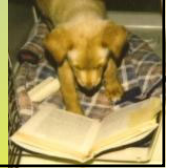


*PowerPoint Crimes*  
– or –  
*Presentation Guidance from a  
Charisma-Challenged Geriatric Professor*

A storyboard of necessary information for  
anyone using PowerPoint or other slides  
in a presentation.



by  
**Herbert Jack Rotfeld**  
**Auburn University Professor Emeritus**  
**Special Advisor to the Graduate School**  
<http://webhome.auburn.edu/~rotfehj>



Obviously, seeing this as a storyboard style loses the nuance, responses to audience reactions, and animations.

In the right hand column:  
RED=explanations  
BLUE=things I would say

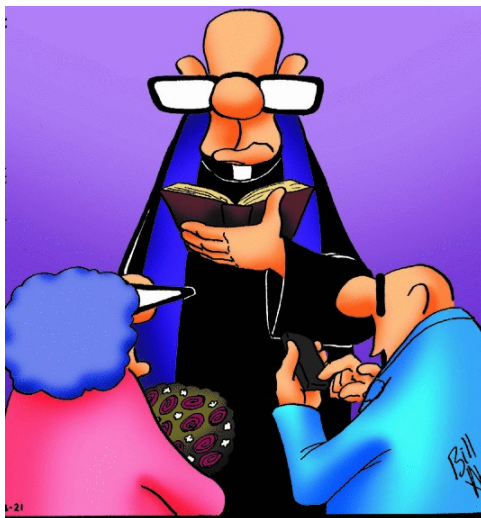
Dog reading a book=my personal logo



[High activity gif files.]

My greatest fear when I started giving lectures was being boring.

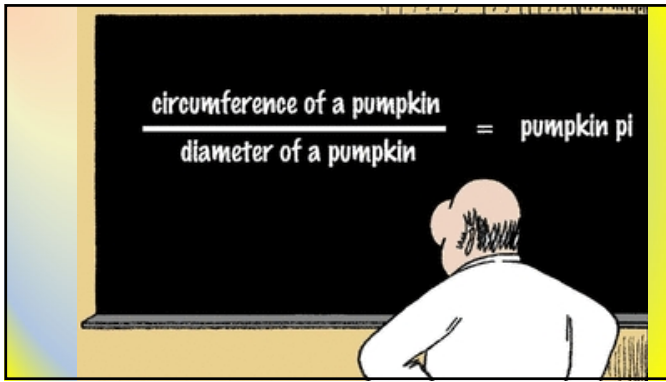
These are "crimes" because violating the rules guarantees a boring presentation



Doesn't a compulsion to check your phone indicate your mind is elsewhere? I hope I can hold your attention for a few minutes.



"Mind if I take this? It might be important."



Whether you plan to work in academia or business, you will have to make presentations to groups that will include people only marginally interested or informed about your work. But despite their limited interest when they walked in the door, they can be asked to evaluate the presentation, such as when it is part of the job interview. You have to come up with some means of keeping them involved.

## OUTLINE

1:  $U \neq TA$

2:  $1P > 10^3 W$

3:  $NU \neq D$

Because college professors like using faux formulas for everything!

3 Basic Rules for a mass communicator

Rule #1:  $U \neq TA$

Rule #2:  $1P > 10^3 W$

Rule #3:  $NU \neq D$

Three *Inter-related* Rules



In a presentation, you have to think that you are a "mass communicator," with three crucial-yet-inter-related rules that you must understand. If you forget them, you will be boring. And if the audience attention is elsewhere, your effort becomes meaningless.

### 3 Basic Rules for a mass communicator

Rule #1:  $U \neq TA$

U = you

TA = target audience



#### 1. "You are not the target audience."

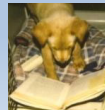
Some people think this simply means a different level of understanding, but it is more than that. It is not what has to be "toned down." It is not an issue of age or gender differences.

There are many reasons that audiences will have perspectives different than yours.



Rule #1 is NOT just a matter of potentially offending someone. As you travel to different parts of the country or the world, unexpected differences will be unavoidable. As you get older, you will be continually surprised as simple terms or phrases acquire unexpected, potentially offensive, additional meanings.

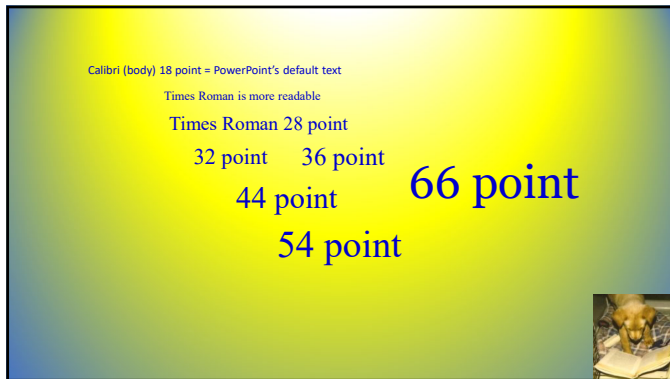
This just says audience knowledge or views are different than your own.



