

Tips for Making Effective PowerPoint Presentations

- Create a consistent and simple design template. Be consistent with font, colors, and background.
- Simplify and limit the number of words on each screen. Use key phrases and include only essential information.
- Limit punctuation and avoid putting words in all capital letters. Empty space will enhance readability.
- Use contrasting colors for text and background. Light text on a dark background is best.
- Avoid the use of flashy transitions such as text fly-ins. These features get old quickly.
- Overuse of special effects such as animation and sounds may make your presentation “cutesy” and could negatively impact your credibility.
- Use good quality images that reinforce and complement your message. Ensure that your image maintains its impact and resolution when projected on a larger screen.
- If you use builds (lines of text appearing each time you click the mouse), have content appear on the screen in a consistent, simple manner; from the top or left is best.
- Limit the number of slides. A good rule of thumb is one slide per minute.
- Learn to navigate your presentation in a non-linear fashion. PowerPoint allows the presenter to jump ahead or back without having to page through all the interim slides.
- Know how to and practice moving forward AND backward within your presentation. Audiences often ask to see the previous screen again.
- If possible, view your slides on the screen you’ll be using for your presentation. Make sure slides are readable from the back row seats. Text and graphical images should be large enough to read, but not so large as to appear “loud.”
- Have a Plan B in the event of technical difficulties. Remember that transparencies and handouts will not show animation or other special effects.
- Practice with someone who has never seen your presentation. Ask them for honest feedback about colors, content, and any effects or graphical images you’ve included.
- Do not read from your slides. The content of your slides is for the audience, not for the presenter.
- Do not speak to your slides. Many presenters face the direction of their presentation rather than their audience. Look your audience in the eye or look slightly above their eyes. Don’t exclude part of the audience. Try to include everyone. The presentation is you sharing, not you presenting a technology show.