

Business

Designing a Good Presentation

I teach students and teachers to use PowerPoint a lot and the same old problems keep on coming up. So here's my 5 step guide to designing an effective presentation.

1. Number of slides

Educational Presentations

If you are going to be giving a lecture to students, then its fine to have a large number of slides, but generally speaking you should be spending between 2-4 minutes per slide and NEVER less than 1 minute per slide.

Sales Presentations

If on the other hand you are making a Sales Presentation, I'd limit yourself to six slides. If you can't sell yourself in six slides then you'll never be able to sell yourself. Most sales books will tell you, that you've got about 5 minutes max to get a client's attention.

After the six slides you might then want to get into individual benefits or product slides at the client's request. Use PowerPoint [Hyperlinks](#) to get you from one part of the presentation to the next.

2. The Text

How much?

The short answer is as little as possible...Generally if somebody can read the PowerPoint and understand the presentation without any further help, then it's too much text. Many trainers talk of the use of slogans, but to define that a little more:

Simple Slides

- Short Clauses
- No Articles
- Few Verbs
- Size 32 best
- Surprise me
- Memory jogger
- Max 6 lines

Should you reveal line by line or all at once... Well there's a big debate and my view is that if you have a big surprise in the text then don't show your hand! Otherwise I'd show all points it gives both the presenter and audience an indication of the flow of the presentation.

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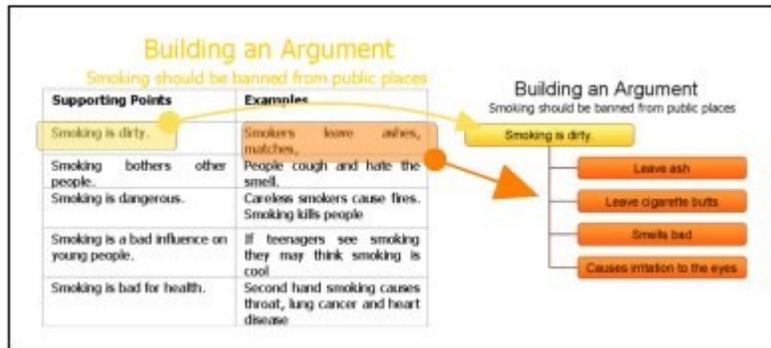
Tables

If using tables, be warned they can be very difficult to handle in PowerPoint and very rarely produce visually impressive results, but sometimes a table is the best way to present comparisons usefully. If that's the case limit the table to 3 columns and 6 rows, don't be afraid to merge cells and colour the background in alternate cells to make it easier for your audience to read line by line.

The diagram illustrates a transition from a complex table to a simplified comparison table. On the left, a table titled "Presentation Software compared" is shown with a grid of cells containing various software names and features. A blue arrow points to the right, where a simplified table titled "Other Options" is displayed. This table compares "Open Office" and "Star Office" across several criteria.

	Open Office	Star Office
Price	Free	70 euros
Tech-support	Free, but limited	Professional tech support
OS	Latest Macs & PC	PC's only
Stability	Highly Stable	
MS Office compatibility	Mostly compatible	

For figure work it is nearly always better to work in Excel and then copy and paste the results into PowerPoint. In the example below I changed a table into an organisation chart, which reinforces the point much more effectively.



English Learners: Don't worry that you can't read directly off the slides, you can use the notes function at the bottom of the slide to provide complete sentences if needed, while learning the presentation.

Good colours

Dark blue and yellow text work well in, black and white work well either way, but make sure colours VERY clearly contrast! And NEVER put strong background images in, if you want an image background either whitewash it or darken it so that it is very easy to tell apart from the text.

Remember: Projectors do NOT display images as well as your monitor.

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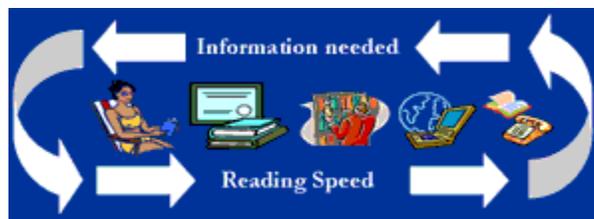
3. Graphics

In simple terms, if you're going to talk about the diagram in your presentation then it's an asset, if it's just there to make your slide pretty then it's a liability. An old boss of mine used to say that every presentation needs to have one *killer-image* that people will remember. Even if that image takes you longer than the rest of the presentation it is time well spent.

