that explains the point of the graph: "alpha Ori light curve shows unexplained amplitude changes."

Text

- Use as little text as possible.

- Make all text and figure labels clear, in the largest font that will fit. The minimum recommended font size is 24 pt.

- Sans Serif fonts, such as Arial and Verdana, are easier to read.

- Dark text on a light background is generally easier to see.

Color

- Don't rely solely on color to convey information; be aware that colors may be difficult for some viewers to distinguish. Whenever possible, use shapes, sizes, and textures to convey meaning, in addition to color.

- Be aware that subtle color contrasts do not always project well; what looks good on your computer screen may not work in the hall.

Images

- For graphs, be sure to label axes in large, easily readable fonts, and include units.

- If you must use a background image, keep it very faint so as to not distract the viewer. Don't do this:
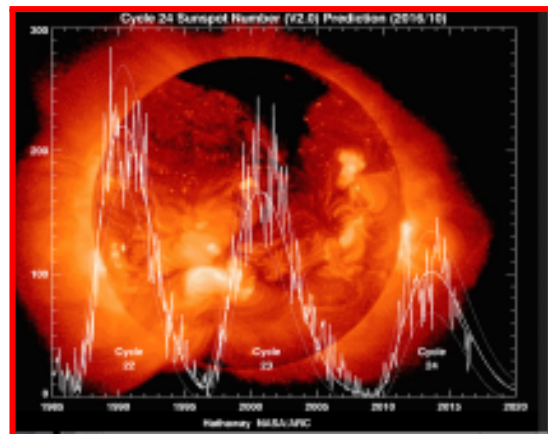
Above: These slides have distracting backgrounds which make it difficult to read words or see graphics.

3. Practicing for your talk

- Practice your talk at least a week beforehand, allowing yourself time to make changes based on your experience.

- Make certain that your talk fits within the time limit allotted, while leaving the expected time for questions and discussion. For example, if your talk is scheduled for 20 minutes + 10 minutes for questions, you should be able to practice your talk in less than 20 minutes.

- If possible, practice in front of a friendly audience. Ask your audience to think of challenging questions, and practice answering them.

- Show your talk to your colleagues, and ask for suggestions.

- Anticipate which terminology the audience may have trouble understanding, keeping in mind that many of the audience members will not be professional scientists. Make sure that you define each acronym in spoken words the first time it is used.

4. Delivering your talk

Speaking so that people will listen

- Speak clearly and not too quickly, enunciate, and project your voice to the back of the room.

- Do not face the projection screen; instead, look directly at the audience. Never read text from your slides.

- Try to address the entire room, and not just one or two persons. Keep your chin up, change the direction that you are facing occasionally, and make brief eye contact.

Using the microphone

- It can be disconcerting to hear your own voice amplified, so be careful that you do not reflexively hold the microphone too far away. Try to keep the microphone a constant distance from your mouth.

- Do not wear jewelry or other objects that will bounce against the microphone or make noises that will be amplified.

- Wear clothing with a pocket or a belt to which the microphone battery/power box can be clipped during your talk.

- If possible, try out the microphone ahead of time. You might experiment with placement, how far away from the microphone to speak, and audibility to participants at various places around the room.

Using the laser pointer

- Use the laser pointer only to draw attention to the most important things, not to highlight every item on a slide.

- Pay attention to where the laser is aimed. Don't wave it around, and especially do not point it at the audience while turned on.

5. After your talk

- Please consider submitting an article about the material in your talk to the Journal of the AAVSO. See: https://www.aavso.org/how-submit-article-jaavso

- Consider bringing supplementary materials which could be discussed with interested attendees during a break.

- Consider making your presentation available as a PDF which could be distributed electronically. At the end of your talk, you could include a slide which lists your email address, or advertises a website where attendees can obtain a copy of your presentation.

