

A green snake with glowing blue spots is slithering through a dense thicket of red and green branches. The scene is illuminated with a blue and red glow, creating a surreal and vibrant atmosphere.

How to Unsuck your PowerPoint slides!

Dennis Meredith
E-mail: dennis@glyphus.com
www.ExplainingResearch.com
Twitter: @ExplainResearch

I've attended countless
scientific presentations
over the decades.

In too many of them, the
PowerPoint slides sucked!

They can easily be
un-sucked.

In this brief presentation,
I'll show you how.

First of all, most presenters make their text too small.

This is 18-point text.

You can read it perfectly well sitting at your computer. But it's far too small to be seen on a screen from the back of an auditorium.

The minimum size of your text should be
24 point, like this.

And headlines can be
about 40 points, like this.

Serif fonts like
Times New Roman
are harder to read on a screen
than...

...sans serif fonts like this:

This is Calibri

This is Verdana

This is Arial

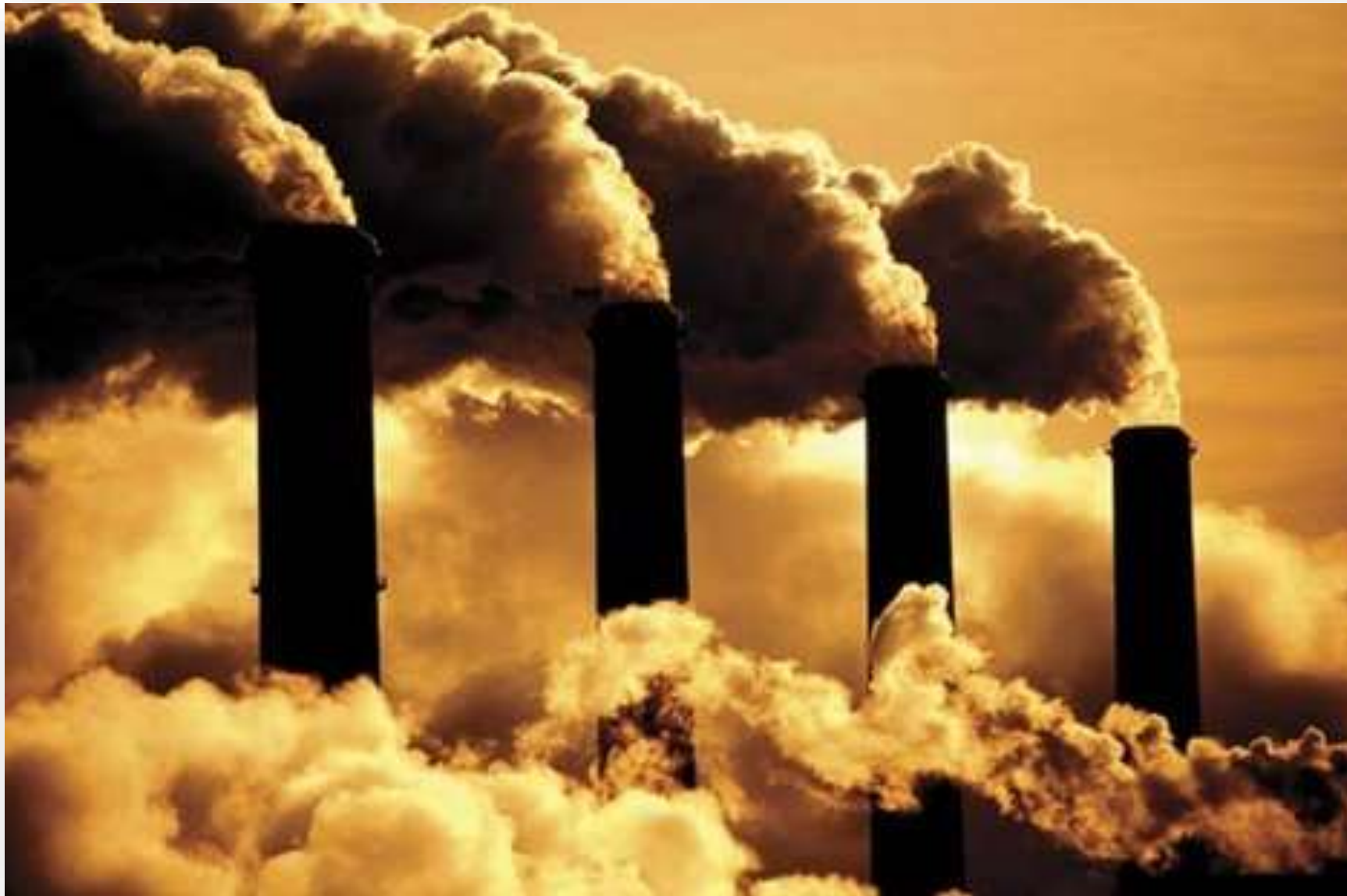
Another problem is slides that are black text on a white background. The glare makes it hard to see the text and causes eye strain.

