

EFFECTIVE USE OF POWERPOINT

PowerPoint is easy to use, but few truly use it well. Lecturing should not be “a way of transferring the instructor’s lecture notes to students’ notebooks without passing through the brains of either.” PowerPoint is better used as a means of presenting graphic organizers or emotional evidence that illustrate the lesson rather than summarize it.

Designing the Slides

Information on slides should be concise and short (key terms/concepts with definitions). Only use elements that contribute to points you want to make. Do not overcrowd the slides with information; the students will not absorb anything. Use no more than six lines, with six words per line. There should be “white space” or “negative space” on the slides. Do not fill in empty spaces with words, or logos, or any unnecessary graphics.

- Number of Slides: Aim at one slide every 3-5 minutes at most.
- Transitions: Do not use them. No flashing text either. Keep it simple and elegant.
- Graphics: Images convey more information than bullet points or text. Always use high-quality

graphics that demonstrate your professionalism and are fresh for the viewers. Avoid clipart or cartoonish line art, as these types of images can undermine your presentation by distracting the audience. Finding the right image can take time, but it is worth it! Use a professional database like Getty Images to find copyright-free images of high quality. Slide transitions and animations should be also kept to a minimum to avoid distracting the audience. Elegant simplicity is more impressive and conveys your story more clearly than overly complex graphics.

- Colors: Color can increase interest and improve comprehension and retention. Cool colors (like

blue and green) are better for backgrounds because they appear to be receding from us. Warm

colors (like red and orange) are better for objects in the foreground, like text. If you are showing the slides in a dark room with the lights off, dark backgrounds with light text works best. If shown in a lighter room, then a lighter background with darker text is better. Background patterns or backgrounds with too much contrast can make the text hard to read, so stick with simple colors and patterns.

- **Fonts:** Font styles are important because they relay subtle messages. There are two types of font styles: Serif fonts and Sans-Serif fonts. Serif fonts (like Times New Roman) are better for printed documents, and are easier to read at small point sizes. Sans-Serif fonts (like Helvetica and Arial) are better for presentations. Establish a consistent style throughout the presentation. Font should be a minimum of 18 to 24. **Go to the back of the room where you'll be presenting and make sure the font size is large enough for everyone to see. Do all of the students have an Center for uninterrupted view of the slides? If the screen is too low, the bottom edge may be hidden by the students in the front, and you'll need to design your slides accordingly (by leaving the bottom section of the slides empty).** Use font colors that contrast sharply with the background image.
- **Assertion-Evidence Structure:** Alley (2002) recommended simplifying slide design from the normal list of topic and sub-topic bullet points used by Microsoft. Instead, he recommended a sentence headline that states the purpose of the slide accompanied with photos, graphs, drawings, films, or equations that support the headline.
- **Presentation Zen:** Reynolds (2008) went even further, and suggested using no more than six words on the slide. For Reynolds, the purpose of slides is to provide emotional proof of the speaker's argument. Print outs of the slides were never to be distributed. Instead, evidence of the argument was to be collected in a separate handout. The images should be unusual, professional, simple, elegant, and should "bleed" off the edge. Quotations are also powerful, because they provoke an emotional response. The slides should help the presenter tell a story.

- **Chunking:** Information should be grouped into “chunks” of 7 ± 2 , because Miller (1956) showed

that this sort of “chunking” helps short-term memory. Use groups of five when presenting new pieces of information. Use groups of up to nine for familiar content presented as a refresher.

Giving the Presentation

Have your notes ready so you are prepared to discuss and elaborate the material. Then practice in front of a mirror or better yet, record yourself with a camcorder. When giving the presentation in the classroom, get out from behind the podium and face the students. Make eye contact with everyone over the course of your presentation. Reading off of the slides reduces the volume of your voice and turns your back on the class -- don't do it! Face your students. If you have designed your slides with high contrast between the font and images, you shouldn't have to turn off the lights, but if you must, turn off as few as possible. If you must, turn off the lights in the middle of the room or the ones directly in front of the screen. If you have text on the screen that you want students to write down, stop talking and give them a chance to write it down. Give ample time for them to do so.

Sharing the Presentation with Students

If the presented information is not in the readings, then prepare a separate handout with the information. That can be saved as a PDF and put on GullNet for students to download as a handout, or it can be printed out and brought to class.

SOURCE: <http://endicott.edu/Academics/AcadResources/CtrTeachingExcellence-AcadResources/~media/AcadResourcesMediaLibrary/PDFs/CTE/DiscussionForums.pdf>