

POWERPOINT GUIDELINES 2013

I. Keys To Creating A Successful PowerPoint Presentation

- Limit content and structure to your core message.
- Use white space generously. Stay focused on the basic message. Use key points and avoid extraneous details.
- Present one basic idea per slide. Use bold lettering in charts and graphs.
- Establish a theme. Use similar colors and font size throughout the presentation.
- Don't change the style half way through the presentation.
- Keep your visual style consistent among all slides.
- Each powerpoint slide should HIGHLIGHT a basic point of your presentation, not replace a chart or enter concept. Think of each slide as a HEADLINE and you are the rest of the article.
- Use visuals to help your audience. Don't present scans or charts that make them feel overwhelmed and lost as they try and interpret the image.
- Limit the use of bullet points and text. Nothing is more boring and sure to lose an audience than slide after slide of paragraphs of fine print text or endless nested bullets. Do not use bullets to outline your entire presentation. Do not use whole sentences or paragraphs in bullet points, it defeats the purpose. Try and follow the rule of sixes: No more than 6 words per bullet, no more than 6 bullets per slide, and no more than 6 slides of just text or bullets.
- Avoid the temptation to use all the cheesy animations, transitions, clip art, and sound effects. These only serve to distract your audience from your message and in many cases are just downright annoying. If you need a transition, a simple dissolve is usually the best choice, but don't overdo it. Use it sparingly such as when moving to a new idea or changing concepts. If you must use clip-art use it sparingly and only use that which supports your message. Do not use stock clip-art included in PowerPoint. It's overused and cliched.

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II. Design And Style

- Have a visual theme and be consistent across slides. Try to avoid the templates included with PowerPoint as they also tend to be overused and cliched resulting in a presentation that is dull and unmemorable. Establishing your own theme will also allow you to tailor it to better fit and support your core message and needs. Don't compromise your message just to make it fit a stock template.
- Choose a good color scheme. While it's beyond the scope of this document to deliver an entire course on color theory, having some basic knowledge about colors and how they interact will help a great deal. There are a couple rules of thumb, however, that can help even without such knowledge. In general, take into account the environment in which your presentation will be seen. If your slides will be viewed in a darkened room, then a dark background with light text and graphics is a better choice. If the room is brightly lit, then a light background with darker text and graphics will work better. In short, contrast is good. Colors that are too close to each other are very hard to see, and certain color combinations will actually be painful to look at. More information about color can be found here: <http://www.tutorial9.net/articles/design/simple-practical-color-theory/>
- Make sure that the treatment you use for headlines, sub-headers, and text are consistent across slides. Don't use more than two different fonts per presentation. When choosing fonts, a sans-serif style will generally work better and be easier to read. Avoid using text effects like drop shadows and outlines and such. They will usually just make the text difficult to read and add to unwanted clutter. The point size of text is important to consider as well. If your presentation will only be viewed by an individual sitting at a computer, a regular text point size of 14 or 16 may work well, depending on the content. However, most of the time this will not be the case. A larger font size is usually better, especially if your presentation will be seen by a group of people or be projected onto a large screen. In such cases, try to keep a minimum point size of no less than 30. Otherwise, it's highly probable people won't be able to read or see it from across the room
- If your presentation will be shown through a video projector, or appear on video, there are some important things to consider that will depend on the quality and resolution of the projector or video monitor. To be sure your presentation will look good you'll want to avoid using thin, script, or serif style fonts, small font sizes, thin lines or patterns, and pure 100% colors. Pure 100% colors may bleed or cause other distortion in video. Make text as large as you can to ensure it can be seen from across a room. Also, avoid placing important elements near the edges of the image. Try to leave at least a 10% safety area around the edges. Anything inside that area could possibly be cut off or clipped by the video projector or monitor.

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III. Suggested Reading

- *Brain Rules* by John Medina
- *Slideology* by Nancy Duarte
- *Beyond Bullet Points* by Cliff Atkinson
- *Presentation Zen* by Garr Reynolds
- *The Back of the Napkin* by Dan Roam
- *Storytelling in Organizations: Facts, Fictions, and Fantasies* by Yiannis Gabriel
- *Clear and to the Point: 8 Psychological Principles for Compelling PowerPoint Presentations* by Stephen M. Kosslyn