

## **Presentation Slides: Tips & Techniques**

- Jim Witte, 4/15/09

- **Tip 1: Construct the outline of your talk using MS Word or an outlining tool. Identify those key "take away" points that you want students to remember, and construct slides to support those points.**

*Rationale: The most common student complaint about presentation slides is that there are too many slides, too much content per slide, and that it's hard to know "what's important". If you can avoid the trap of writing everything you want to cover on your slides, you now have a way to reinforce the main take away points using your slides.*

- **Tip 2: Use "Assertion/Evidence" approach to slide construction. Slide title is a full sentence assertion, evidence is a picture, graphic organizer, graph, etc.**

*see: Michael Alley, <http://writing.engr.psu.edu/slides.html>*

- Assertions are full sentences that provides a statement of fact or opinion.

*slides with full-sentence assertions are much easier to understand and use outside a f2f lecture context.*

- Evidence can be a picture, diagram, graphic organizer.

*Avoid decorative graphics that don't serve an explanatory function. Distracting graphics that attract attention but don't bear any "explanatory load" are counterproductive.*

- **Tip 3: Leverage the visual medium**

- Certain kinds of information lend themselves to a visual presentation. Providing a mix of visual and linguistic (text/speech) representations helps learners remember more.

*see: Jim Witte, <http://jwitte.uiuc-atlas.net/static/visual>*

- Information that lends itself to graphic presentation include:

- pictures of objects/people/places under discussion

- graphic organizers like steps in a process, timelines, qualitative relationships, quantitative graphs & charts

*PowerPoint users, check out the "SmartArt Graphics" function in PPT for easy graphic organizers!*

- concept maps

- schematics, diagrams, maps

- **Tip 4: If you post your presentations for learners to use outside class, explain to your students how the slides should be used.**

- assertion/evidence format results in fewer slides that highlight the main points. Students may be accustomed to "info dump" slides from other courses that are essentially the instructor's lecture notes.

- you may want to give students a structured way (worksheets) where they take notes on readings or lectures. In the assertion/evidence format, headings for these worksheets often correspond to slides.

- **Tip 5: Screen real estate is quite limited. Busy, full slides are difficult to comprehend. Space for text in online "video" style presentations may be even more limited.**

*If you need more space for an explanation, a handout or a full web page may be more appropriate.*