

WHAT IS THE “RIGHT” NUMBER OF SLIDES?

Like everything else in presentations, there is no formula for success. What works for one may be inappropriate for others. Presentations that are fast-paced and have lots of visual content are more likely to hold audience attention. The audience can visually read a slide or understand a photo or graphic a lot faster than the speaker can verbalize the slide. A point may be made using several slides associated with it.

If a slide is on the screen for more than 15 seconds that is usually too long, unless it is a complicated graphic or photo which needs explanation. As a test, take any word slide from a recent presentation and see how many times you can silently read it in 15 seconds — probably 3 times. At the end of 15 seconds, have you understood what the slide was trying to impart? If yes, why have it on the screen longer when you could put up a second or third slide to reinforce the same point the speaker is making? Another test is to look at a commercial on TV and count how many times the visual image changes. How many times do our speakers drone on for a full minute with just one visual?

Start by preparing more subjects and slides than can be fit into a presentation — 3 slides per minute or 90 slides for a half hour presentation. It's better to cut material than have too few visuals and no time during the rehearsals to generate additional visuals. Blend the visuals and spoken word into an effective message.