Example Slides

<div align="center">
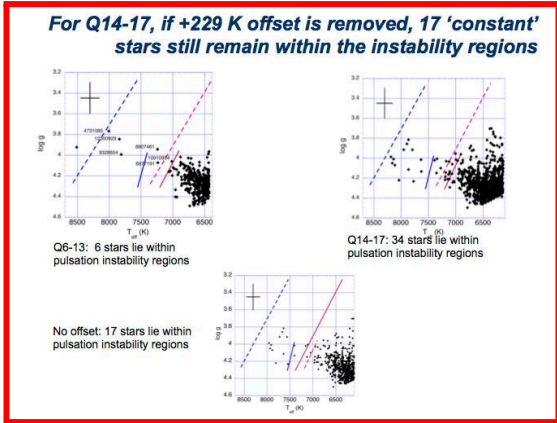
Don't   *Do*

</div>
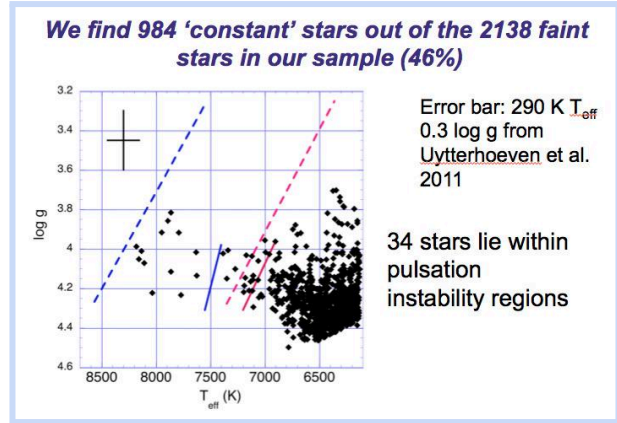
Left: This slide is too complex and difficult to read. It should be separated into several slides.
Right: The new slide has a large enough figure, better title, and is easier to read.

Left: It's impossible to read this table and understand its contents.
Right: The new slide uses charts to make its point obvious on first glance.
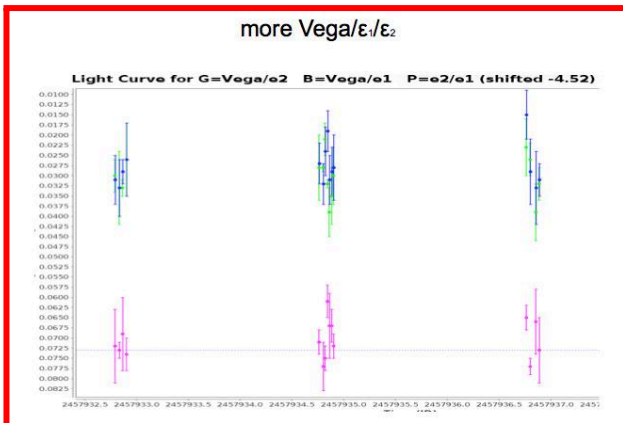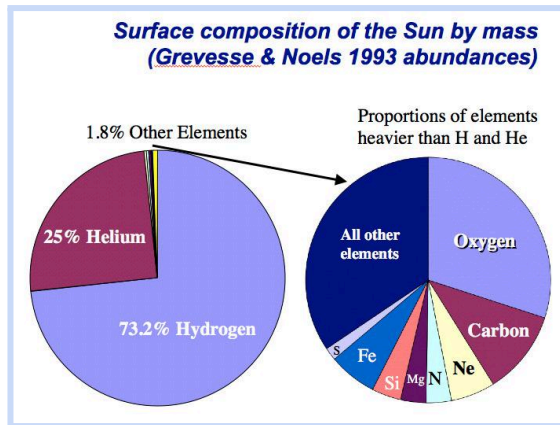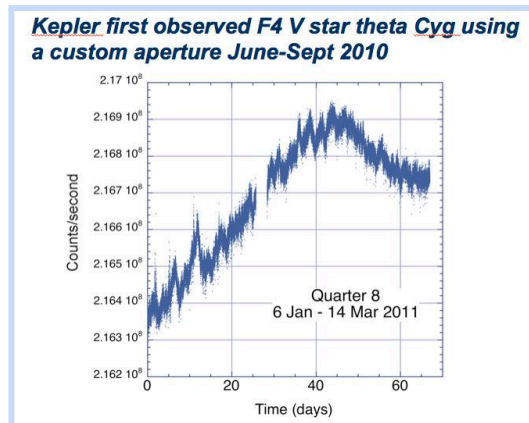
Left: This slide has unlabeled axes, too-small text, an uninformative title, and the terms are unexplained.
Right: This slide has larger font sizes, a better title, axis labels, and a clearer figure.