

How to
Design
TED-Worthy
Presentation Slides

Presentation Design Principles from TED Talks

(Exclusive Course Handout)

© AKASH KARIA

Bestselling author of “How to Deliver a Great TED Talk”

www.AkashKaria.com

“You can reverse engineer almost any good design. Take apart your favorite presentations, infographics, websites and figure out how it’s done and remix it into something new.”

- *Jesse Desjardins*

HOW TO BREATHE LIFE INTO YOUR PRESENTATION...INSTEAD OF DRAINING IT OUT OF YOUR AUDIENCE

SIR KEN ROBINSON

For a TED talk, presenters are given a maximum slot of 18 minutes to share their message with the world. Some choose to present without slides. For example, Sir Ken Robinson delivered a very inspiring speech on education without the use of any slides. Watch the presentation here: akashkaria.com/ken

TEDx SPEAKER GUIDE:

According to the TEDx speaker guide, “Slides can be helpful for the audience, but they are by no means necessary or relevant to every talk. Ask yourself: **Would my slides help and clarify information for the audience, or would they distract and confuse them?**” Download TEDx speaker guide here: bit.ly/1fhMIty

THE MOST COMMON MISTAKE – AND HOW TO AVOID IT

SIMON SINEK

What was the core message of Simon's talk? Watch Simon's TED talk here: akashkaria.com/simon

CHIARA OJEDA

Simon didn't use slides in his TED talk, but one of my favorite presentation designers, Chiara Ojeda created a Slideshare presentation around the talk. As illustrated in Chiara's slide, which you can view at akashkaria.com/chiara the core message of the talk was “start with why”.

DAN PINK

In Dan Pink's TED talk (akashkaria.com/dan), the core message of the speech was that motivation is not about “[enticing] people with a sweeter carrot or [threatening] them with a sharper stick. We need a whole new approach.” All the examples, research and stories used in Dan's talk were used to support his core message.

THIS ONE PRINCIPLE WILL MAKE YOU BETTER THAN 90% OF PRESENTERS

SIMON SINEK

Consider this you-focused opening from Simon Sinek's brilliant TED talk, "Start with Why" (akashkaria.com/simon). Notice how the you-focused opening immediately grabs the audience's attention.

AMY CUDDY

Watch the opening of Amy Cuddy's TED talk, "Your body language shapes who you are" at akashkaria.com/amy:

THE FIRST STEP TO CREATING TED-WORTHY SLIDES

NANCY DUARTE

“Whether it’s an official-’cause-its-on-my-calendar brainstorm...or a ‘quickstorm’ (a spontaneous 20-30 minute all-out cram session with some of the brightest folks you work with) collecting perspectives early on can be an enormous help.” - duarte.com

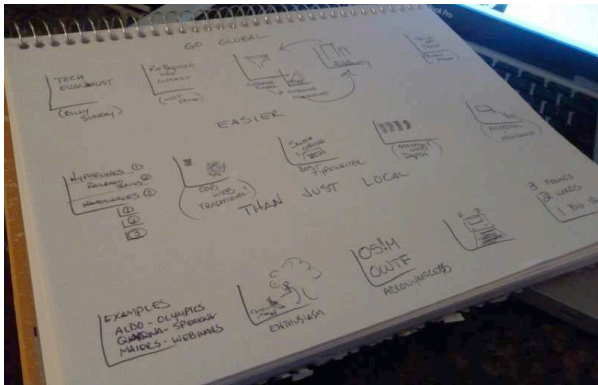
HOW TO QUICKLY STORYBOARD YOUR PRESENTATION

NANCY DUARTE

Nancy Duarte, who gave the TEDx talk, “The secret structure of great TED talks” (akashkaria.com/nancy), was interviewed for the TED blog. When asked, “What is the best way to start creating a presentation?” she said: **“My best advice is to not start in PowerPoint.”**

STORYBOARD

What is a storyboard? It’s a visual outline of your presentation (akashkaria.com/story)



Source: [Mike Sansone](#) via Compfight

Storyboards were first used for movies, but their use has extended to marketing, advertising and presentation design. Why are they used in presentation design? Because they free presenters from the self-imposed constraints of using headings and bullet points.

NILOFER MERCHANT

Watch Nilofer Merchant’s TED Talk here: akashkaria.com/nilofer

BILL GATES: DULL TO DASHING SLIDES

BILL GATES

In his *Windows Live* presentation, Bill Gates used some very ugly, bullet-filled slides to launch Windows Live (akashkaria.com/bill).



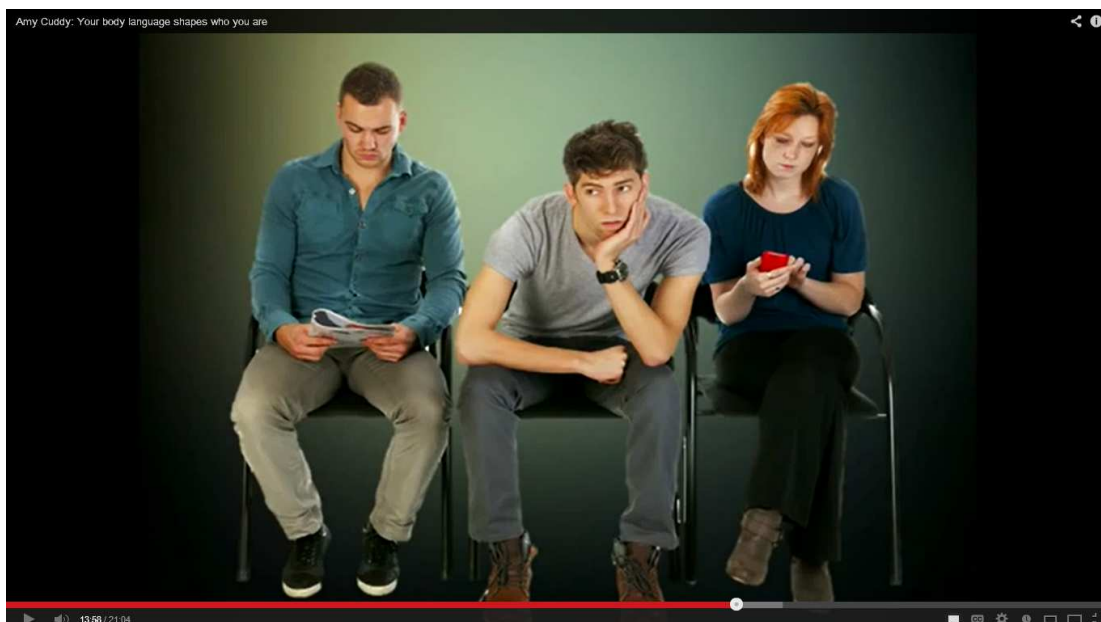
Source: niallkennedy via Flickr

Fortunately, Bill Gates has learned that your slides can make or break a presentation. In his 2010 TED talk, Bill Gates used highly visual slides to deliver his message. Check out a sample slide:



AMY CUDDY

Here is another example of a great slide used in a TED talk by Amy Cuddy (akashkaria.com/amy) that follows the rule of minimizing text on slides.



200 SLIDES IN 18 MINUTES

LARRY LESSIG

In his TED talk on “How creativity is being strangled by the law,” Professor Larry Lessig used 200 slides (akashkaria.com/larry)

For example, let’s take just one sentence from Larry’s talk:

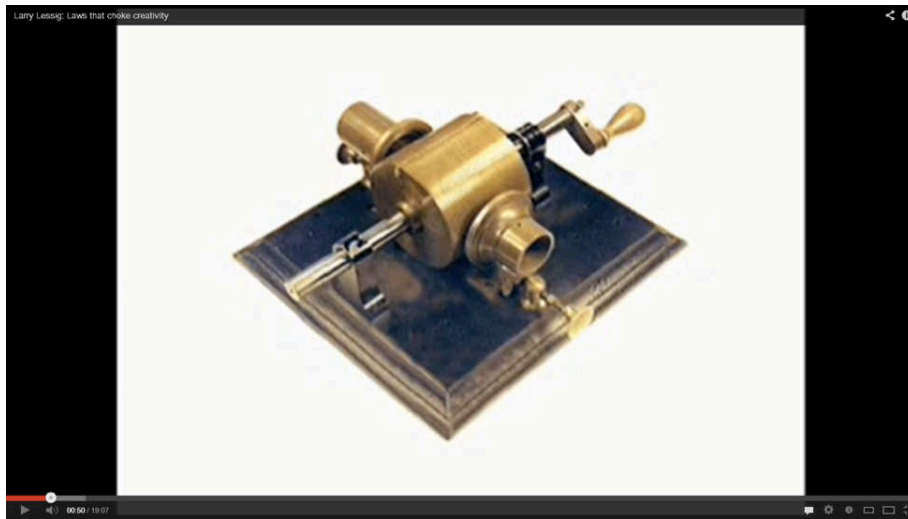
“1906. This man, John Philip Sousa,



traveled to this place, the United States Capitol,



to talk about this technology, what he called the, quote, ‘talking machines.’”