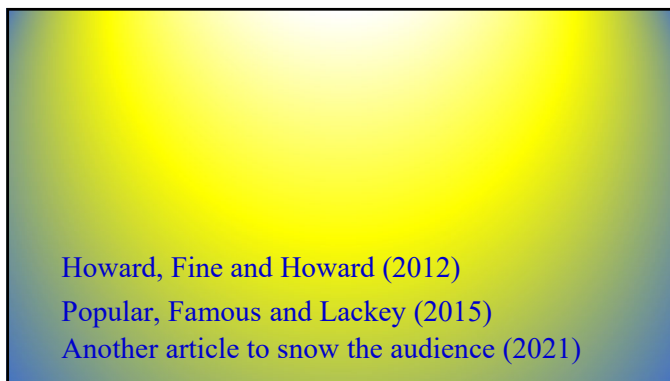
You can't assume. Even sex appeals are not a consistent universal value.

People will come to your meeting or presentation or classes with a different set of interests.

What is obvious to you might not be to them.



Here's a simple example. What might look good on your computer might be unreadable on screen in a room. Is your font choice visible to the whole room? What about people whose vision isn't perfect? Most likely, anything smaller than 36 point would not be readable to anyone beyond the first two rows, even though 18 point sans serif is the default PowerPoint font for text. Web designers still have not caught on that many of their site visitors will come in by a mix of computers, tablets or phones. Advertising agencies usually show their work to clients on state-of-the-art extra-large-screen televisions, ignoring that significant parts of their audiences will see the messages on something older or smaller.



Here's another example. Many researchers give citations in their slides, while the audience doesn't know what they reference. It is best that you don't bother to drop citations into the presentation. Those familiar with the topic don't need them. Those unfamiliar would just be perplexed, unless you hand out a full reference list to everyone.



3 Rules


Rule #1: U ≠ TA

Rule #2:  $1P > 10^3W$

P = picture  
W = words

**What are you doing right now**


  
 reading this



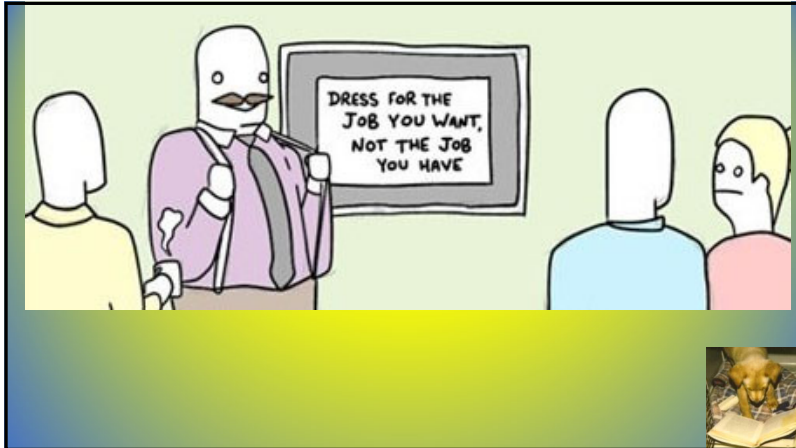
## 2. One picture is greater than 1000 words."

The formula for rule #2 was an experience in rule #1 for me. Seeing it for the first time with a bunch of journalists, we all laughed. Ingenious I thought. Coming home, I showed it to an Engineering professor who said "It's wrong" as he wrote the "correct" formula with these letters that I learned meant something specific in his work that is different than "pictures" & "words."

Rule #2 points out that your slides shouldn't be filled with words. Slides should be treated as illustrations.

If someone can just read your slides and know everything you said, you wasted everyone's time with a face-to-face meeting. If someone can listen from the next room and know your entire presentation, you wasted your time making slides.

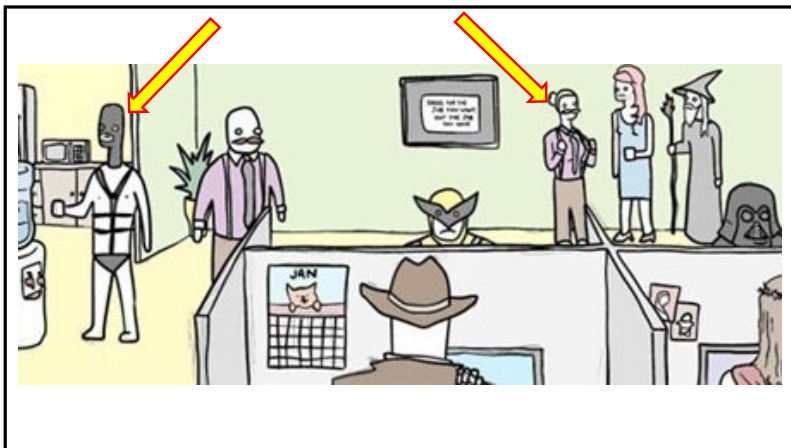




As example, this is using illustrations to help explain Rule #1.

