

THE NON-DESIGNER'S **PRESENTATION** BOOK

SECOND EDITION

principles for effective
presentation design



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a journal

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handmade revolution
in digital design



SHAKESPEARE'S

WORDS

YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW

ROBIN WILLIAMS



The Non- Designer's Presentation Book

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principles
for
effective
presentation
design

Robin Williams



Peachpit Press

SOURDOUGH
THE ANCIENT ART OF BREAD LEAVENING

- Sourdough has been used to leaven bread for more than 7,000 years by bakers around the world.
- Baker's yeast has been used for only the past 100 years, invented for bread factories
- Pliny the Elder described making sourdough bread in the year 79 CE in his book, *Natural Philosophy*.
- In the sourdough process, gluten is broken down and rendered virtually harmless.



The presenter has too many words on the page. She is going to spend several minutes talking about these aspects of sourdough, so she doesn't really need all these words on the screen.

SOURDOUGH
THE ANCIENT ART OF BREAD LEAVENING

Used to leaven bread for more than 7,000 years.

Baker's yeast has been used for 100 years.

Gluten becomes virtually harmless.



By condensing the key points into a few words, she makes it easier for attendees to grasp the points and take notes while still listening to her. And she can enlarge both the graphic and the text (and align the text).

SOURDOUGH
THE ANCIENT ART OF BREAD LEAVENING



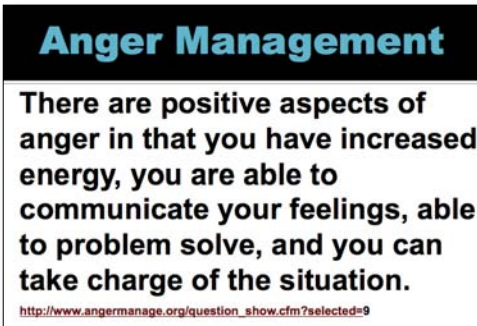
To crop an image into a shape, see Chapter 12.

She might consider not using any bullet points at all on the slide, just a visual of the gorgeous loaf of sourdough. Depending on the purpose of the presentation, she might include a handout with the important bits.

Avoid lengthy complete sentences

You rarely need to write complete sentences on a slide, especially if they're long. You will be *speaking* in complete sentences, so you want your audience to be able to skim the main points on your slide. If the main points are instantly accessible (no one has to sludge through a dense sentence), the audience will be able to immediately grasp those ideas and still have enough brain-processing power left over to *listen* to you as you elaborate on those very points.

Notice in the example below there are no bullets. There are bullet *points*, but simply eliminating the actual bullets softens the slide.



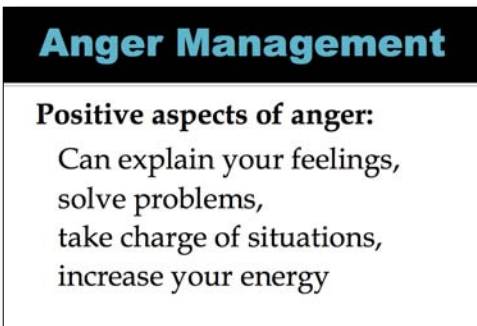
Anger Management

There are positive aspects of anger in that you have increased energy, you are able to communicate your feelings, able to problem solve, and you can take charge of the situation.

http://www.angermanage.org/question_show.cfm?selected=9

Can anyone read the web address? It should be on your handouts—no one can copy complex addresses properly while listening to you.

Of course, you might be posting this deck and want the address on the slide, but make sure the link is clickable; otherwise post the link in the notes—don't clutter up the slide.



Anger Management

Positive aspects of anger:

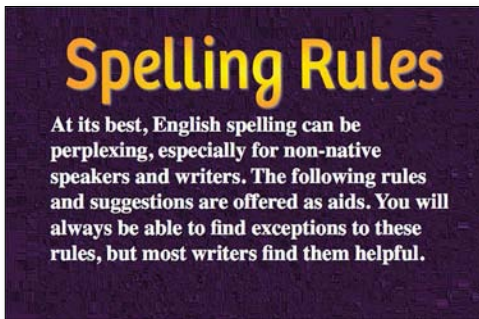
- Can explain your feelings,
- solve problems,
- take charge of situations,
- increase your energy

With this limited amount of text, you can speak your piece and your audience will pick up these main points more easily.

