

## FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions) on presentations



Detail from Great Orator, 1944 by Irving Norman. Graphite and color pencil on paper, 12 x 22 1/8 inches. Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund.

### The Medium is the Message (Marshall McLuhan) Not!

- Q. I feel nervous speaking in public: can I get out of giving a talk?

- Welcome to the human race. **No.**

- I've got to give a 15 minute talk, so should I prepare enough for 20 minutes so I don't run out?
- **No. Never! You want a breakdown of (roughly)**
- 1 minute getting started
- 2 mins intro.
- 8 mins presentation
- 4 mins questions
- Scale this up or down for longer/ shorter presentations.

- But I need to get across lots of important ideas. How can I do it?
- **You can't!. Tests show that about 10% of the material in a lecture is remembered, so don't try.**
- Should I wear a funny tee-shirt to attract people's attention?
- **No. You want the attention to be on the talk**
-

- Is it OK if I start off by telling a few jokes?
- No. Being funny in public is hard (ask any comedian). And you don't have time!
- I don't have anything very interesting to say, so is it OK if I start off by apologising for wasting everyone's time?
- No. Never apologise



- How should I prepare for a talk??
- You must practise beforehand.
- Best option is to find a friend and get them to listen. Get them to time the talk, and write notes as you are doing it. If you are reciprocating, be as honest as you can. Most of us are very unaware of the tics/faults that we have: e.g. ...
- Really good is to record your talk with a video or at least a tape-recorder.
- As a last option, give the talk to yourself in front of a mirror



- I'm so nervous before I talk that I can hardly get a word out. What can I do?
- Write down everything you want to say for the first 2 minutes: if the worst comes to the worst, you can just read it
- Someone asked me a really dumb question after my talk. Can I be rude to them?
- No. You are an "expert" on what you just talked about. He/she isn't. What goes around comes around!



- Someone asked me a really difficult question after my talk. I don't know the answer: what on earth do I do?
- Start off by saying "That's a very good question: I don't really know the answer". Then think aloud: maybe someone will help.
- Is it OK if I look at my shoes throughout the presentation?
- No. Try to make eye contact with most people in the room. That way, they will feel that you are interested in them.



## What are the worst mistakes in giving a talk/lecture?

- Talking away from Audience/Not looking at people.
- Diagrams that are too small.
- Writing too small.
- Varying level of talk at random.
- Writing at bottom of board/screen.
- Non-sequential information



Peter Watson

- Hands in pocket
- Wearing a cap
- Wearing a cap **BACKWARDS**
- Irrelevant jokes
- Puffery
- "Dangling" information
- Oh yes, and turning up late and/or overrunning your time
- Oh yes, and not turning off your cell phone



Peter Watson

## How To Make a Bad Show

How to make a bad

Without Really Trying to

## How to make

## a Good Slide Show

NSCI 1000B

2011

(mostly stolen from Don Wiles)