Note that there are 11 words in this illustration, a number will be significant in a little bit. More important, the joke is shown by the pictures in this and the next slide.

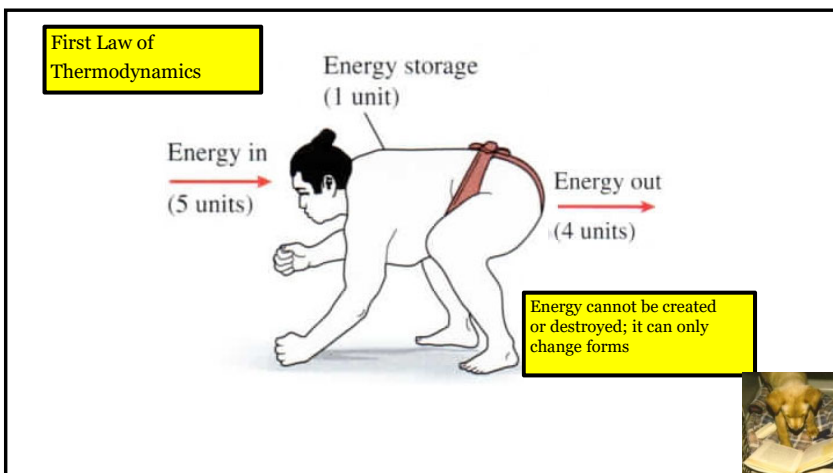
Here the boss is trying to get everyone to dress better, thinking they all would want his job.



To his surprise, instead of inspiring employees to be better dressed, he got comic-con. One woman dressed exactly like him, complete with a fake mustache plus her hair pulled back & flat.

I have no idea what is going on with the guy at the water cooler. I don't want to know what job he wants.

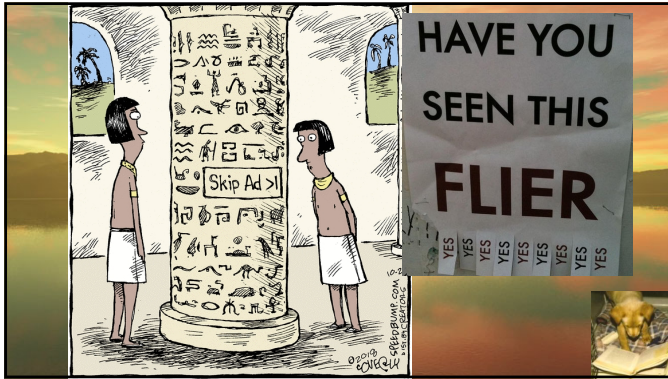
The joke is in the pictures.



This slide is from a book that was left behind in my classroom one day.

On the one hand, the engineering students might have seen it as a simple illustration of the principle. The joke might help in conveying the First Law.

On the other hand, following rule #1, they might be distracted by the childish flatulence humor.



After more than 4 decades studying and teaching courses on the advertising business, I'll use advertising principles to explain. Specifically, the best examples to explain rule #2 come from outdoor advertising, what is commonly called billboards.

Everyone has driven past a billboard, maybe the same billboard multiple times, and had no idea what it was selling.



\*Too many words.

\*Too small a font.

\*Too much to be read in the short time the display is visible.



The rule for good outdoor displays is that about 7 words would be optimal. At most, 11. The more you try to say, the less you convey. And the fonts need to be large enough to be easily read.

After all, people are driving past and we hope they are paying attention to traffic.

With your presentations, you want the slides to be helpful illustrations, not distractions from what you are trying to communicate.



Generally, you want to show less than 7 words at a time.

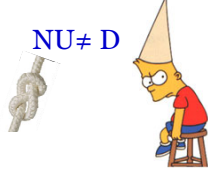
If you have too many words on screen, the audience will be reading instead of listening.

### 3 Basic Rules for a mass communicator

Rule #1:  $U \neq TA$

Rule #3:  $NU \neq D$

Rule #2:  $1P > 10^3W$



N=not and D=dunce

3. "Being different from you doesn't mean the audience members are dunces."

Ignoring this last rule leads to some of the worst, most boring, most "I want to check my phone" types of presentations.

To explain this, I want you to remember what it was like as a student, taking a course, sitting in a classroom during a lecture. This is about presentations in general, but let's work from your experiences in a class as an audience member.

