



Guidelines for Using PowerPoint in Presentations

Using Microsoft PowerPoint as a visual aid can vastly improve anyone's presentation by combining the elements of pictures, data, or text. These can help an audience follow the presenter and view the topics that the presenter presents with their own eyes.

Here are some guidelines for making an effective PowerPoint:

1. **Set aside some time to prepare** your PowerPoint slides and to look at the options available to you. You can incorporate different backgrounds, fonts, layouts, graphs, pictures, transitions between slides, and sound effects into your PowerPoint slides. Take time to play with the options until you feel comfortable with them.
2. **Get some practice** setting up your PowerPoint on the classroom computer. Ask your professor about accessing the classroom for your practice session. Having a PowerPoint presentation and knowing how to use it are two different things. You need to be familiar with the system to be able to use it effectively.
3. **Come a few minutes early** the day of your presentation to make sure that all the equipment you need and have reserved ahead of time are in good working order. Pull up any links you need in the presentation. Having the equipment, knowing that it works, and knowing HOW it works are three different things. You need to do all three when giving your presentation.
4. **Back up your presentation.** It's not a good idea to rely solely on sending your PowerPoint slides to your own email address to retrieve it in the classroom. Use resources like iCloud, USB Drive, or Dropbox as well in case one method of retrieval fails on your presentation day.

5. **Limit how many slides you use.** There must be an optimal balance between using your visual aide as a mere backdrop and letting your slides overwhelm your entire presentation. To achieve this goal, you may want to limit the number of slides to around 5-6 for a ten minute speech. Hamilton (1996) suggests this rule of thumb for the maximum number of slides: **Length of speech/2 + 1 = Maximum number.**
6. **Refer to the slides when you need to,** but **don't read directly** word for word from the screen. Remember to use transition statements. Don't assume that reading the title of a new slide constitutes a smooth transition into a new idea.
7. **Try not to overwhelm the audience** with too many visuals, words, and sounds. Each slide should contain one main idea, with bullet points rather than full sentences on the slide. A nice transition between slides helps to increase a look of professionalism, but the effect is distracting when transitions are overdone with irrelevant and/or noisy sounds. You want the slides to enhance rather than hinder the audience's comprehension of your main points.
8. **Feel free to incorporate other forms of visual aids, such as artifacts or a whiteboard.** Research shows that in educational settings, the use of different forms of audio visuals enhances retention. Again, think of a balance between using only one form of visual aid and many forms. You don't want to distract, but you DO want to create visual and sensory interest. Ask your professor if using an additional alternate form of visual aid is permitted.

In summary, **experimenting** with PowerPoint is the best way to get your desired presentation. It is versatile tool that anyone can use to enhance the message they wish to leave their audience with. Practice with your PowerPoint as much as possible and good luck!

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