

Tips for Making Effective PowerPoint Presentations

1. Use the slide master feature to create a consistent and simple design template. It is fine to vary the content presentation (i.e. bulleted list, 2-column text, text & image), but be consistent with other elements such as font, colors, and background.
2. Simplify and limit the number of words on each screen. Use key phrases and include only essential information.
3. Limit punctuation and avoid putting words in all capital letters. Empty space on the slide will enhance readability.
4. Use contrasting colors for text and background. Dark text on a light background is best. Patterned backgrounds can reduce readability of text.
5. Avoid the use of flashy transitions such as text fly-ins. These features may seem impressive at first, but are distracting and get old quickly.
6. Overuse of special effects such as animation and sounds may make your presentation "cutesy" and could negatively impact your credibility.
7. Use good quality images that reinforce and complement your message. Ensure that your images maintain their impact and resolution when projected on a larger screen.
8. If you use builds, have content appear on the screen in a consistent, simple manner; from the top or left is best. Only "build" screens when necessary to make your point because they can slow your presentation.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Know how to and practice moving forward AND backward within your presentation. Audiences often ask to see the previous screen again.
12. If possible, view your slides on the screen you'll be using for your presentation. Make sure they are readable from the back row seats. Text and graphics should be large enough to read, but not so large as to appear "loud."
13. Have a "Plan B" in the event of technical difficulties. Remember that transparencies and handouts will not show animation or other special effects.
14. Practice with someone who has never seen your presentation. Ask them for honest feedback about colors, content, and any effects or graphics you've included.
15. Do not read from your slides. The content of your slides is for the audience, not for the presenter.
16. Do not speak to your slides. Many presenters face the direction of their presentation rather than their audience.
17. Do not apologize for anything in your presentation. If you believe something will be hard to read or understand, don't use it.
18. When possible, run your presentation from the computer hard drive rather than a CD. Running from a CD may slow your presentation.