At least, give the background some tint like this to reduce eye strain. But that reduces the contrast between the text and the background.

A better solution is to reverse the type out of a dark background like this. It makes the text stand out. It also makes images “pop,” as you can see in the next two slides. First a light background, then a dark one.

Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) come from. . .

Coal-Fired Plants



Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) come from. . .

Coal-Fired Plants



Presenters often put too
much text on a slide.

People cannot listen and
read at the same time.

If you keep your slide simple you will find that it is more digestible by audiences and much more memorable than if you clutter it with extraneous text that overwhelms the language-processing part of their brain.
Remember...

If you keep your slide **simple** you will find that it **is** more digestible by audiences and much more **memorable** than if you clutter it with extraneous text that overwhelms the language-processing part of their brain.
Remember...

If you keep your slide **simple** you will find that it **is** more digestible by audiences and much more **memorable** than if you clutter it with extraneous text and images that do not contribute to your point.

Use short bullets:

- Make points easier to jot down
- Reduces reading load
- More memorable
- Create suspense: “What’s he going to say about this point?”

Don't use labels on your slides. Use headlines that tell the point of your slide.

This is a label:

Florida “West Indian” manatee



And this is a headline:

Manatee extinction likely without additional protection



Presenters put too much data
on their slides.
Like this:

2007 United States Recommended Childhood Immunization Schedule

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

Recommended Immunization Schedule for Persons Aged 0–6 Years—UNITED STATES • 2007

Vaccine▼	Age►	Birth	1 month	2 months	4 months	6 months	12 months	15 months	18 months	19–23 months	2–3 years	4–6 years
Hepatitis B ¹	HepB		HepB		^{see footnote 1}		HepB				HepB Series	
Rotavirus ²				Rota	Rota	Rota						
Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis ³				DTaP	DTaP	DTaP		DTaP				DTaP
<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b ⁴				Hib	Hib	Hib ⁴	Hib			Hib		
Pneumococcal ⁵				PCV	PCV	PCV	PCV				PCV PPV	
Inactivated Poliovirus				IPV	IPV		IPV					IPV
Influenza ⁶							Influenza (Yearly)					
Measles, Mumps, Rubella ⁷							MMR					MMR
Varicella ⁸							Varicella					Varicella
Hepatitis A ⁹								HepA (2 doses)				HepA Series
Meningococcal ¹⁰												MPSV4

 Range of recommended ages
 Catch-up immunization
 Certain high-risk groups

This schedule indicates the recommended ages for routine administration of currently licensed childhood vaccines, as of December 1, 2006, for children aged 0–6 years. Additional information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.htm>. Any dose not administered at the recommended age should be administered at any subsequent visit, when indicated and feasible. Additional vaccines may be licensed and recommended during the year. Licensed combination vaccines may be used whenever any components of the combination are indicated and

other components of the vaccine are not contraindicated and if approved by the Food and Drug Administration for that dose of the series. Providers should consult the respective Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices statement for detailed recommendations. Clinically significant adverse events that follow immunization should be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Guidance about how to obtain and complete a VAERS form is available at <http://www.vaers.hhs.gov> or by telephone, 800-822-7967.

