

Suggestions for Preparing Effective PowerPoint Presentations

The following PowerPoint preparation tips are provided to assure that you will prepare effective and readable presentations. Whether it is the first time you have spoken or you are an experienced speaker, you will find these guidelines helpful in preparing PowerPoint presentations.

- **DO NOT** read your slides to your audience! The visuals you create should support your verbal presentation and not become the presentation itself.
- **DO NOT** use too many slides. An average of **10 -12 data slides per 15-minute** presentation is a good guideline.
- Each slide should be designed to be concise, uncluttered and readable from a distance: include only key words and phrases for visual reinforcement.
- **DO NOT** put too much information on any single slide. Attendees should be able to comprehend the visual in 20 seconds or less. If you are not sure whether attendees will be able to read a slide, omit it.
- It is good practice to convey **only one message or idea per slide**. Observe the rule of 6 x 6 – **no more than six lines, with each line containing no more than six words**.
- Use special effects (transitions, sounds, etc.) sparingly, if at all, because they tend to distract from the message being conveyed.
- Use a font and a font size that is readable. Sans Serif fonts, such as **Arial**, **Tahoma**, and **Verdana**, are recommended for clarity. Do not mix fonts unless it is for a good reason, e.g., presenting quotes. Do not use capitals except for occasional emphasis – they are harder to read than lower-case letters.
- Keep the following guidelines in mind in terms of font size:
 - The larger, the better. Remember, your slides must be readable, even at the back of the room.
 - **Verdana 40 point** is a good title size.
 - **Verdana 32 point** is a good subtitle or bullet point size.

- Content text should be no smaller than **Verdana 24 point**. Smaller text will be unreadable from beyond 3-4 meters, which will be only the front row in most meeting rooms.
- Keep the following guidelines in mind in terms of background:
 - Use the same background on each slide.
 - No logo slides or institution-specific templates may be used, except on first and last slides.
 - **Avoid** white backgrounds – the white screen can be blinding in a dark room.
 - Dark slides with light-colored text (**not** white) work best.
- Keep the following guidelines in mind in terms of font colors:
 - Use color and fonts for interest and variety, but **DO NOT** use too many of each as the slides may become confusing.
 - Ideally, lettering should be light coloured on a dark-coloured background.
 - Reds and oranges are high-energy but can be difficult to stay focused on.
 - Greens, blues, and browns are mellower but not good for grabbing attention.
 - Reds and greens can be difficult to see for those who are colour blind.
- Graphs and charts should be kept simple, with large lettering and clearly marked axes, etc.
 - Use coloured arrows to direct the audience's attention to particular parts of charts, especially for complicated figures. For figures created in charting programs and then exported to PowerPoint, be sure that the output fonts and line widths are legible once the image is scaled within PowerPoint.
 - If you have a complicated chart, it is a good idea to add statistics directly onto the chart and to provide the details of the graph orally.
- When advancing to your next slide, give the audience a couple of seconds to become familiar with the new piece of information.

Before the presentation

- Make sure that you have everything you need. In many cases, videos embedded in PowerPoint presentations cause a problem. It is a good idea to save such videos separately in a folder in case you need to show them separately.
- If you are not going to use your own computer, copy your presentation to the new computer's hard drive and test the software in advance.
- Make sure that you have a pointing device.
- Make sure that you will not have to deal with silly details (a table in the middle of your path, an open window, etc.) during your presentation.

During the presentation

- **DO NOT** stand in front of the screen or wall on which the slides are reflected.
- Keep eye-contact with the audience (but **do not** simply stare at them). This also means that **DO NOT** turn your presentation into a reading session in which you constantly look at the notes in your hand and read everything aloud.
- If you need to quote a sentence or a phrase, write it down on a piece of paper and read it instead of trying to memorize it.
- **DO NOT** stand on the same spot at all times during your presentation – neither should you walk up and down all the time and distract the audience.
- When someone asks a question, repeat the question if you think that not everyone present may have heard it clearly.