

Tips for Effective PowerPoint Presentations

Fonts

- Select sans-serif fonts such as Arial or Helvetica. Avoid serif fonts such as Times New Roman or Palatino as they are sometimes more difficult to read.
- Use no font size smaller than 24 point.
- Clearly label each screen. Use a larger font (35-45 points) or different color for the title.
- Use a single sans-serif font for most of the presentation. Use different colors, sizes and styles (bold, underline) for impact.
- Avoid italicized fonts as they are difficult to read quickly.
- No more than 6-8 words per line
- For bullet points, use the 6 x 6 Rule. One thought per line with no more than 6 words per line and no more than 6 lines per slide
- Use dark text on light background or light text on dark background. However, dark backgrounds sometimes make it difficult for some people to read the text.
- Do not use all caps except for titles.

To test the font, stand back six feet from the monitor and see if you can read the slide.

Graphics and Design

- Keep the background consistent and subtle.
- Use only enough text when using charts or graphs to clearly explain the graphic.
- Keep the design clean and uncluttered. Leave empty space around the text and graphics
- Use quality clipart and use it sparingly. The graphic should relate to and enhance the topic of the slide.
- Try to use the same style graphics throughout the presentation (e.g. cartoon, photographs)
- Limit the number of graphics on each slide.
- Check all graphics on a projection screen before the actual presentation.
- Avoid flashy graphics and noisy animation effects unless they relate directly to the slide.
- Limit the number of transitions used. It is often better to use only one so the audience knows what to expect.

Color

- Limit the number of colors on a single screen.
- Bright colors make small objects and thin lines stand out. However, some vibrant colors are difficult to read when projected.
- Use no more than four colors on one chart.
- Check all colors on a projection screen before the actual presentation. They may project differently than what appears on the monitor.

General Presentation

- Check the spelling and grammar.
- Do not read the presentation. Practice the presentation so you can speak from bullet points. The text should be a cue for the presenter rather than a message for the viewer.
- Give a brief overview at the start. Then present the information. Finally review important points.
- It is often more effective to have bulleted points appear one at a time so the audience listens to the presenter rather than reading the screen.
- Use a wireless mouse or pick up the wired mouse so you can move around as you speak.
- If sound effects are used, wait until the sound has finished to speak.
- If the content is complex, print out the slides so the audience can take notes.
- Do not turn your back on the audience. Try to position the monitor so you can speak from it.

Adapted from:

- Bankerd, Kathy. "How to Optimize Projection Technology: Using Fonts, Graphics, and Color to Maximize the Effectiveness of Your Presentation". Syllabus. November/December 1997.
- Bird, Linda. "Avoid the Mistakes of PowerPoint Rookies." Smart Computing. January 2001.
- Brown, David G. "PowerPoint-Induced Sleep." Syllabus. January 2001.