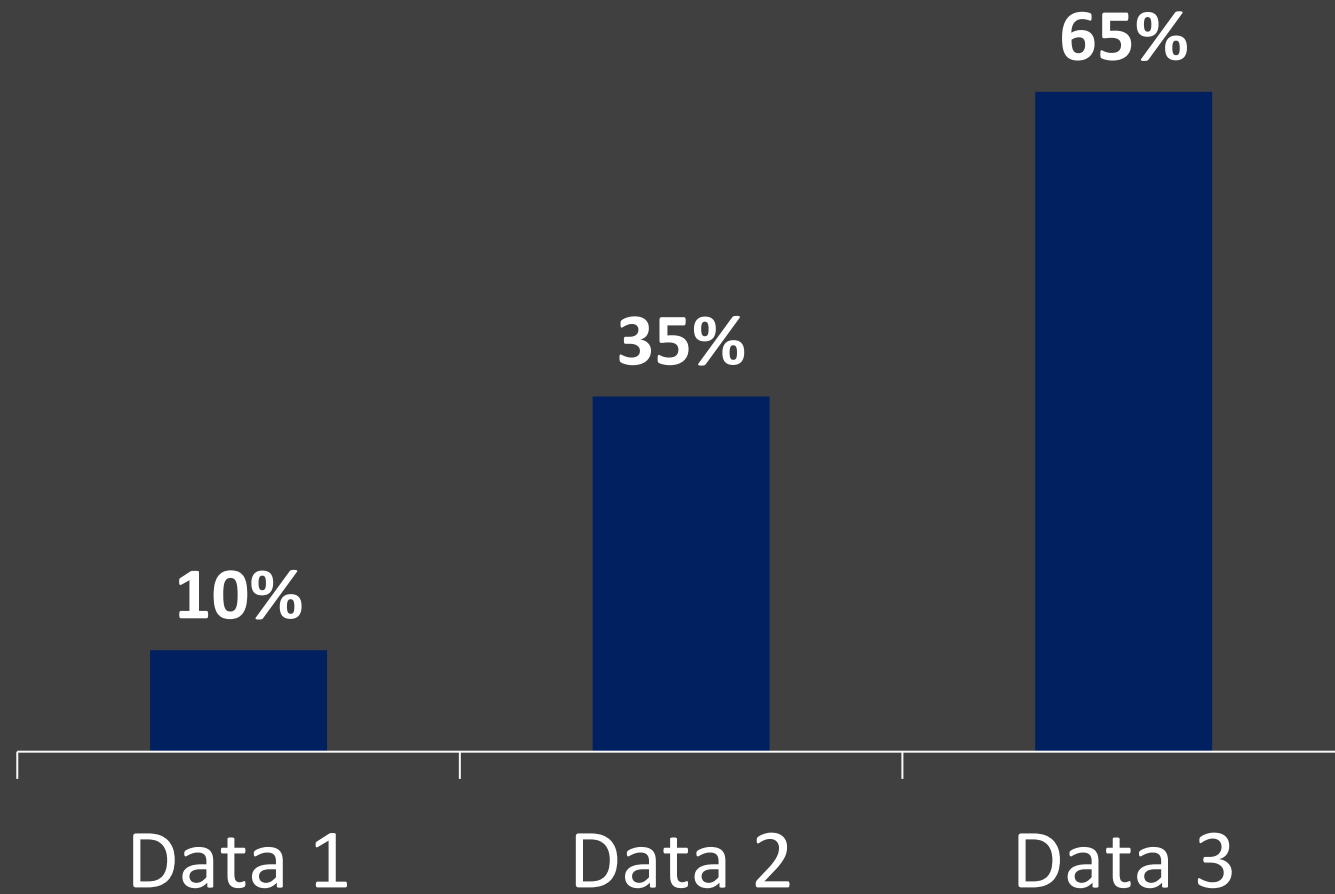
Do you think this presenter talked about every number on this chart?

- Only show numbers to be discussed.
- Crop out the teensy type in the caption.
- Don't put text on the screen that's not meant to be read.

Design your graphs and charts to tell
people where to look.

This one doesn't:

This is a headline that makes the point

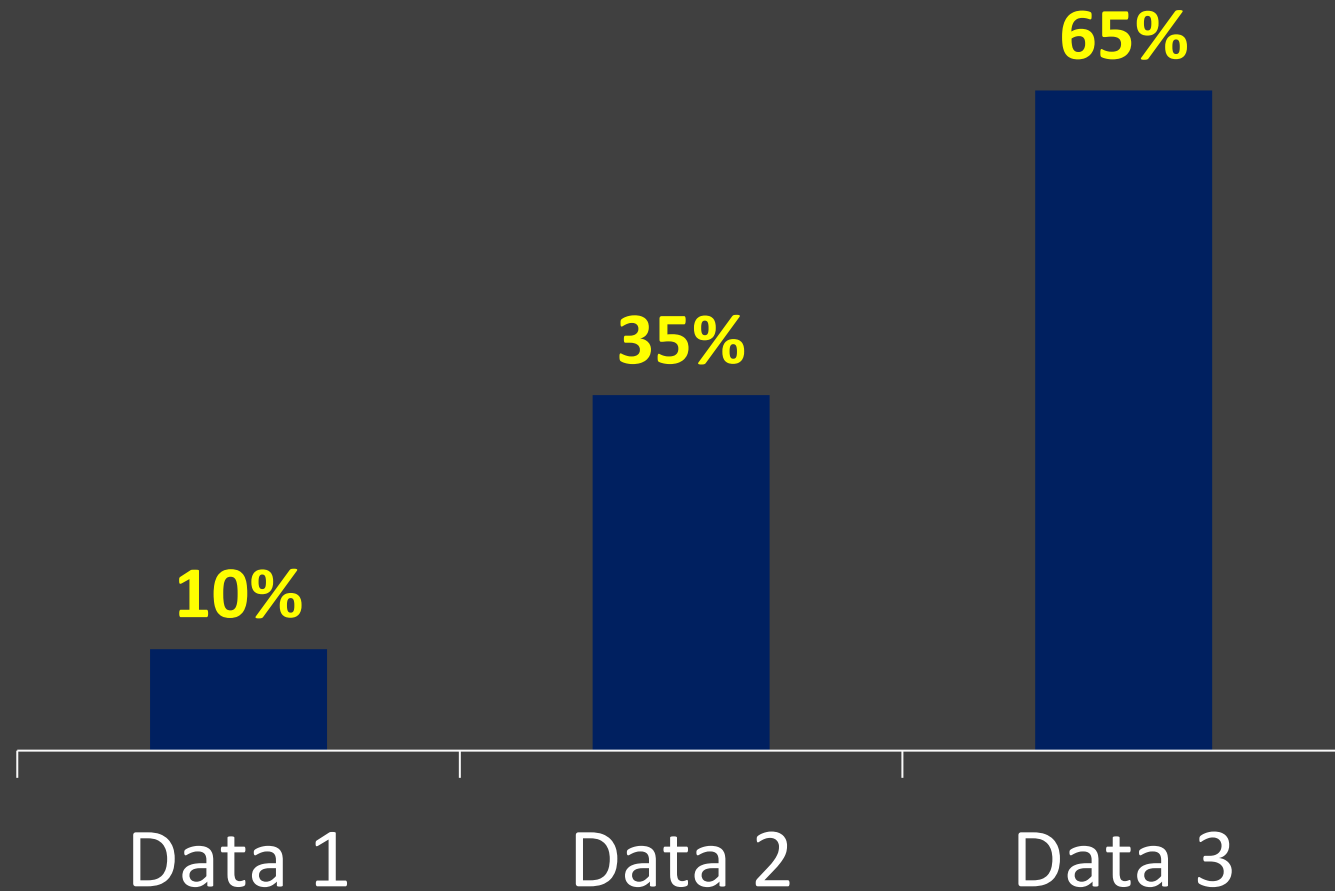


“Washington, G. and Jefferson, T. “Very important research paper,” *Top Sci Jrnl*, Vol. 400, No. 4, November 8, 2016

Use color to draw the eye to the
important data.

Like this:

This is a headline that **makes the point**

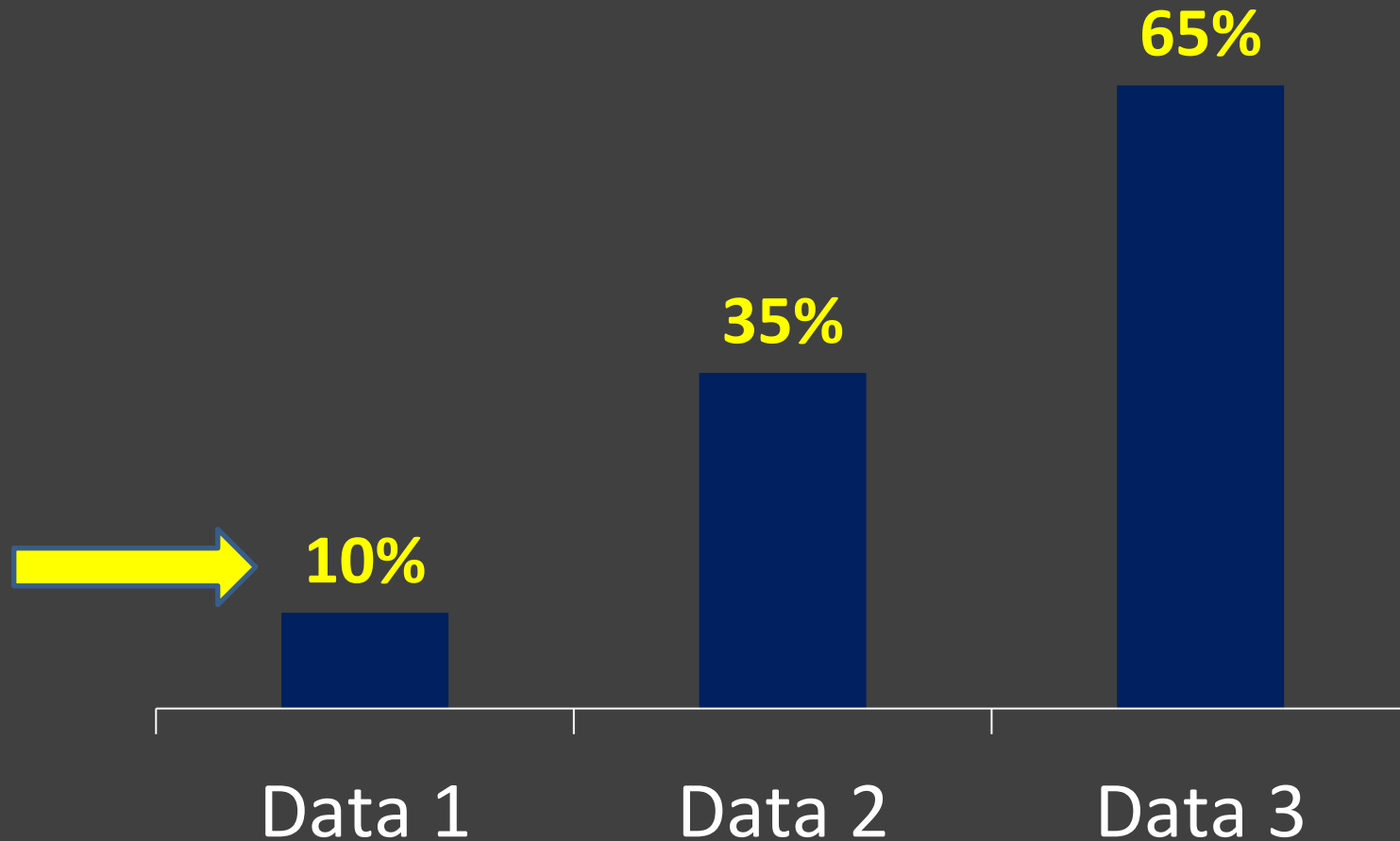


“Washington, G. and Jefferson, T. “Very important research paper,” *Top Sci Jrnl*, Vol. 400, No. 4, November 8, 2016

Use arrows to point out
important aspects.