## **First and Foremost**

### **Organize your thoughts**

### **What is your objective:**

**To inform?**

**To Persuade**

**Or to amaze?**

Limit fancy transitions: only to  
emphasize **really** important  
ideas

### **Keep a list of things**

**to add, subtract or move**

1. Reorganize the background photos
2. Check all spelling
3. Check the timing
4. Do the fonts and colours match?

**At the end, remove this list**  
**or move it to the bottom**

**Use the show  
to illustrate your lecture**

**Don't put too much text  
on your slides**

**Don't read your slides**

## How to Make a Bad Show

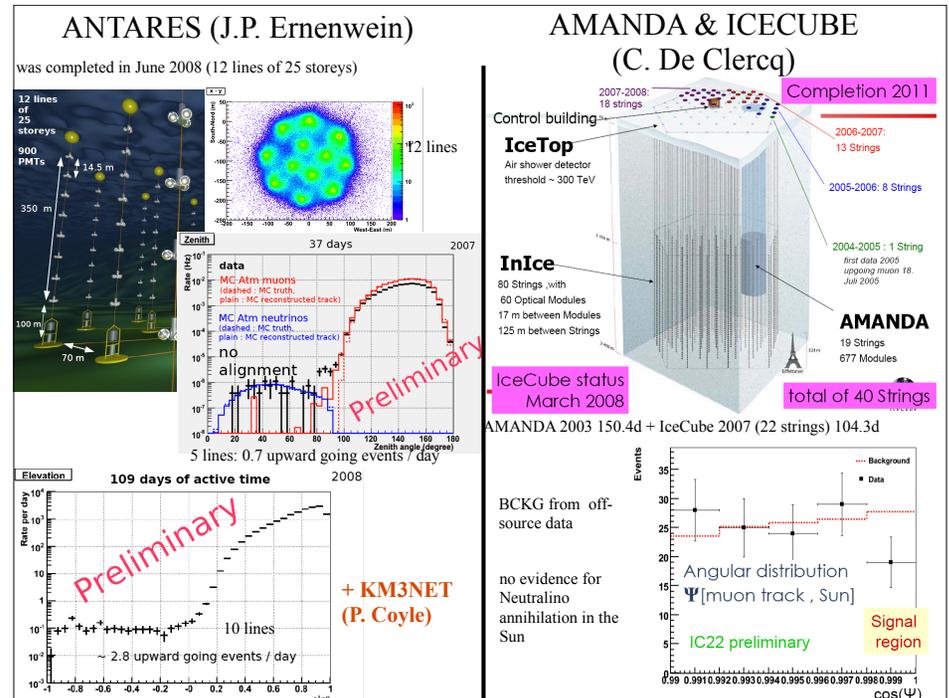
Without really trying

Or by Trying too hard

If you put too much information on a slide, no one will be able to read it. Perhaps it won't matter, in which case you shouldn't show the slide at all. Otherwise you will find yourself saying "You probably can't read this, but ...." This serves to make you look stupid, which may be correct, but you may not want to advertise that fact.

Sometimes it is necessary to show a lot of data on a slide. In that case, you will want to pause to discuss the information in detail. That's OK, as long as everyone can read the information you are talking about.

If no one can read the slide, not only do you look stupid, but you are! This information should be kept to yourself and perhaps a few close friends, but not portrayed on an overhead screen.





*On the other hand, the font  
can be quite legible but not  
appropriate to your message.*

It is usually found that

**Times NewRoman**

is the most legible type

Although

Arial

can also be easy to read

**Especially if it is**

**Bolded**

**Title Pages  
should set the standard**

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**The Halifax Explosion -1917  
Seven Seas Navigator  
2 August 2005  
Don Wiles**

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# **The Halifax Explosion -1917**