Don't present your notes

The example below is exactly what people complain about when they say, “Don’t read your slides!” The problem is not that the speaker reads her slide—the problem is that she has put her introductory notes right on the slide *so she has no choice but to read the slide*—it’s her intro.

This style of presentation design is perfectly okay if you plan to post the file and it must stand alone. But if you are presenting it in person, do not put the full text *that you plan to say* on the page. Otherwise why do you need to show up?



Don’t write on the slide what you plan to speak aloud. Give people a reason to listen to your dynamic self.



This is all you need for an intro slide. You’ll **show** this slide and **speak** the text as shown above.

By *not* reading the slide, it emphasizes YOU as the authority and center of this presentation. It indicates that you know your stuff and you’re comfortable speaking and teaching, not just reading.

Write in the active voice

I realize this little reminder about active voice vs. passive voice is not really a design issue, but it will affect the number of words you put on a slide, which *is* a design issue. I bring it up right here because generally the active voice takes fewer words and right now we're in the process of deleting superfluous words for clarity.

You can recognize when a sentence is in passive voice because no one is responsible. It's like when you're talking to a group about an issue but don't want to point fingers.

PASSIVE: The office microwave was blown up by someone.

ACTIVE: George blew up the microwave.

Check your slides to see if you explain, give directions, or write bullet points passively; if so, make them active.

PASSIVE: When a fire is suspected, one can push
the Big Red Button.

ACTIVE: If you suspect a fire, push the Big Red Button.

PASSIVE: If the feeling exists that your life is being threatened,
you can often escape by running away.

ACTIVE: If your life is threatened, run.

Active writing is more dynamic, and more importantly for a slide presentation, *it uses fewer words*.

To notice passive writing, see if someone is responsible. That is, the sentence "The cookies were eaten" is passive because no one is responsible, while "He ate the cookies" is active.

Also see the following page about gerunds, which are verbs that have been turned into nouns by adding *-ing*.

The passive voice uses too many words:



With fewer words, you can consider using full-screen graphics. You are going to be expanding on this topic as you speak (that's why you're there) so you don't need all those words on the screen:



Now try even fewer words:



You can consider not using any text at all, since your attendees will have a visual message in their eyes and your relevant words in their ears (and any necessary tables of data in their handouts; see Chapter 11). It's very trendy to do that right now—images with no words. But having the key word or phrase *plus* the image is a perfectly viable option because it brands *both* the text and the image into the brain and there's nothing wrong with that. And it helps you easily refer to items as you talk about them.

Avoid the 'ings

Gerunds are those verbs that act as nouns or noun phrases by adding “ing” to them. 'Ings tend to be passive and weak, and it takes more words to use 'ings.

“Do you mind my *asking*?” as opposed to, “May I ask?”

“We will *be seeing* a drop in sales next week,” as opposed to,
“Sales will drop next week.”

“You’re *going* to make my day,” as opposed to,
“Make my day.”

Check your text and see if you can delete any gerunds and thus make the sentences or phrases more direct, less passive, and use fewer words.

Sometimes, of course, a word ending in 'ing is the best possible word to use, and that's okay. For instance, you can't talk about the fishing industry without using the word “fishing.” The “fish industry” just isn't right.

But get rid of the 'ings that are unnecessary.

Anger Management	Anger Management
Anger management would be seen then as increasing the positive aspects or functions of anger and decreasing the negative functions of anger.	Increases the positive functions of anger Decreases the negative functions of anger

Get rid of the complete sentence and get rid of the 'ings—now the actual message is much clearer.

Also, can you see how passive that sentence is? “Anger management would be seen then as” Good heavens, how wimpy can you get? Stand up and make a statement: “Anger management increases the positive functions of anger.” There.

With fewer words on the slide, the audience can easily listen to you, take notes, and still absorb the important content.