THE SETH GODIN PRESENTATION FORMULA

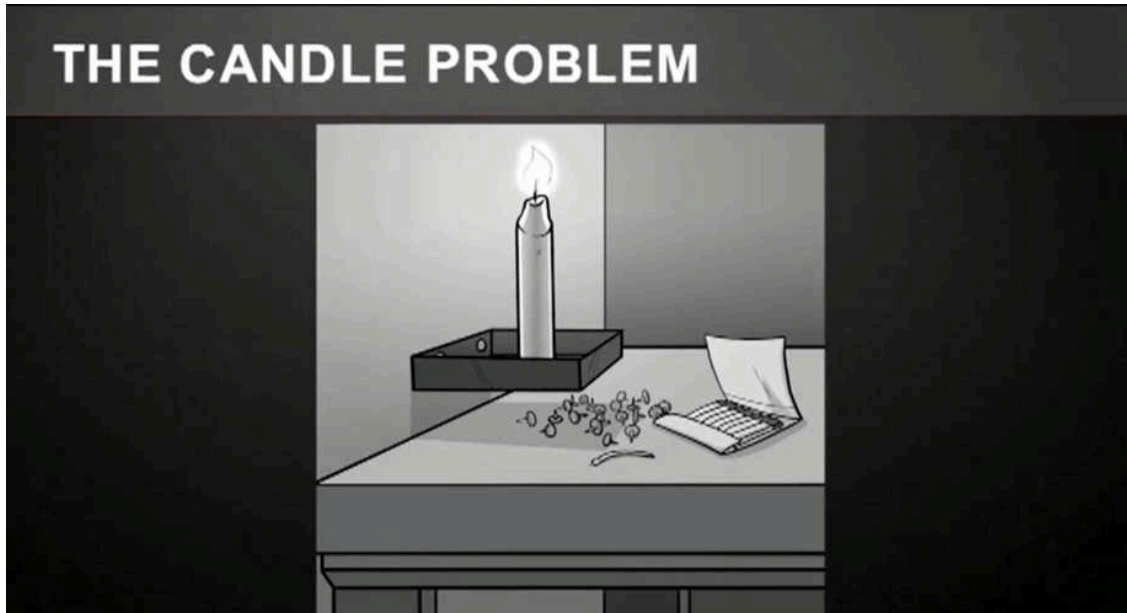
SETH GODIN

In his TED talk, “Why tribes, not money or factories, will change the world” (akashkaria.com/seth) Seth Godin’s slides consisted of many large, colorful images with almost no text on them.



DAN PINK

For example, in his TED talk “The science of motivation,” Dan Pink was describing an experiment that was conducted. While the experiment wasn’t overly complicated, explaining the setup without a picture would take too much time and might be confusing. Therefore, Dan had a slide that was filled up by an image that showed the experiment setup (akashkaria.com/experiment):



SLIDESHARE

For a short lesson on how an idea can be represented visually, check out this great Slideshare presentation (akashkaria.com/slideshare) that walks you through the process.

AL GORE

Unfortunately, Al Gore's TED talk on global warming was not as impressive. His slides consisted of text-only, and while his talk made sense on an intellectual level, it failed to involve the viewer on an emotional level.



Check out Al Gore's full presentation on "Averting the climate crisis" at akashkaria.com/gore:

JACQUELINE NOVOGRATZ

In her TED talk about escaping poverty, Jacqueline Novogratz displayed photos of a slum she visited in Kenya. You can view the full presentation at akashkaria.com/jacqueline



FULL BLEED IMAGES

When using images, make sure you use full-bleed images (akashkaria.com/imagebleed). What does it mean to bleed the image? This simply means that the image takes up the entire slide.



Image on slide: [Chris Yarzab](#) via Compfight

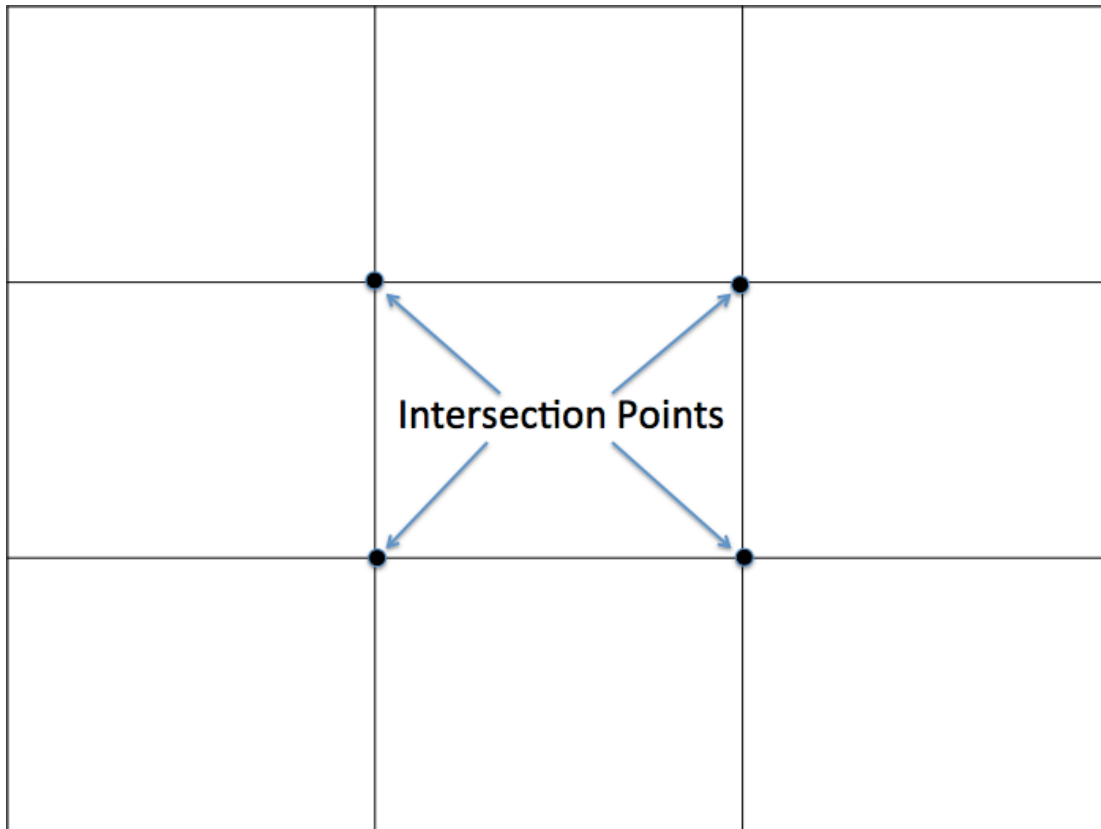
Full-bleed images are more appealing to look at than thumbnails of pictures placed on slides:



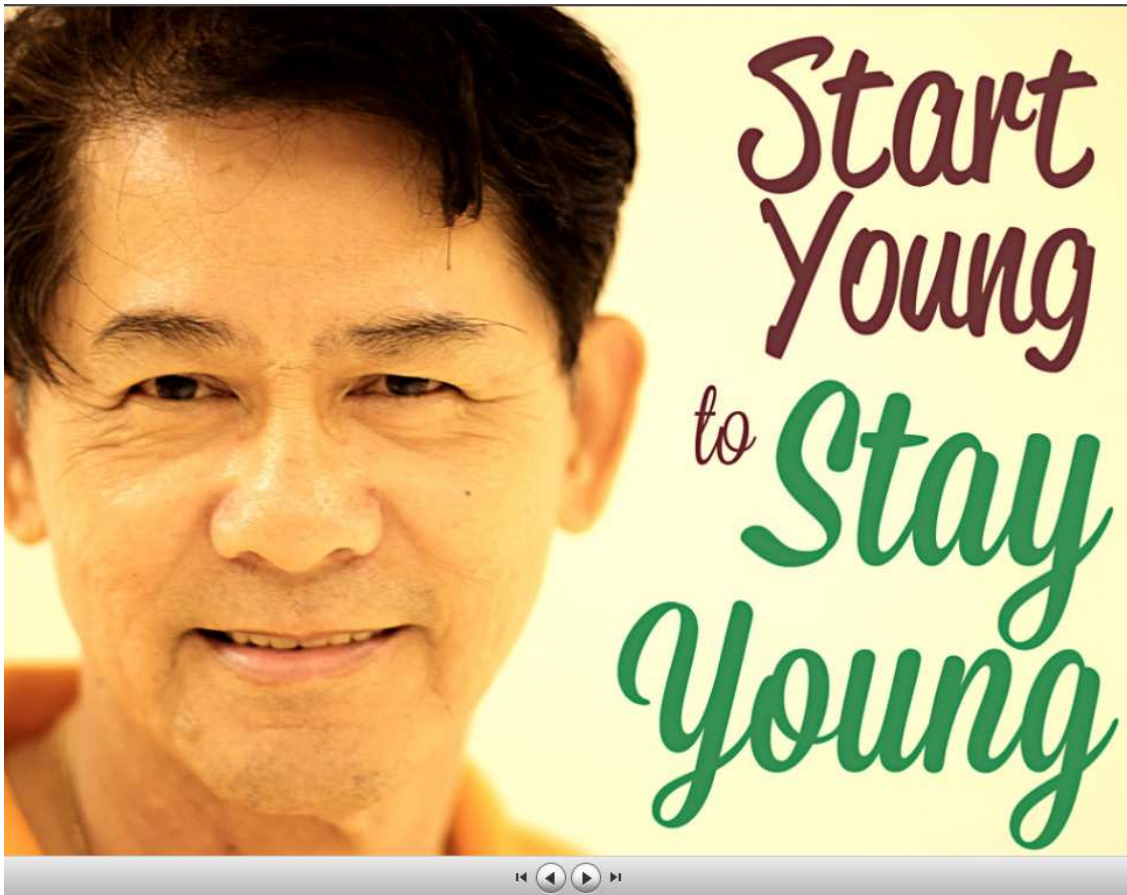
Image on slide: [Chris Yarzab](#) via Compfight

