

General Power Point Presentation Suggestions

For an example of what not to do see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLpjrHzgSRM>

The audience has come to hear you not to stare at images tossed onto a screen. Therefore do not let PowerPoint outshine the message. You are creating slides to support a spoken presentation. To this end I have gathered some general suggestions. Most of these suggestions are in some way related to readability. Are you presenting the information in a simple and clear manner that minimizes distractions from your topic?

- Bring a **backup of presentation (USB storage device)** Also put sound, video and any linked images with the PowerPoint file on your own backup device.
- Keep each slide simple clean and concise. You want to eliminate distractions from the point you are trying to make.
- To this extent keep the PowerPoint presentation simple. Be a minimalist. Make it easy for your audience to get your message.
- Do not use your presentation for handouts. Handouts should provide extensive background, but slides should be brief and to the point.
- Cut down on the number of slides. You don't need want your slide presentation to be a transcript of your speech with every point and sub point.
- When presenting do not simply read each slide. This is redundant and makes the presentation boring. Use PowerPoint to augment you talk. Discuss what is being projected. Don't mimic what is on the screen.
- Similarly, do not speak to your slides. Many presenters face the direction of their presentation rather than their audience.
- The more words you use the less readable the slide becomes. If you must use a long quote Pair it down to the bare essentials. Use an excerpt. Emphasize the important words. Then orally present the full quote in your talk.
- Phrases and keywords are better than whole sentences, since they are easily digested by the audience
- Opinions differ but a general rule of thumb is no more than five words per line and no more than five lines of text per page.
- Keep background and layout of slides consistent throughout presentation.
- Use contrasting text and background.
- Avoid background with obvious patters that conflict with the text.
- If you deliver your presentation in a darkened room, you should opt for a dark background with white text, and if delivering a presentation in a lightened room, the background should be white with dark text.
- ***Only use a few fonts.***
- ***Fancy fonts are hard to read.***
- ***Use standard fonts can which can be found on most Windows and Macintosh PCs. (i.e., Times New Roman, Geneva, Helvetica, Courier, Arial, Verdana, etc.) If you use a nonstandard font and are presenting on an older computer your slides may not look as you intended.***
- Exceptions to this rule occur when special font characters are required. As an example, the Symbol font proves useful to scientists due to the presence of Greek characters and special mathematics symbols.
- Be consistent in your method of highlighting.
- Use bold, underline or color rather than italics to highlight a word (italics are usually harder to read).
- Don't use all caps except for emphasis of a single or a few words.
- Avoid "title capitalization" unless it is a title. Sentence capitalization is much easier to read. For example "There was no difference between the experimental and control populations." is easier to read than "There Was No Difference Between The Experimental And Control Populations".

- Avoid the use of Red text because red has a tendency to bleed into surrounding colors. It can be used with caution for one or two words for emphasis, but it has negative connotation of warning or danger.
- When selecting the color for text and background, do not use colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel because there is too much contrast. They fight each other for recognition. (e.g. A bad color combination is red text on a green background)
- Remember that a portion of your audience may be color blind.
- Make everything large enough for the people in the back to see. Use a font that is large enough to read. This size is dependent on shape and size of auditorium and the size of the screen. A good practical test is to print out a slide and place it on the floor. If you can read it then it should be fine for most presentation situations.
- Don't be afraid of empty space on your slide. The empty space brings the focus to the point you are trying to make.
- Use pictures judiciously. Don't just decorate. This will just distract your audience away from the point or purpose of your presentation. Each item on the slide must have a purpose related to the point you are trying to make. The exception to this rule is using a company logo-yours or your customer's is effective. Keep photos and video to a reasonable file size.
- Keep graphs and charts simple. You do not want your audience to work too hard to decipher the graphic.
- Limit pie slices to 6 or 8.
- Don't assume that the audience knows what any or all of the symbols and colors represent. Talk them through the graph (e.g. the blue line represents the average knee angle on the right side during stance phase for the control population)
- Minimize or eliminate special effects.
- Use animation and transitions sparingly. These features may seem impressive at first, but are distracting and get old quickly.
- If you do, be prepared to compensate for the distraction a visual may cause.
- If you use projected material or video either talk more loudly and vigorously when communicating along with the machine or refuse to compete at all. Talk before or after the video.
- Limit the number of slides. Presenters who constantly "flip" to the next slide are likely to lose their audience. A good rule of thumb is one slide per minute maximum.
- Don't end your presentation abruptly.
- Use a conclusion slide with a few summary points or action steps or a short "take home message". Remember the audience is likely to remember your last words.
- Alternatively end your presentation with a simple question slide to: provide a transition to the question period, and to provide a visual aid during the question period.
- Have a Plan B in the event of technical difficulties. Consider bringing multiple copies of your presentation on different media CDs, flash drives. Don't put all of these in your checked baggage if you are flying. Give send a copy of your presentation to a college to bring.
- Before you travel, seriously consider using a "test audience" to watch your performance before the lecture. Other people will sometimes see clearly what you missed easily.