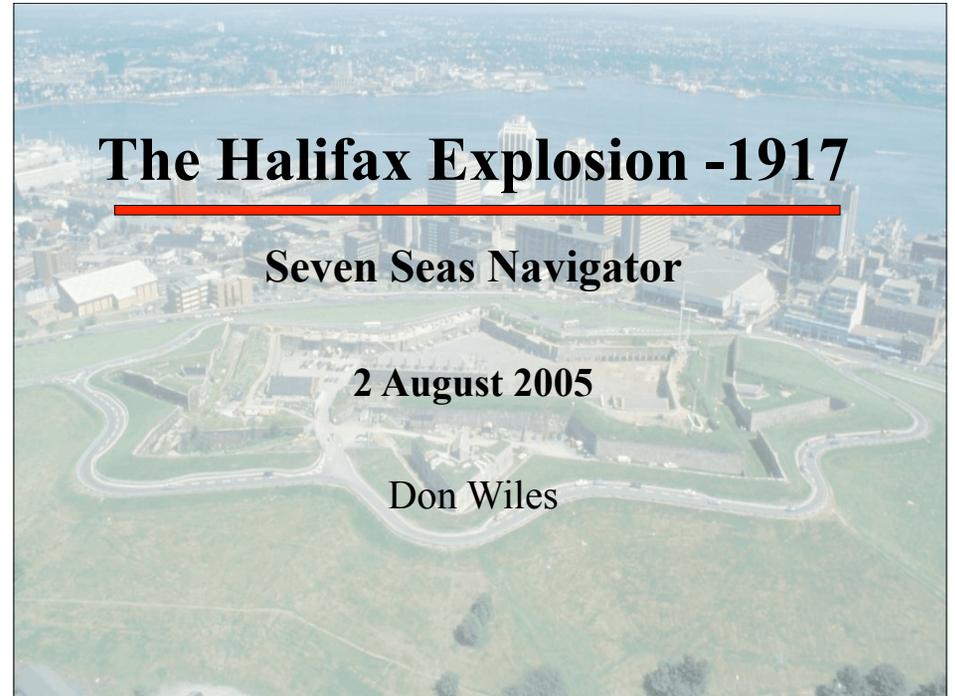
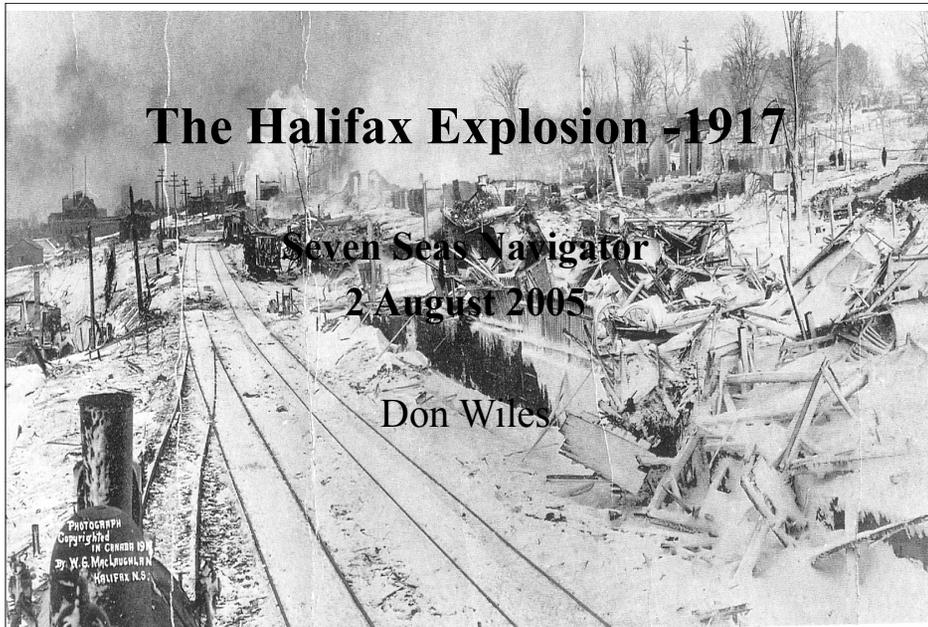
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**Seven Seas Navigator**

**2 August 2005**

Don Wiles

**Use a background  
only if it helps**



Underlining can be useful

Or it can be distracting

The text should be centred

**Unless there is to be a list**

**Or for other special effects**

The text should be centred

**Unless there is to be a list**

**Or for other special effects**

The text should be properly levelled

Items in a list can be emphasized

- By using bullets
  - By indenting the items
- b) By presenting the items in a series
  - By the judicious use of colour

- Or by a discrete transition

**Spelling minsteakes**

**are unexcusable**

**Colour**

Can be used very effectively

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OR **VERY BADLY**

This is legible

**This is quite legible**

**This is perhaps  
more legible**

This is less legible

This is terrible

This is not Legible

This is not much better

This is a little better

This is good

**This is perhaps best**

Sometimes it is useful

**to have a dull background**

But line it up well



If you line things up

~~Do it right!~~

- Don't
- Annoy
- Your
- Audience

# The End

(At Last!)

**Keep a list of things  
to add, subtract or move**

- √1. Reorganize the background photos
- √2. Check all spelling
- √3. Check the timing
- √4. Do the fonts and colours match?

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**At the end, remove this list  
or move it to the bottom**