THE RULE OF THIRDS

Images are most powerful when they follow the rule of thirds. What is the rule of thirds? The rule of thirds refers to dividing a slide into thirds (both horizontally and vertically):



You can see example of an image that uses the rule of thirds to create visual appeal at akashkaria.com/thirds:



Source: [Eugene Cheng](#)

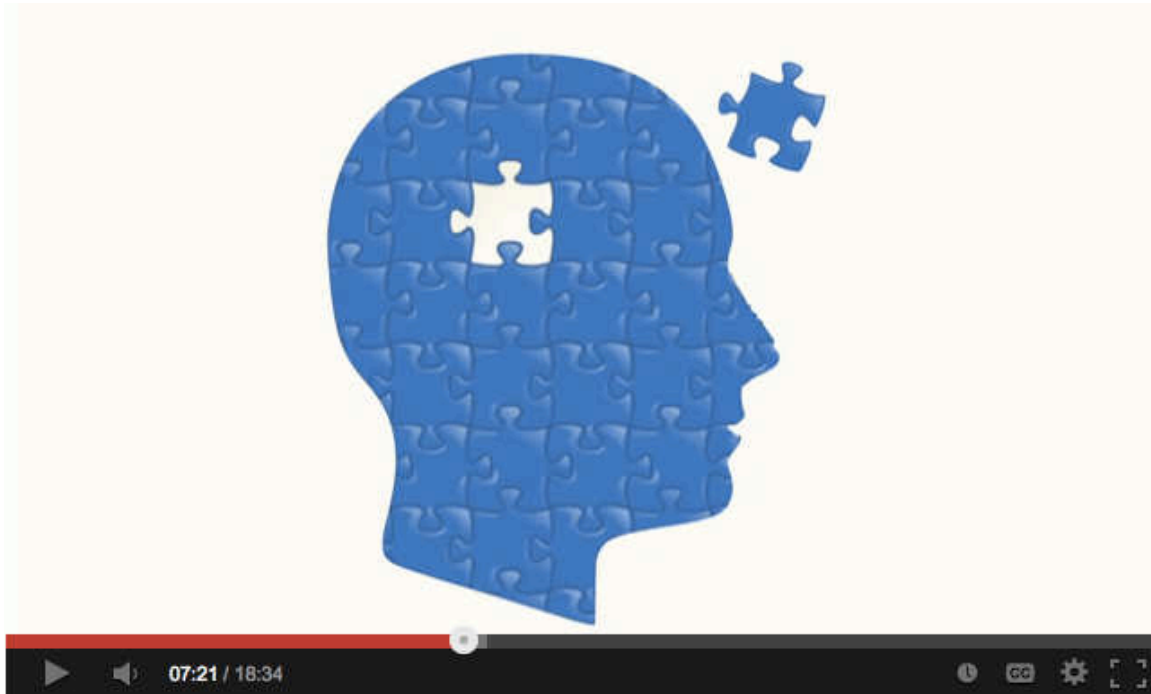
BRENE BROWN

Don't be tempted to fill your entire slide up. Instead of cluttering your slides up with lots of images, text, logos and charts, allow your slides to breathe. For example, check out the slide from Brene Brown's TED talk on "The power of vulnerability" at akashkaria.com/brene:



STUART FIRESTEIN

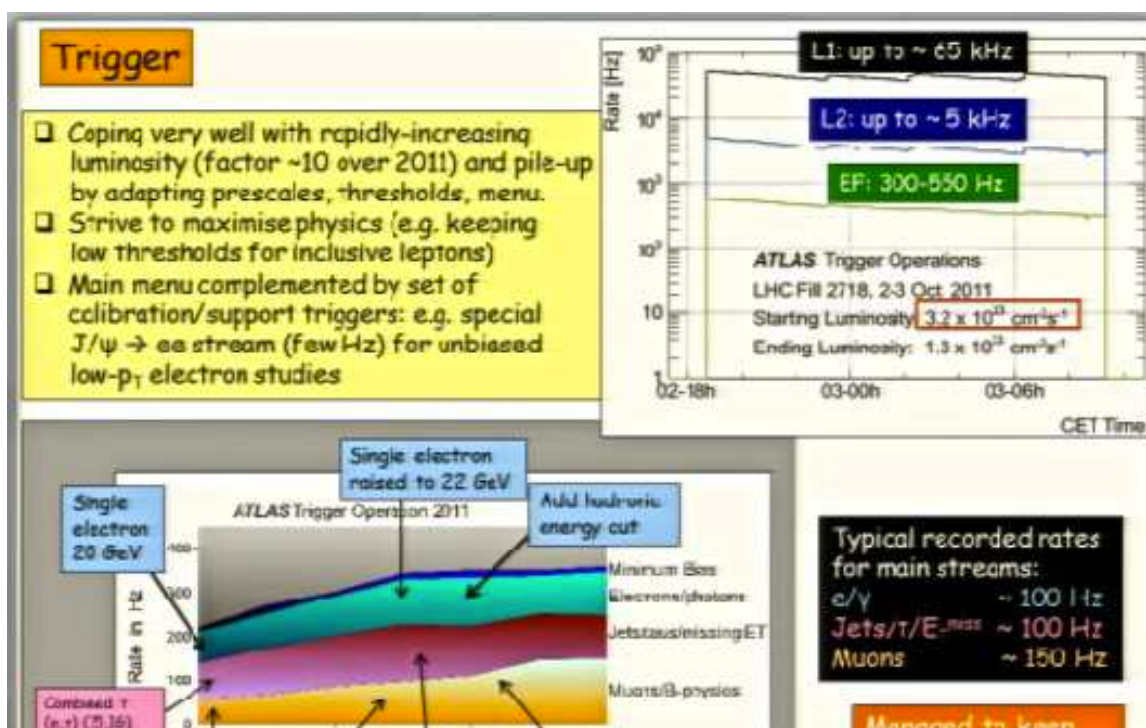
Also, check out Stuart Firestein's slide from his TED talk at akashkaria.com/stuart and notice how his slide contains a large image and plenty of empty space:



IS YOUR FONT SEXY ENOUGH?

HIGGS BOSON

Because the PowerPoint was so poorly designed (and the font choice was terrible), it failed to convey the groundbreaking significance of the particle and inspired ridicule instead of awe (akashkaria.com/boson):



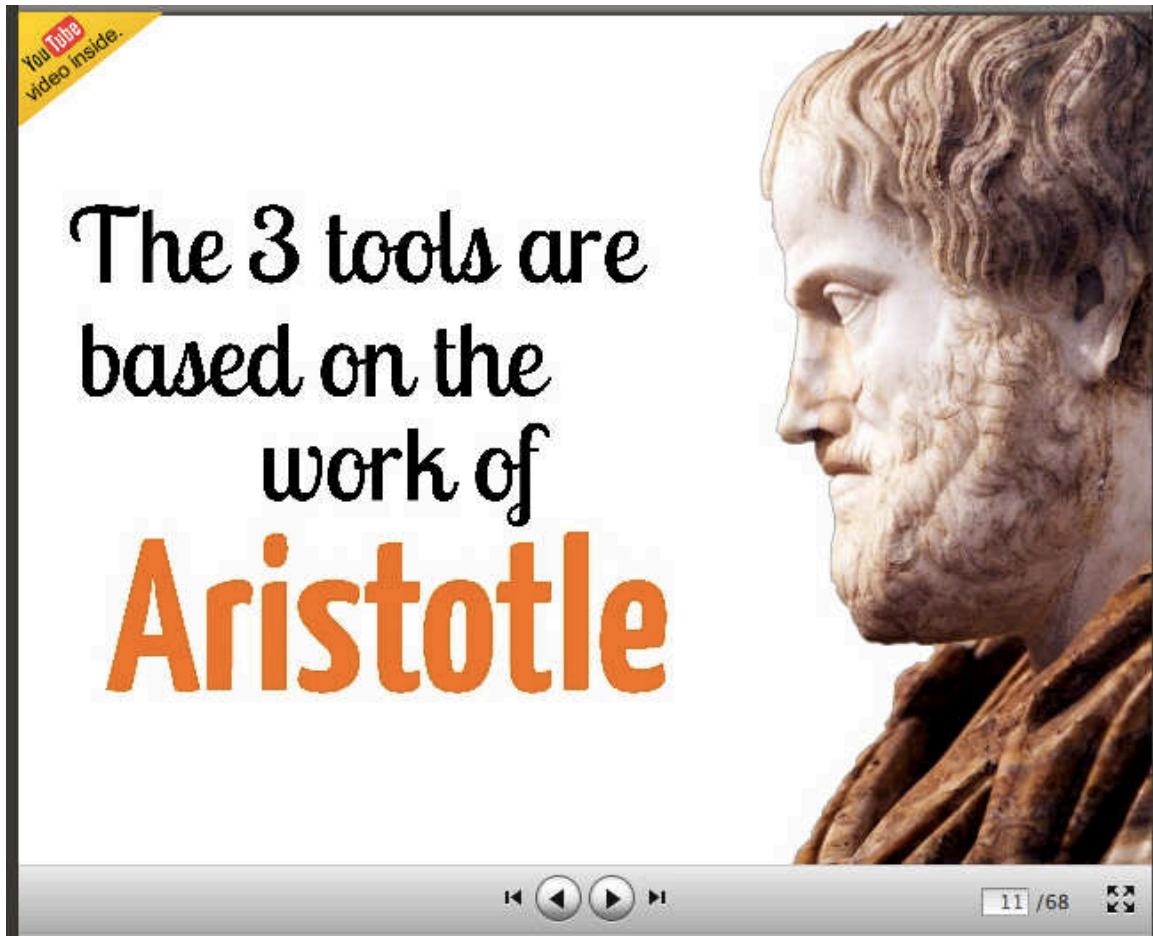
AKASH KARIA

Some fonts are reserved for serious presentations, whereas other fonts can be used for lighthearted presentations. Consider the font in my slide at akashkaria.com/font:



What feelings does the font convey? Some words that come to mind are: Bold. Powerful. Commanding. Authoritative. Impactful.

Consider an alternative font in the second slide on akashkaria.com/font:

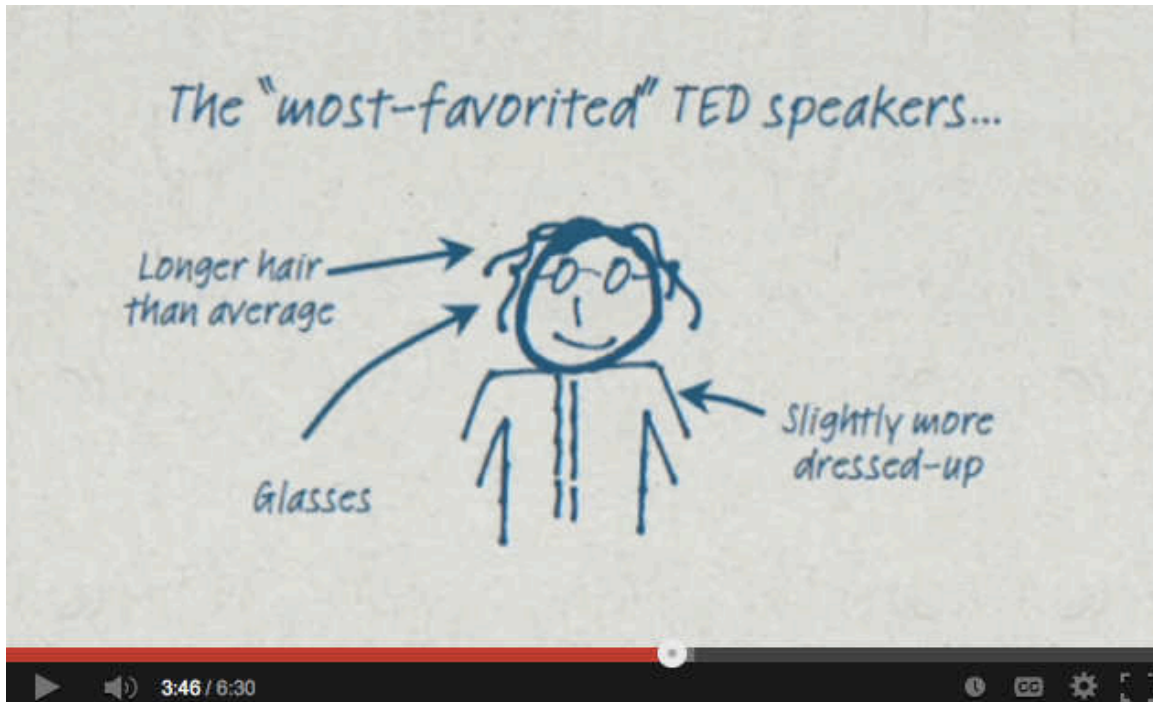


What feelings does this font convey? Some words that come to mind are: Elegant. Sleek. Sophisticated. Stylish.

Since different fonts convey different feelings, it's important you choose a font that matches your message.

SEBASTIAN WERNICKE

For example, in his TED talk called “Lies, damned lies and statistics (about TED talks)” Sebastian Wernicke shared with the audience his statistical analysis on how to create the optimum TED talk. The talk was fun and lighthearted. Thus, he chose a font that would convey this mood (akashkaria.com/sebastian):



RACHEL BOTSMAN

Check the slide taken from Rachel Botsman's TED talk

(akashkaria.com/rachel) called "The currency of the new economy is trust."

On the slide, Rachel displays a quote by Mark Pagel. Look at how large the font is to ensure that it is clearly readable from the back of the room:



GEORGE PAPANDREOU

Using different font sizes on a single slide is a great way of building visual hierarchy. For an example, look at the slide from George Papandreou's TED talk, "Imagine a democracy without borders" (akashkaria.com/george):



PAUL KEMP-ROBERTSON

Now let's look at another slide, this time from Paul Kemp-Robertson's TED talk (akashkaria.com/paul). Notice how font size is used to draw attention to the most important element of the slide:



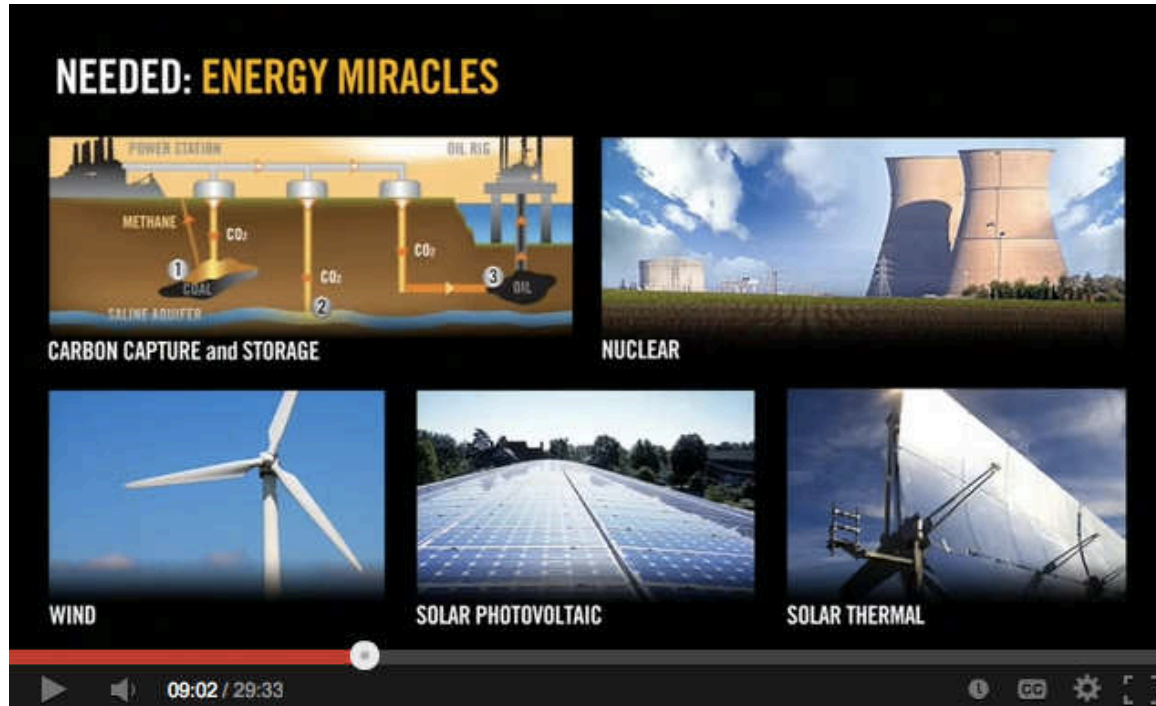
If you pay attention to billboards and other forms of advertising, you'll see this same principle in action:

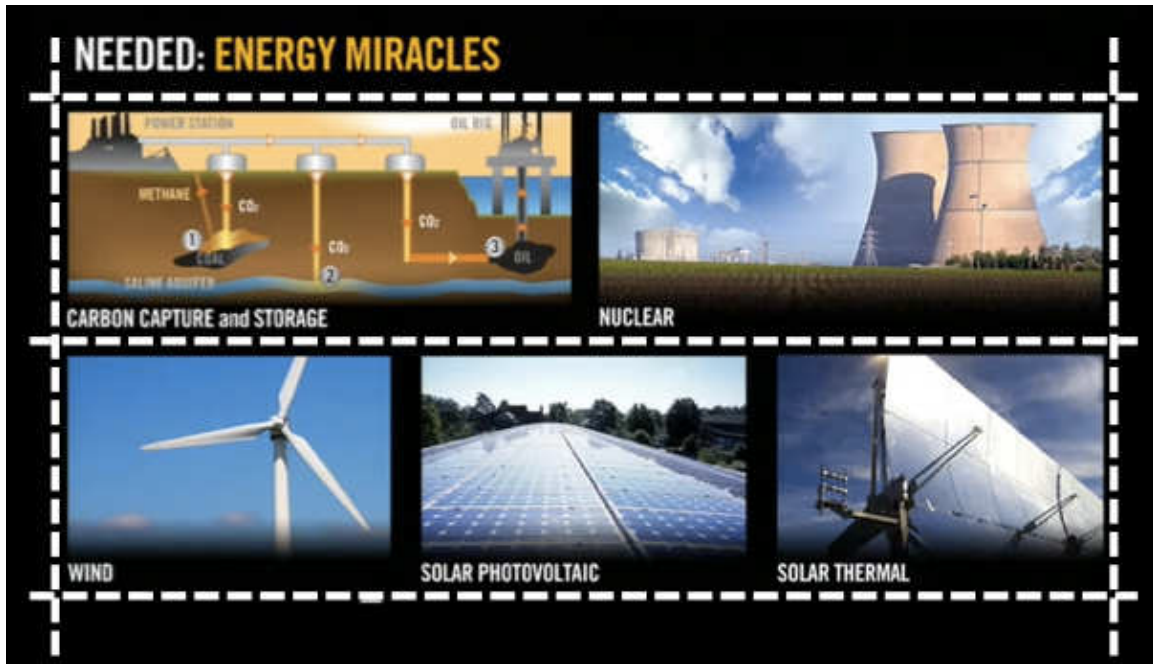


Source: [Thomas Hawk](#) via Flickr

BILL GATES

Alignment is an important principle of design. You can an example of this principle in action in the slides from Bill Gates' TED talk (akashkaria.com/alignment) where all the images and text on the slide are aligned and connected:





KFC

The principle of alignment is also visible in good advertisements. Have a look at the KFC ad (akashkaria.com/kfc), and pay attention to the alignment of the text. Notice how the all the text is left-aligned, giving the ad a clean, organized look:



Source: [Thomas Hawk](#) via Flickr

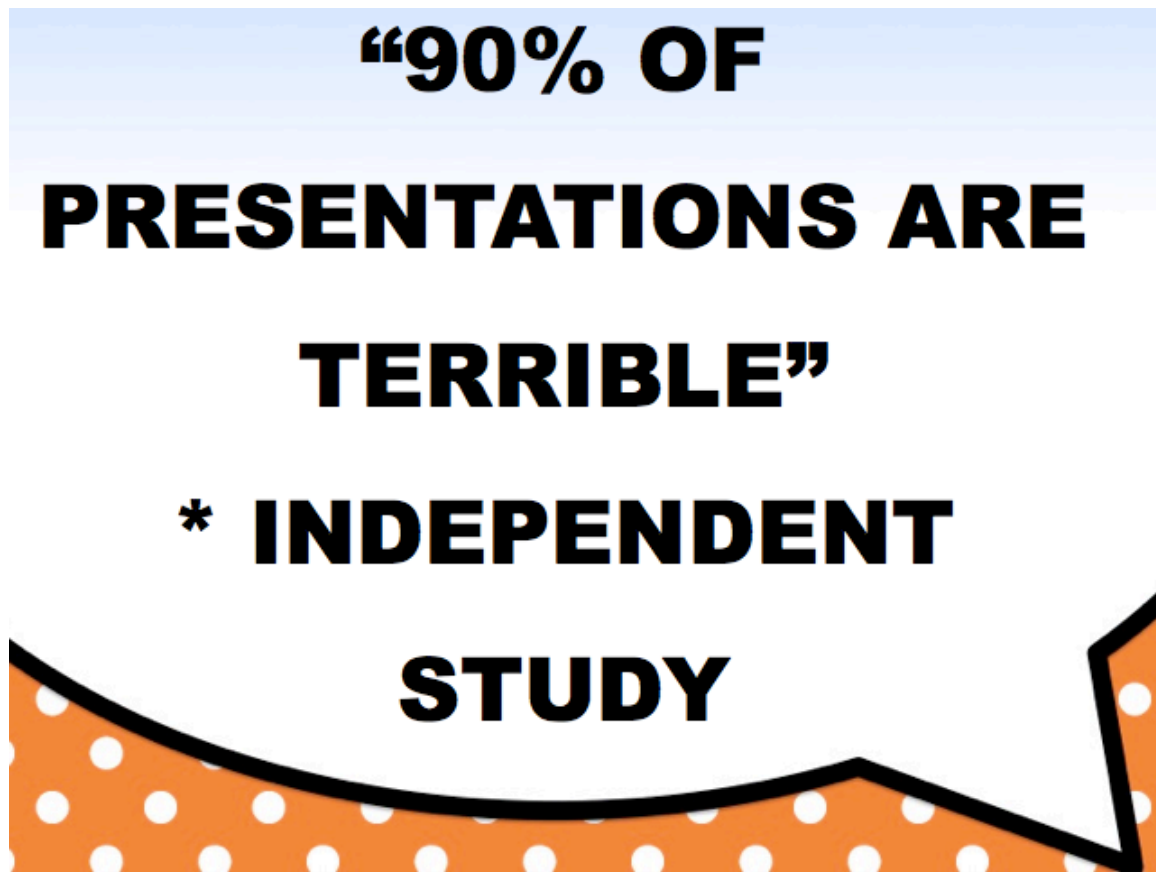
PAUL KEMP-ROBERTSON

Finally, look at the slide by Paul-Kemp Robertson (akashkaria.com/paul) where the text is centrally aligned and you can picture an invisible line running vertically through the center of the slide:

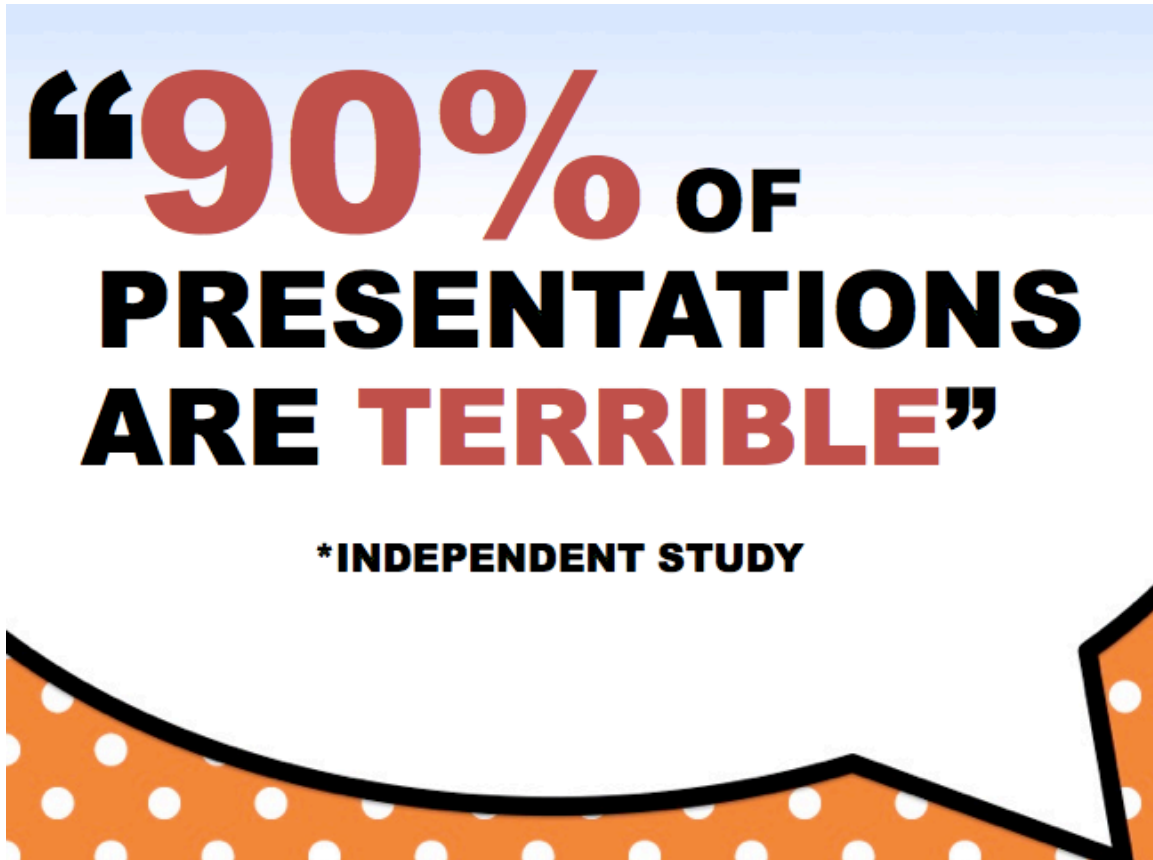


PROXIMITY

When different elements on the slide belong together, they should be placed in close proximity to each other. Let's have a look at an example where no thought has been placed regarding proximity and line spacing between text elements (akashkaria.com/proximity):