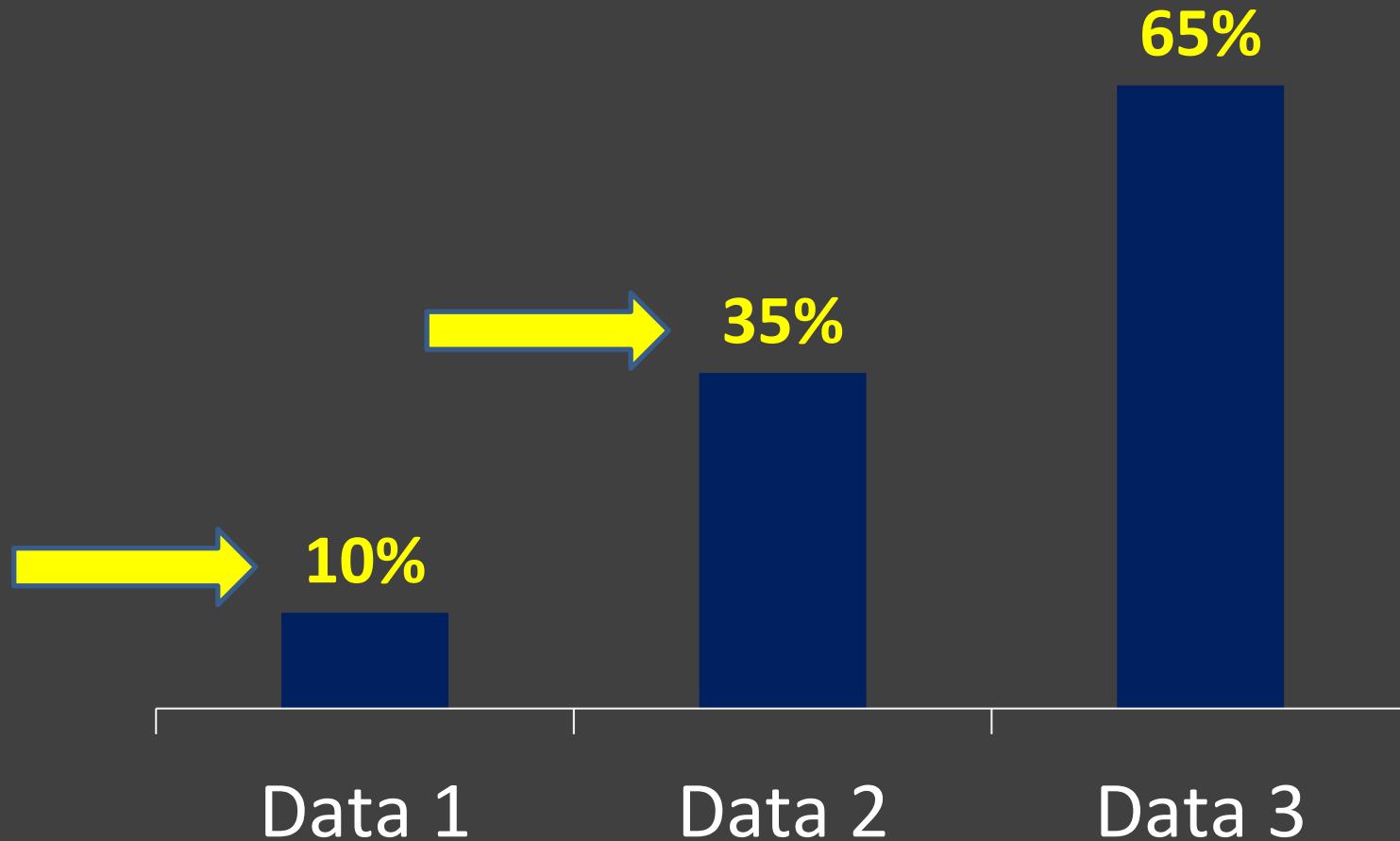
Like this:

This is a headline that **makes the point**



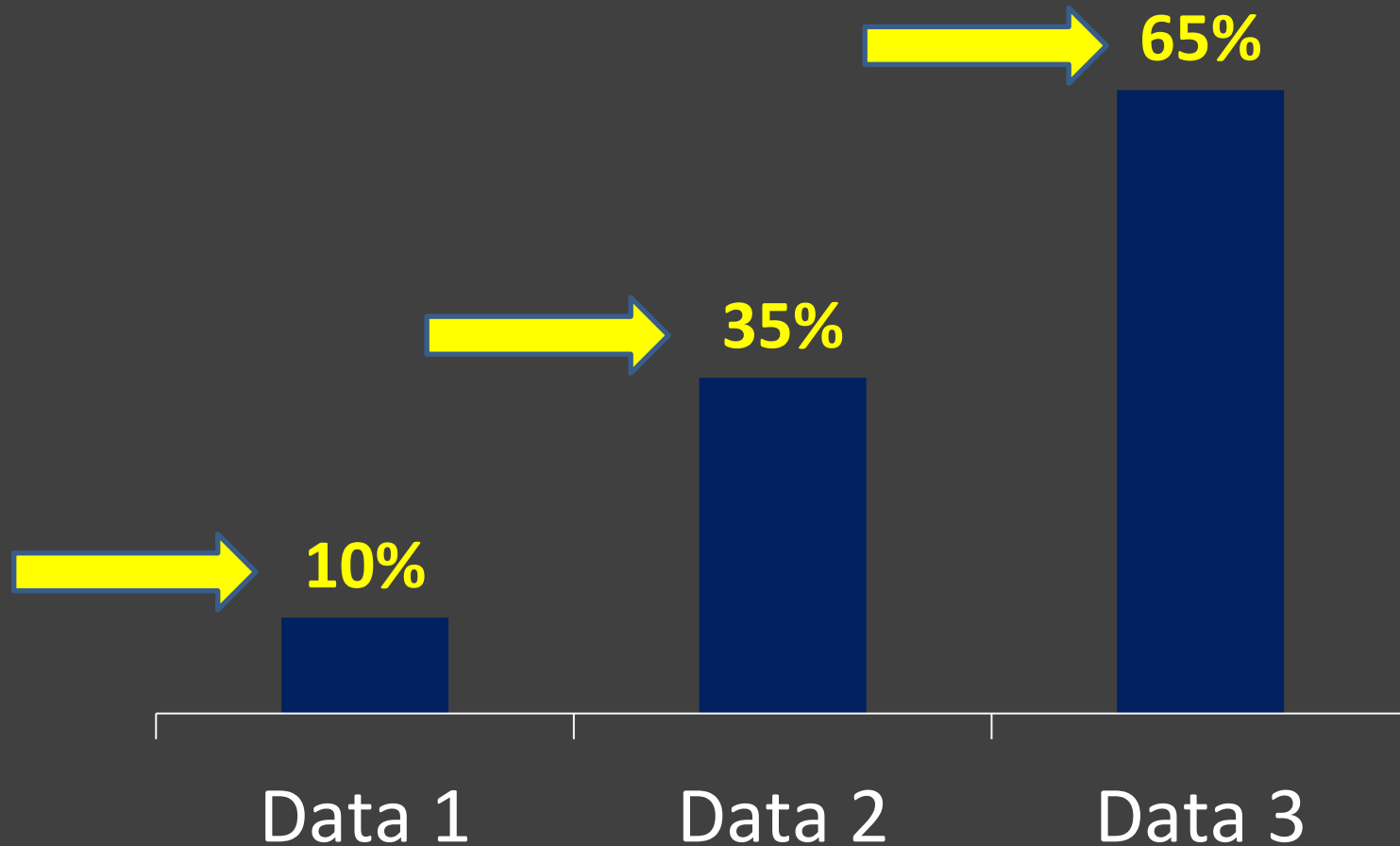
“Washington, G. and Jefferson, T. “Very important research paper,” *Top Sci Jrnl*, Vol. 400, No. 4, November 8, 2016

This is a headline that **makes the point**



“Washington, G. and Jefferson, T. “Very important research paper,” *Top Sci Jrnl*, Vol. 400, No. 4, November 8, 2016

This is a headline that **makes the point**



“Washington, G. and Jefferson, T. “Very important research paper,” *Top Sci Jrnl*, Vol. 400, No. 4, November 8, 2016

DUAAWETF!

**Don't Use Arcane
Abbreviations Without
Explaining Them First!**

Use visuals to grab your audience's attention and make your point.

