

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 test² 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.

¹ Stratten, Scott. "Giving Effective PowerPoint Presentations." 2005. 22 Mar. 2005
<http://sbinfocanada.about.com/cs/management/qt/powerptpres_p.htm>

² Saylor, Thomas. "Creating an Effective PowerPoint Presentation." 13 Sep. 2003. 22 Mar. 2005
<http://people.csp.edu/saylor/effective_powerpoint.htm>

³ Montecino, Virginia. "Creating an Effective PowerPoint Presentation." Education and Technology Resources. New Century College, George Mason University. July 1999. 22 Mar 2005
<<http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/powerpoint.html>>

- **Present only main ideas on the slides.**
 - Use the screen as a reference during your talk.
 - You can tell your audience the details.
 - The slides are NOT the presentation – only an aid.

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

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

C. Practice Your Presentation

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

- **Time your presentation**
 - Practice, practice, practice.
 - Run through the presentation, saying what you actually want to say in front of the audience.
 - Generally, you should spend no more than three minutes per slide.
 - 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.
 - Do you want people to take notes? If so, leave time for them to do so.
 - Have you left some time for questions?
 - Do you want to supply handouts?