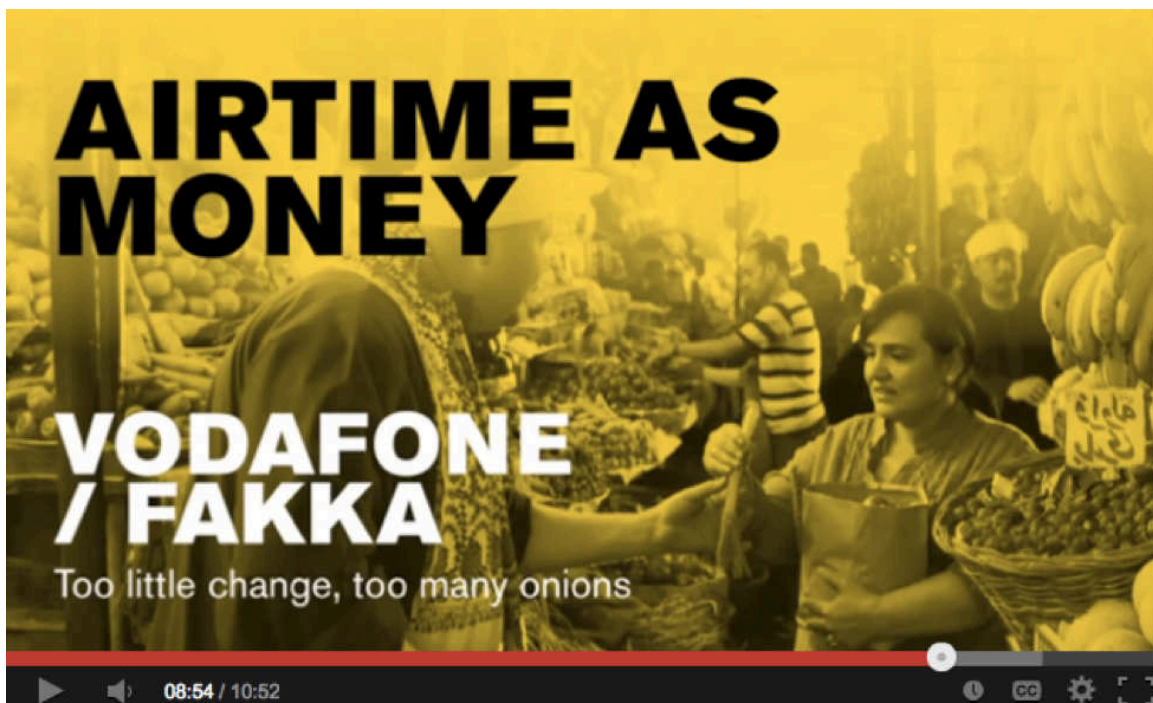


Let's change the slide so that the quote and the quote source are clearly two different elements. We will do this by changing the proximity between the lines (akashkaria.com/proximity):



PAUL KEMP-ROBERTSON

You can see two more examples of the law of proximity in action on the slides by Paul-Kemp Robertson:



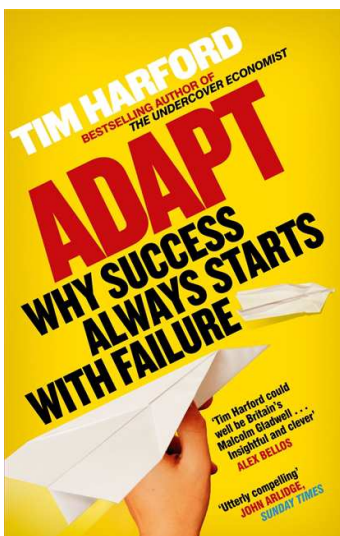
GEORGE PAPANDREOU

A final way to add excitement to your typography is to experiment with rotating text (akashkaria.com/george):



ADAPT

You can rotate text simply for aesthetic purposes. An example of a great book cover that grabs attention using rotated text is Tim Harford's book, "Adapt" (akashkaria.com/adapt):



“DUDE, WHERE’S THE CONTRAST?”

PANKAJ GHEMAWAT

In the sample slide by Pankaj Ghemawat (hakashkaria.com/pankaj), who presented at the TED Global 2012, Pankaj uses a simple black background:



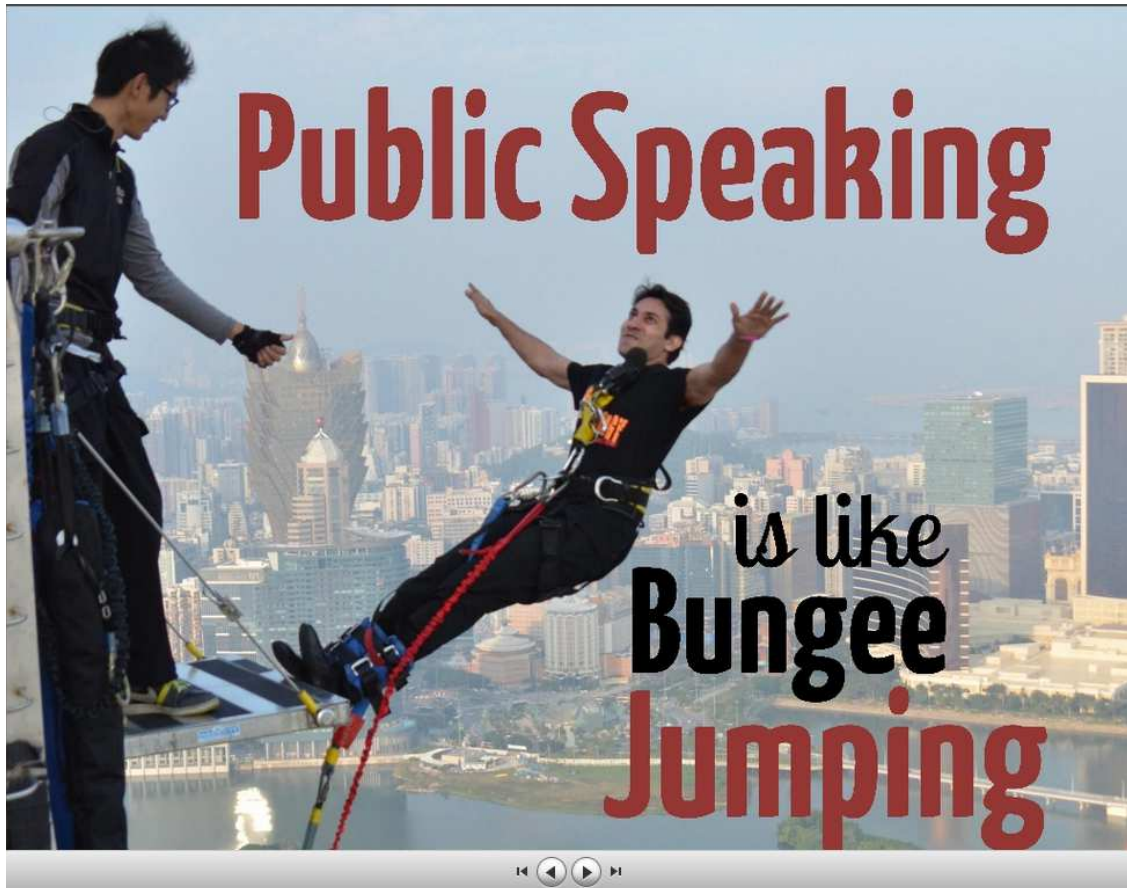
BILL GATES

You don't necessarily have to use a plain background. Sometimes, it can be more visually exciting and appropriate to use an image as a background instead. The picture should fill up the entire slide (with the text being placed upon it), such as in the slide from Bill Gates' TED talk, "Innovating to zero" (akashkaria.com/innovating):



AKASH KARIA

If you want to ensure sufficient contrast between the text and the background, make sure you place your text over the non-noisy sections of the image. As an example, check out this sample slide that I created for one of my presentations (akashkaria.com/publicspeaking):



DAN PALLATO

Let me give you another example where the text has been placed over the non-noisy section of the image. This slide is from a TED talk by Dan Pallato, which you can find at akashkaria.com/pallato:



AKASH KARIA

What if your image has no quiet space for you to place your text over? For example, consider the following slide (akashkaria.com/contrast):



Image on slide: [Paul Bica](#) via Flickr

One option to achieve better contrast is to fill the text box with color:



RISE TO THE TOP



Image on slide: [Paul Bica](#) via Flickr

BILL GATES

Another option to achieve the same effect is to place a shape (such as a box or a circle) behind the text and to fill the shape with color

(akashkaria.com/shape):



JESSE DESJARDINS

Another example is from Jesse Desjardins' popular presentation, "You suck at PowerPoint!" which you can view at akashkaria.com/shape



