PowerPoint – Creating an Effective Presentation

Before we cover how to create PowerPoint slides to augment a presentation, it is a good idea to think about general rules for creating an effective one. The following are a few suggestions for making an effective presentation using PowerPoint as an aid. You can consult the web sites referenced at the bottom of the page\(^1\),\(^2\),\(^3\), which are the basis for this handout, for more suggestions.

A. Prepare Before You Create the Presentation

- **Thoroughly research your project.**
  - A presentation can only be as good as the quality of the information you present.

- **Organize your thoughts.**
  - You should organize what you want to say before working on the slides
  - Consider preparing a written outline of the presentation first.

B. Create Effective PowerPoint Slides

- **Use design templates.**

- **Keep the design of all the slides the same.**
  - Using a master slide to create all the slides will help.

- **Make sure the audience can read your slides**
  - Use large fonts, generally from 20 to 54 point
    - Use the floor test\(^2\) for legibility
      - Print a slide and put the page on the floor. Can you read it from the standing position?
  - The text should contrast with the background
  - Don’t use fancy fonts – they are difficult to read
  - Select colors with care.
    - Be sure they work well when projected.
    - Remember – some people are color-blind.

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<http://people.csp.edu/saylor/efficient_powerpoint.htm>

\(^3\) Montecino, Virginia. “Creating an Effective PowerPoint Presentation.” Education and Technology Resources.
<http://maso.mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/powerpoint.html>
• Present only main ideas on the slides.
  o Use the screen as a reference during your talk.
  o You can tell your audience the details.
  o The slides are NOT the presentation – only an aid.

• Use the “rule of six”:
  o Generally no more than six lines per slide
  o Generally no more than six words per line.
  o Avoid long sentences.

• Avoid special effects
  o Avoid fancy transitions, animations, and sounds
  o Visual images can be helpful
    ▪ They can be useful when they convey information.
    ▪ Don’t use generic pictures just to fill space.
  o The information you are presenting is what is important, not the effects.

C. Practice Your Presentation

• Look at the slides again
  o Are the main points on each slide clear?
  o Is there a logical flow from beginning to end?

• Time your presentation
  o Practice, practice, practice.
  o Run through the presentation, saying what you actually want to say in front of the audience.
  o Generally, you should spend no more than three minutes per slide.
  o Can you do the presentation in less than the time limit allowed?
    ▪ Did you need to hurry?
    ▪ If so, then your presentation is too long.
  o Do you want people to take notes? If so, leave time for them to do so.
  o Have you left some time for questions?
  o Do you want to supply handouts?