

AN *e*-BURST OF INSPIRATION FROM THE BEST BOOKS

Jerry Weissman

# PRESENTATION SLIDE TEXT

Less Is More



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# Presentation Slide Text

*Less is More*

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When giving presentations all text slides come in only two options: bullets and sentences. Each of these options is quite different, with separate forms and functions. Keep them distinct.

A bullet is meant to express a core idea, so craft it in the form of a headline. Look at any newspaper, and you'll see that a headline is not a complete sentence. Basic English grammar dictates that a sentence must contain a subject and a verb, but most headlines are not complete sentences. Generally, headlines omit the parts of speech that form complete sentences: articles (the, an, a), conjunctions (and, but, or), and prepositions (of, for, by, through).

Why are headlines written in this shorthand style? There are several good reasons. When fewer words have to be squeezed into an available space, the size of the letters can be increased, enhancing legibility. Furthermore, by providing the gist of the story in a few words, readers can scan a page full of stories in a few seconds and pick out the ones of interest.

Legibility and speed are equally important in presentation slides. When you create a text slide containing bullets, you are, in effect, presenting headlines only. Where does the body text appear? Not on any slide. As the presenter, it is *your* job to put flesh on the bones of the headline bullets. The presenter provides the body text. The presenter is the focus of the presentation.

This approach can make for a very crisp, clear presentation. You can summarize most of the concepts of your story (distilled in the Brainstorming process and organized into clusters) in two-to-five-word headline-style bullets. Some typical concepts from any company story might include

- Breakthrough New Product Line
- Experienced Management Team
- Exploding Market
- Targeted Strategy

How long would you be able to speak about any of these concepts as they apply to your business? Probably for several minutes each, if not longer. Therefore, the optimal presentation is composed of a presenter providing spoken body text for headline-style bullets on the slides.

What about sentences? When should you use them in your graphics?

The only time you need a sentence is when you need to demonstrate verbatim accuracy. Use a sentence only when you're citing the specific words in a quotation, like this:

**"PQR Technologies is the most exciting new business concept I've seen this year."**

**Tom Hudson**  
***High-Tech Monthly***

While you can use full sentences for your endorsing quotations, you would do well to keep them to a minimum, and rely primarily on bullets as headlines for your text slides.