A Picture Paints a Thousand Words

Some of the most effective presentations are created from images and minimal text. Garr Reynolds from Presentation Zen is a strong advocate of this style of presentation design.

Images are wonderful, abundant, and fun to use. It can spice up your PowerPoint.

Yet too many images on a slide make it hard for the student to concentrate on what the side is trying to convey. Use images with moderation and with purpose. Use images that support your text or illustrate a point, remember what you are trying to communicate!

There are no hard and fast rules on how many images on a slide is too many. But a good rule of thumb is if there are more than three or four images the slide it is too graphics-heavy.

Reduce & Resize
Instead of many small images, consider using just one or two large images. Image overload generally comes from using too many bits of scattered photographs, clip art, decorative bullets, boxes or borders, and rules (lines) all on the same slide. Strip most of that out. It's unnecessary. Choose one or two key images that complement the text and use them to focus attention or provide visual interest.

Unify

Instead of many completely different images scattered all over, unify them. Make them all the same size. Use the same border. Line them up vertically or horizontally. When it is necessary to use many images, provide consistency and order by tying them together visually.

Prioritize

Instead of a barrage of images competing for attention, prioritize them. Give a single image prominence through size and placement. Unify the remaining images elsewhere on the slide using the techniques described above.

Part of choosing the right image or photo is knowing what role that image plays in the final design. These are some ways to grab attention with images:

- Make it Smaller
- Crop it Close
See next page for more example of ways to use image sizes...
Make it Smaller:

Grab attention with lots of contrast of size and white space.

Put something small in a big space to draw the student’s eye to it. Works best when there is not a lot of other material on the page to compete for attention.

In this illustration, to keep the potted plant from floating away in all that white space, a cast shadow anchors it to the page. Italic text with extra leading keeps the piece airy and light.

Make it Bigger:

Grab attention with super-sized text or graphics. Put something big in a small space to give it extra emphasis and importance. Use big words or images to fill up the space, push at the margins. Big indicates importance, abundance, and ‘too powerful to be contained.’

Example:

In this illustration, the paintbrush and company brand name are almost bursting out of the ad. Big is best (or Goodman’s Best, in this case) and all the rest are insignificant in contrast.

This bold use of imagery works just as well in an education context to get an important message across!
Crop it Close:

Direct the eye by zooming in on what’s important. Crop out unnecessary elements and zoom in on the key parts of an image. You can also grab attention by cropping in unexpected ways: chop off a head, cut a person vertically down the middle, or crop it so close you have to really stare to figure out what is in the picture.

Example:

In this illustration, even without its head and wings, you know this is a bird of prey. In the context of an ad, it’s those deadly claws swooping down on their prey that are the most important element.

Pick a Central Idea:

Make sure your images have significance, communicate your message appropriately in tone and style. Think, when the image count rises above three on a single slide, consider other ways to achieve the same effect without adding more visual stimulation.

Instructional Design Note – Image placement:

When an image is being used in a combination with text to illustrate or support a teaching point, the image should always be placed before the text (to the left of the text). The image then acts as an anchor for the information in the student’s mind.
Conversely if you are using a graph in a combination with text to illustrate or support a teaching point, the graph should always come after the text (to the right of the text). It is easier for the brain to compute the information in this format.

**Direction:**

It is important to consider the direction that your image is pointing. Look at your image, if the person/object in the image is looking/pointing to the right, then the image is fine to place on the left side of the page. If the image is looking/pointing to the left - the image will direct your readers’ eyes away from the page flow.

**Tip!** If the image is facing the wrong direction simply flip it...

**Step 1**

Select the image,

**Step 2**

The ‘Picture Tools’ menu displays above the tool bar. Click on ‘Format’ to reveal menu options
Step 3

Click on ‘Rotate’. From the drop down menu click on ‘Flip Horizontal’.

Your image will now face in the opposite direction

Tips:

- Sites like Behold, and PhotoPin are examples of image search engines that only use free Creative Commons images. This means that as long as you put the URL provided in small text somewhere on the image or in a bibliography page at the end of your presentation, you are legally using the image.

- For icons search sites such as IconFinder and Icon Archive. Using Icons instead of ClipArt will give your presentation a contemporary feel.

- Keep your text on a slide to words that inspire, or remind you of what you wish to share during your lesson. Put all other text in the Notes Page of the slide.