

BEST PRACTICES

WHAT THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING

PowerPoint can be an effective tool when used correctly. This best practices guide will give you helpful tips to follow when using PowerPoint in your classroom. Each tip falls into one of three categories: **SLIDES**, **STRATEGY**, and **DELIVERY**.

SLIDES

Text

15 words max per slide.

Font Size:

24 + Content Text

28 + Title Text

Use a sans serif font:

Verdana or Arial

Use no more than 2 fonts per slide.

Use a common font to prevent cross-platform problems.

Do not use ALL CAPS or underlining.

Use dark type on a light background.

Limit each slide to one idea.

Avoid complete sentences.

Design

Avoid standard background templates.

Use a custom template or contact FACT to have one created for you.

Choose a template where words are easily distinguished from the background.

Avoid busy backgrounds.

Select a template and color scheme that relates to your lecture topic.

Copying illustrations from a text usually results in too much detail. Students are frustrated when they cannot read the details on a slide.

Keep pictures near 90 dpi at the correct size.

Keep transitions simple. Dissolve is the best transition to use.

STRATEGY

Use Objectives

Establish good learning objectives before creating your PowerPoint—what do you want your students to do when they leave the classroom?

Keep in mind your student's existing/pre-existing skills and knowledge, interest level, and the desired learning outcomes.

Organize Content

Structure your material with an introduction, body, and conclusion.

Let the audience know where you're going. Use an agenda, key points, and headers.

Include just core ideas the audience can quickly scan.

Use bulleted lists that are parallel grammatically.

Use several simple slides rather than one complicated one.

ASK YOURSELF:

- Is the material presented in a logical order?
- Is a change of topic made clear?

DELIVERY

Instructor

Avoid rambling.

Project your voice; don't mumble.

Pace yourself.

Show enthusiasm for your topic and use relevant humor.

Keep your hands free to gesture.

Always face the audience. Stand to the left of the screen so that as you talk the student's attention naturally goes from left to right—from you to the screen.

Smile!

Prepare and anticipate—think on your feet.

Believe what you say.

Paraphrase—don't read slide content.

Classroom

Keep the room lights on and avoid showing slides in a dark room for more than 15 minutes.

Use a wireless mechanism to advance your slides: Do not be tethered to your computer.

Students

Pay more attention to your students than to the content. We see competent instructors clinging to the pre-constructed scripts provided on the screen behind them.

Combine receiving information with whiteboard and other activities—keep students out of a passive mode.

Pause! Allow students time to process the information before moving on. They'll listen better if they've already registered the displayed information.

Sip from a glass of water throughout class. This will slow you down between topics and encourage questions by allowing silence in the classroom.

Provide students with a paper handout copy of your presentation to take notes on and follow along with you.

Content

Be familiar with the content. It's puzzling to see a teacher surprised or confused by the material in his or her own presentation.

Only display images when you're ready to use them. Students are distracted by visuals that aren't immediately pertinent to the information being conveyed.

Orient your audience to displayed visuals before going into the details.

Viewers need direction with bullet points or lists.

Begin presenting basic elements all students understand and build up to a more complex level.

Use the slide as a guide rather than reading from it.

Enemy of Learning: Teachers need to cover content at all costs.

References

- Attias, N. (2004). Presentations: how to make an impact on your audience. *Canadian Consulting Engineer*, 45 (6). 201.
- Ball, C. (2002). Death by PowerPoint. *Corporate Meetings & Incentives*, 21 (12). 22.
- Cooper, S. S., & Yoder-Wise, P. S. (2003). Teaching with slides, PowerPoint, and overhead projectors. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 34 (6). 245-246.
- Class act. Promoting access for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. (n.d.) Retrieved June 10, 2005, from <http://www.rit.edu/~classact/>
- DuFrene, D. D., & Lehman, C. M. (2004). Concept, content, construction, and contingencies: getting the horse before the PowerPoint cart. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 67 (1). 84.
- Gallagher, D., (2004). How to...deliver an effective presentation. *People Management 10* (20). 48-49.
- Hill, J. (2004). Top 10 font rules for electronic slides. *Presentations*. 38-40.
- McKeachie, W. J. (2002). *McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Obuchowskis, J. (2005). Polish or perish. *Harvard Management Communication Letter*, 2 (1). 4.
- Walsh, J., & Frontczack, K. P. (2003). Back to basics: non-technical tips for improving technology-based presentation skills. *TechTrends*, 47 (1). 41-45,