AKASH KARIA

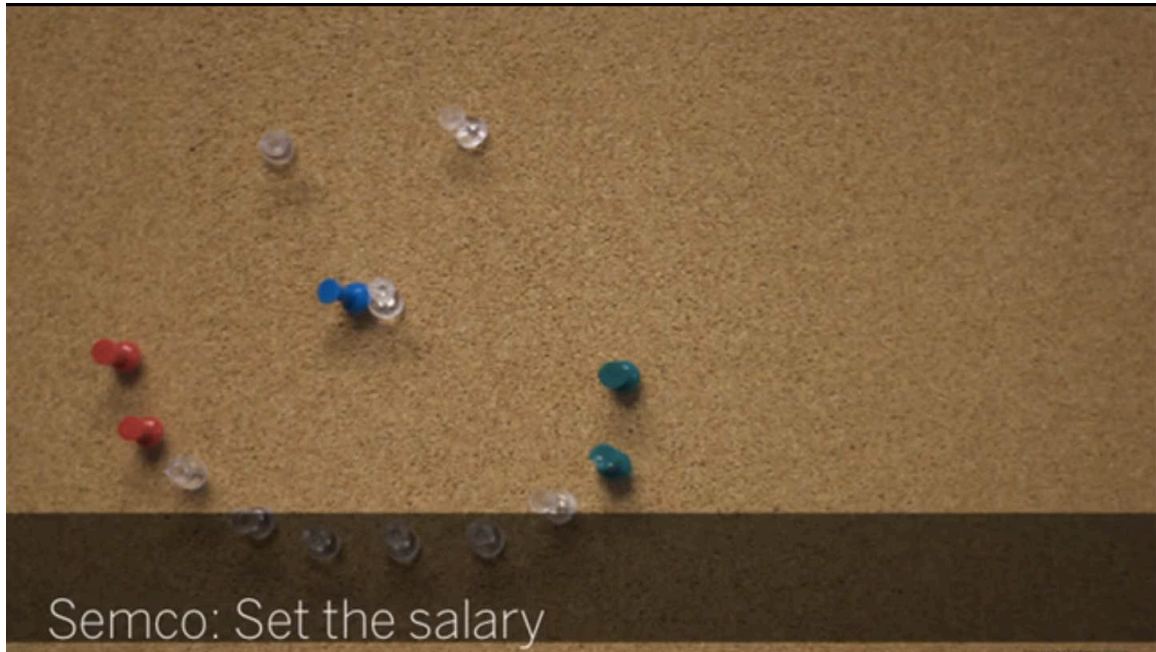
Another technique you can use is to fill the text box (or shape) with a solid color but to make it semi-transparent so that the background is partially visible. You can see an example of this at akashkaria.com/contrast:



Image on slide: [Paul Bica](#) via Flickr

TIM LEBERCHT

Making the text box semi-transparent allows the background image to still be visible. You can see an example slide from Tim Leberecht TED talk at akashkaria.com/semi:



WOLFGANG KESSLING

Here's one final example. This one comes from Wolfgang Kessling's TED talk on "How to air-condition outdoor spaces" ([akashkaria.com/semi](https://www.akashkaria.com/semi)):



DISPLAYING DATA WITHOUT BEING DULL

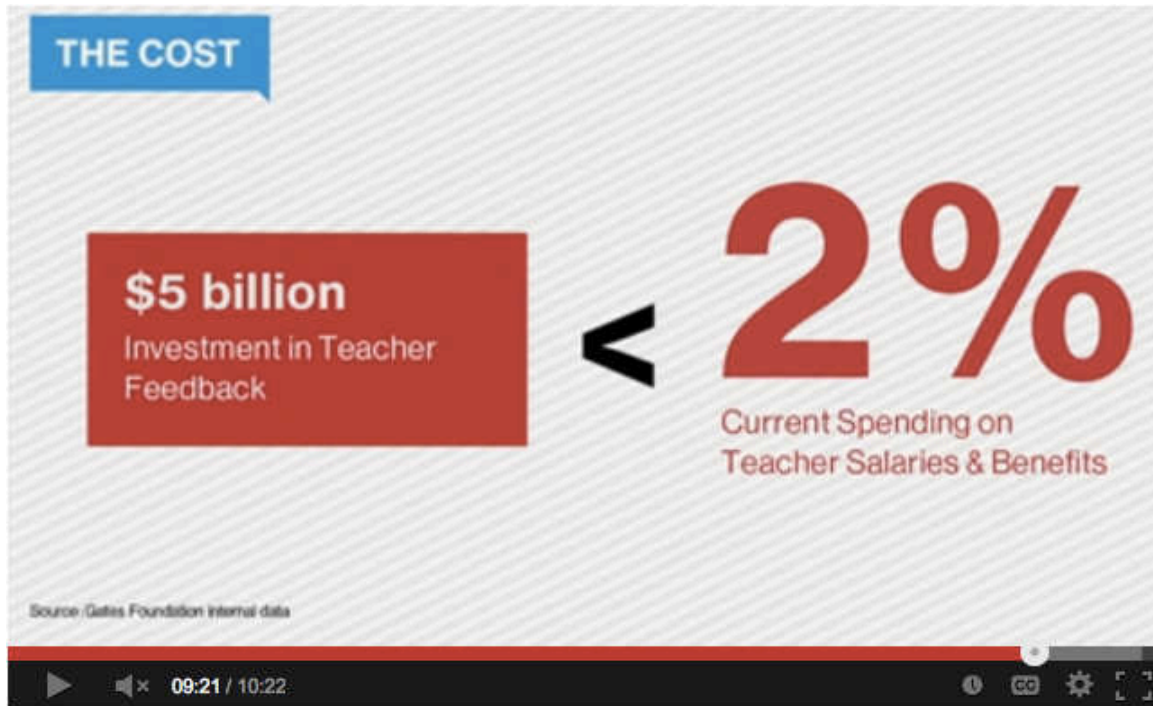
JULIAN TREASURE

Consider how in his TED talk (akashkaria.com/stats), “Why architects need to use their ears”, Julian Treasure filled up his entire slide with a statistic:



BILL GATES

Another example, taken from Bill Gates' TED talk "Teachers need real feedback", can be seen at akashkaria.com/stats:



Notice how Bill combines stats and text with images to make them more exciting (akashkaria.com/zero):



AKASH KARIA

If you're going to be pairing pictures up with text, use images that guide your audience's eyes towards the text (or data). Here's an example at akashkaria.com/focus:



Image on slide: [MikeBaird](#) via [Compfight](#)

BILL GATES

An example of a simple and effective pie chart can be seen in Bill Gates' TED talk on "How the state budgets are breaking US schools" (Watch it and view the slide at akashkaria.com/pie):



NIC MARKS

An example of a clear bar chart can be seen in Nic Marks' TED talk, "The happy planet index", which you can view at akashkaria.com/nic:



SPICING UP YOUR PRESENTATIONS WITH VIDEO

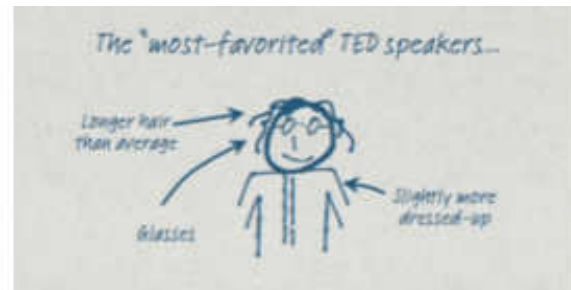
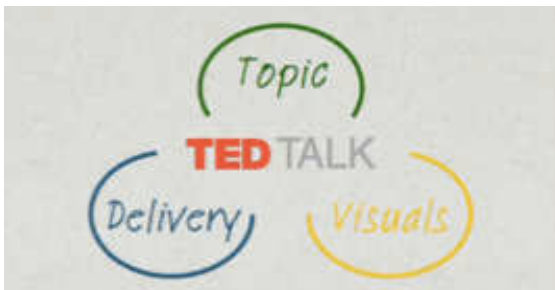
AMY CUDDY

In her TED talk on body language, Amy Cuddy made great use of embedded videos within her presentation (If you haven't already, you can watch the presentation at akashkaria.com/amy)

“HOW DO I MAKE IT ALL CONSISTENT?”