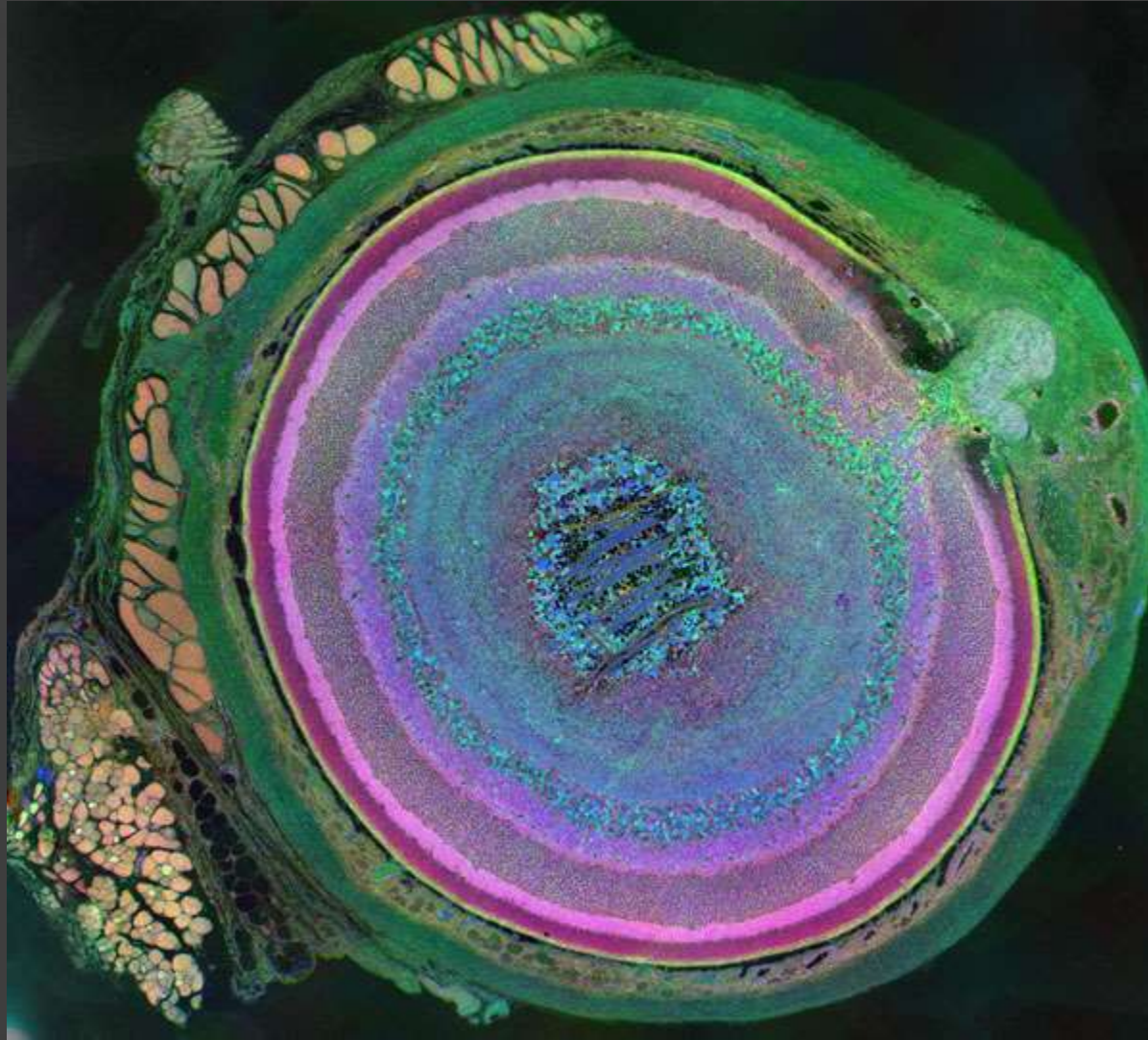
For example, which slide is more interesting and memorable?

This one?

The mammalian eye has 70
different cell types.

Or this one?

The mammalian eye has 70 different cell types.



Bryan William Jones and Robert E. Marc, University of Utah

You can find many image
sources at
www.ExplainingResearch.com.

On the Explaining Research menu: Click on Refs and Resources, Ch. 3

Dennis
Meredith

[Home](#) [Explaining Research](#) [Explore Novels](#) [Workshops, Consulting](#) [Buy Books](#)

[About/Info](#) [Social Media](#)

Chapter 3 references: Give compelling talks

Free sources for images, illustrations, animations, and videos

- [Astronomy Picture of the Day, NASA](#)
- [Bugwood Network](#) insect and forestry images
- [CalPhotos](#)
- [Compfight](#), comprehensive image search site
- [Dynamic images](#) enables custom text to be added to iconic images
- [Free Nature Stock](#)
- [Genomics Image Gallery](#), (also images depicting biofuels, carbon cycling, systems biology), DOE
- [Gratisography](#)
- [Earth Science World Image Bank](#)



Now your
PowerPoint slides
won't suck!

Dennis Meredith
E-mail: dennis@glyphus.com
www.ExplainingResearch.com
Twitter: [@ExplainResearch](https://twitter.com/ExplainResearch)

To learn more about research communication,
see the new *Explaining Research, 2nd Edition*