**You probably had a class where . . .** Every day, the instructor would show a series of word-filled slides, and every line of each slide would be read out loud.

- Most slides were in the book
- Attendance was part of the grade
- So you came to class, using the period to keep up with your friends' messages or shop online

*I read this slide out loud.*



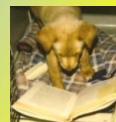
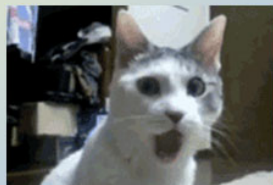
**Have you been to a meeting or class like that?**



Did anyone ever ask .... (?)

"Why do you think we can't read?"

[I'll now wait for you to get the joke.]

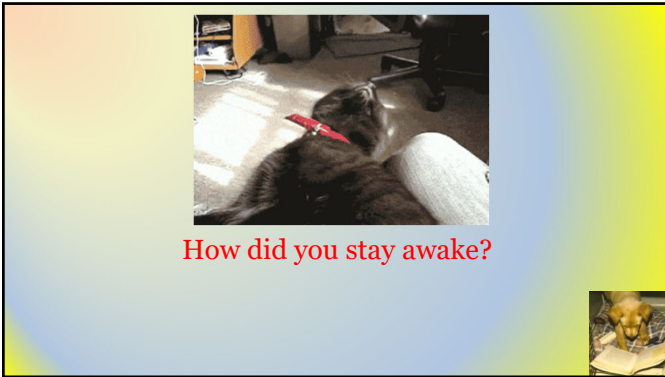


*Vj g'vqr 'rkg'ku't gcf 'qwl'qwf.*

*Tj gp" vj g" ugeqpf "rkg"lp" vj g" dqz" is read as it dgeqo gu'xkldng0'*

*Then stop reading and reveal the third line in silence.*





Did you find those classes interesting, or did you use the time to catch up on messages or shop online?

Then why do you even consider doing the same thing in your own presentations?

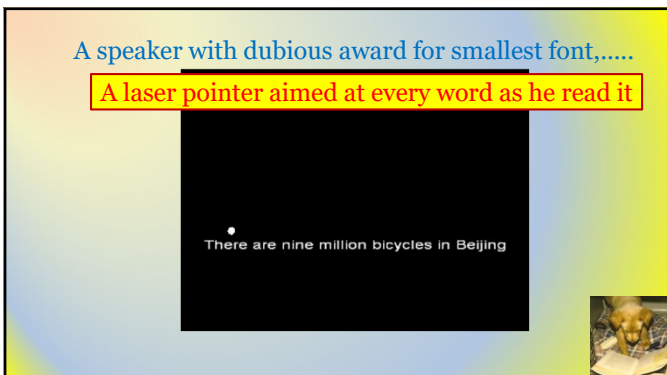


In other words, if everything is on screen, why are you speaking at all? For an interesting presentation:

- Presume audience intelligence
- Don't read slides out loud
- Don't make your slides the script

Your audiences won't be illiterate, or so I hope. Don't read to the audience as if they are children at bedtime. This has been, and continues to be, my single greatest hatred of many presentations.

I have attended too many faculty meetings where word heavy slides were read line by line, slides that might have been available in advance of the meeting, maybe along with a written report which the slides summarized. At many past meetings of my University Senate, these types of presentations have been made to the room full of people holding multiple advanced degrees, representing many millions of dollars collective salary value, people who all had better things to do with their time than have the information read to them.



A speaker with dubious award for smallest font,.....

A laser pointer aimed at every word as he read it

I thought this hit a peak of insulting when a conference speaker apparently didn't think we'd know which words he was reading as he quickly moved his laser pointer across the words on the screen.

Unfortunately, that presentation was only the first time, as I have endured several repeats of that experience since then.

Your audience might not be as interested in the topic as you, and they don't have your knowledge level. After all, that's why you are making a presentation. But you MUST remember:

1. The audience members aren't you. What looks great on your computer monitor might fail on screen. What you think is a killer joke can fall flat.
2. Slides are illustrations, so depend on pictures instead of words. Use words to help your illustrations, not distract from them.
3. Just because your audience is different than you doesn't make them a collection of deranged, dim-witted, mentally deficient dunces. The people at your presentation are not idiots, but you are one if you feel a need to read to them.

Rule #1: You are not the target audience



Rule #2: 1 picture is greater than 1000 words

Rule #3: Those unlike you aren't idiots


WORLD'S MOST ACCURATE PIE CHART




"Think you used enough dynamite there, Butch?"



It is a safe bet that everyone here has been in an audience that experienced presentations guilty of all of the bad practices I've described here. You should follow the same pattern for your presentations only if you personally found those classes or meetings interesting & not a time to check your phone.



"And I think I'm done here"



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