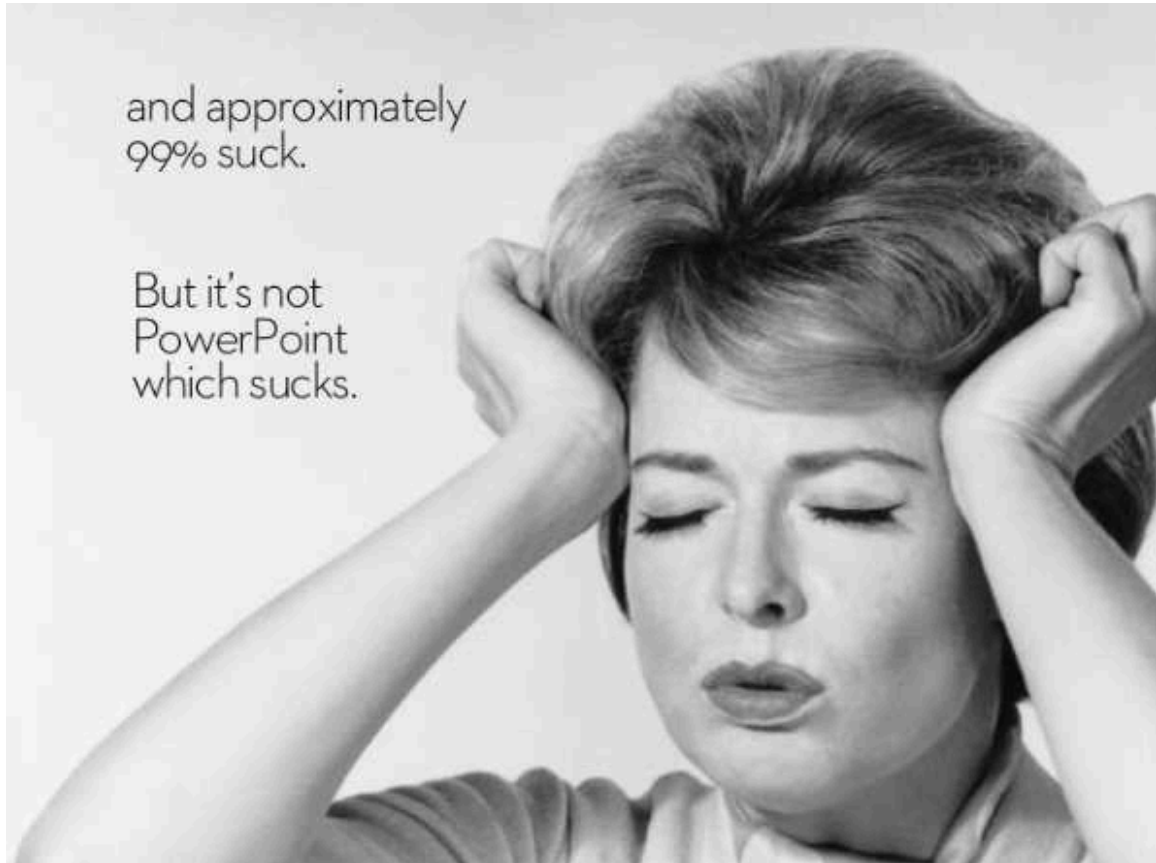
SEBASTIAN WENICKE

Watch Sebastian Wernicke’s TED talk and notice how he used the same font throughout his entire presentation in order to create consistency between the slides (akashkaria.com/sebastian):



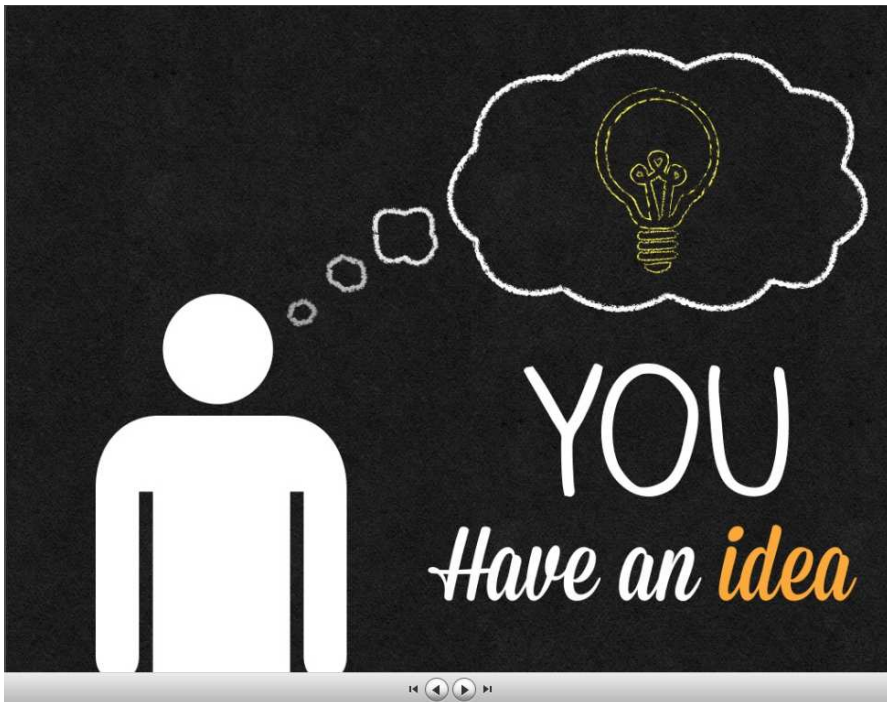
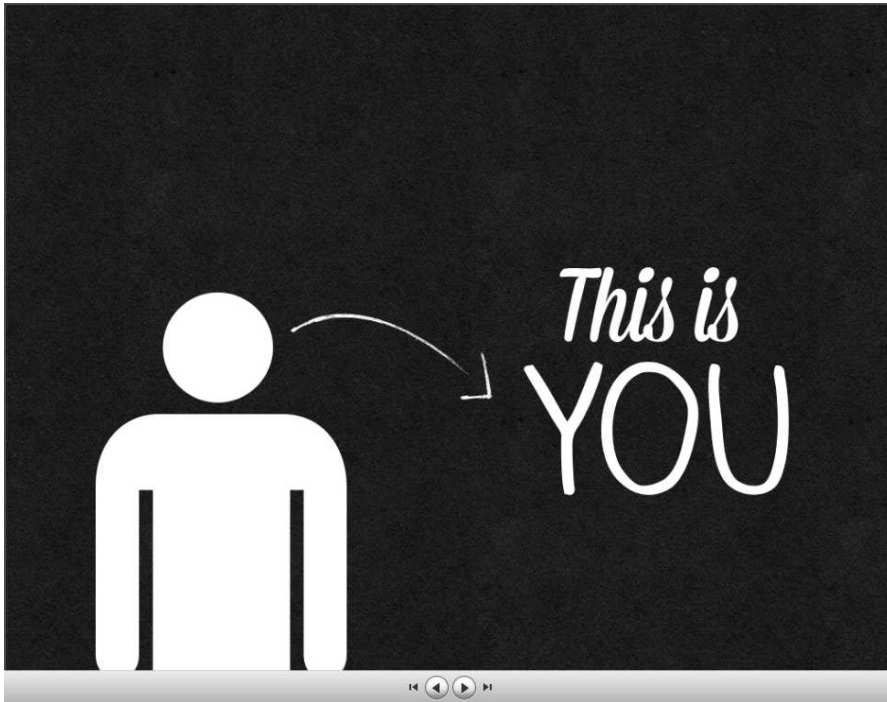
JESSE DESJARDINS

Consider how the presentation designer Jesse Desjardins used a collection of black-and-white images with a similar style to create a unified theme for his presentation (akashkaria.com/jesse):



EUGENE CHENG

Check out Eugene Cheng's presentation on akashkaria.com/cheng and pay attention to how Eugene Cheng used the same set of icons throughout his presentation to create consistency between his slides:



EUGENE CHENG

Have a visual element in your slide that is repeated consistently throughout your slides. For example, consider the slides at akashkaria.com/consistency:



HOW TO DELIVER A GREAT TED TALK

AKASH KARIA

Let's say that I was giving a presentation on the effects of global warming. Here are two sample slides of my presentation, which you can view at akashkaria.com/global:



Image on slide: [Christine Zenino](#) via [Compfight](#)



Image on slide: [IceSabre](#)

In slide #1, I would explain the negative consequences of global warming. Then, before I click on the next slide, I would say, “So, is there anything we can do to stop global warming?” This is my transition statement and introduces my next slide before it comes up. This way, instead of seeming like a disjointed presentation, my presentation has a certain continuity and flow to it.

WRAP-UP: HOW TO CREATE TED-WORTHY SLIDES

Here's a quick list of all the presentation design tools covered in this course. I suggest that you come back to this list again two weeks from now to refresh your memory:

1. Start with your core message.
2. Create an audience-centred presentation.
3. Resist the temptation to start creating your slides immediately. Instead, do an idea-dump on a piece of paper to get your thoughts and points clear.
4. Limit the amount of text on your slide. Remember, the aim is to create a visually appealing slide, not a slideument.
5. Make sure each slide contains only one idea.
6. Use as many slides as you need. There is no rule that you need to limit the number of slides in your presentation.
7. Follow the Seth Godin presentation formula. Fill your slides with large images and very little or no text.
8. Ask yourself, "How can this idea be represented visually?"
9. Use images that create an emotional response in your audience.
10. Use high-quality digital photos from quality stock photo sites. Alternatively, if you are a photographer, use high-resolution pictures that you have taken.
11. Full bleed images. Use visually stunning images that fill up the entire slide.
12. Think of your slides as billboards. The main message of your slide should be clear to your audience within three seconds or less.
13. Follow the rule of thirds to create more interesting images.
14. Avoid clichéd images. Look for fresh, new and unique ways to represent your idea visually.
15. Learn to appreciate empty space.
16. Use large, sexy fonts to make your slides visually engaging.

17. Choose a font that matches your message.
18. Stick to a maximum of two font types.
19. Design for the person sitting at the back of the room.
20. Vary font size to create excitement.
21. Pay attention to alignment.
22. Experiment with rotating text.
23. Ensure sufficient contrast between the image and the text.
24. Add text over non-noisy sections of the image.
25. If you have a very busy image, use semi-transparent text boxes to make your text readable.
26. Ensure the fonts, images and visual elements in your presentation are consistent throughout the presentation.
27. Use the appropriate chart for representing your data.
28. Label your charts and graphs clearly.
29. Incorporate builds into your charts and graphs if necessary.
30. Provide verbal transitions between slides
31. When delivering your presentation, don't read your slides. Speak with energy and enthusiasm. Let your passion flow. Forget about yourself. Focus on your audience.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

I'd love to hear your thoughts. Email me at: akash.speaker@gmail.com or Akash@AkashKaria.com

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