Designing Graphics

The ideal graphic is one specifically made for the presentation by a professional. Failing that consider the following options:

- For numeric information, use Excel to create graphs and then copy and paste them into your PowerPoint. (Excel has much better control over graphs than PowerPoint)
- Use the [insert -> diagram](#) option to make semi-customised content.
- Use [Google Images](#) to try and find the specific image you want.
- Use the drawing toolbar to combine your images effectively. (See image below)



Combines a number of standard images to make a new diagram

Using Thumbnails

5 Principles of Effective Writing

-  **Netiquette**
Inoffensive yet assertive
-  **Structure**
Maximum readability in minimum time
-  **Clarity**
Can read this easily?
-  **Grammar**
You looks very cool with ya grammar
-  **Purpose – Why?**

Thumbnails can be useful navigational items for training Presentations, because they provide a quick visual reference for students to see what aspect of the subject the lecturer is referring to.

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4. Multimedia Content

Generally speaking I try to avoid multimedia content and unless you are highly technically adept, I'd advise against using any kind of sound or videos in your presentation. Be aware of the following pitfalls:

- Linked files do not transfer well from one PC to another. The best method to make presentations portable is to use the [package for CD](#) option.
- Check your audio before giving the presentation and make sure you take all the required cables. (Plan B, one presentation with sound and one without)
- NEVER assume you can use the Internet during a presentation. It's always best to ensure all content is on your PC.
- Make sure you use the same version of PowerPoint on both PCs. (If you can't check your presentation carefully before giving it.)
- Don't use more than one fade and more than one transition per slideshow, unless this is going to be used in a kiosk, you want the speaker to be the focus of attention not the flashing graphics.

5. Front Page

In many cases the front slide will be shown before your presentation and this is a great opportunity to get the audience excited about what you are going to say, make sure your frontpage has:

- The name of the presentation clearly displayed
- Your name clearly displayed
- An interesting visual image relevant to the presentation or somekind of teaser.

6. Handouts

If people get handouts at the beginning of the presentation, why do they need to listen to you? Many people tell their audience they'll be getting handouts at the end and with attentive audiences this is quite acceptable, but not everybody will pay attention when they know they'll be getting notes...

Also, for sales and marketing Presentations, wouldn't the notes be an incentive for people to give you their Email addresses? So that you can send them a copy...

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7 Differences between PowerPoint and Impress

Impress is free presentation software that is a part of Open Office. It is an excellent alternative to Microsoft products and runs on a wider range of operating systems. It has a number of advantages including, Flash Export, better drawing tools and easy PDF creation.

Drawing

If you like to draw then Impress is great, because you have a fully functional drawing package within Impress with connectors and it can even do 3D graphics. What it does not have are standard diagrams built in, so you have to draw every diagram yourself or find clipart. (One good source is: <http://openclipart.org/>)

Multimedia Content

Impress has some nice features for using Multimedia, but on a Windows platform beware that Windows Media Video is not directly supported, but Apple QuickTime is. If you've got Windows Media files, then I'd suggest downloading a convertor program such as: [Super](#) to enable you to play and convert most kinds of videos. (The Website is a dog to navigate, use the Find function on the word download and eventually you will get there.)

Also if you plan to present with a different computer, please ensure that you bring the Movie file with you. It is best if they are kept in the same directory as the original file. (You may need to insert the video clip again, so please check on the target computer)

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Questions

Mark each of the following: True / False / Not Given

1. You should spend no more than one minute per slide
2. You should not use more than six slides for a sales presentation
3. It is good to put all the words on the slide
4. You should always display all of your words at once
5. PowerPoint Tables should have no more than 3 columns
6. People should type the entire contents of their speech into the Notes section
7. Strong contrast is important
8. My old boss was very good at PowerPoint slides
9. The Diagrams in PowerPoint are all of very good quality
10. Thumbnails are useful in an educational context

Discuss

- What do you think are the three most useful tips in this handout?
- Do you disagree with any of the ideas in this handout?
- Do you think PowerPoint represents good value for money when Impress is available for free?

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Answers

1. F – You should spend more than one minute per slide
2. T – That is the amount a client is likely to want to see before making their decision
3. F – If somebody can read it, then they don't need a presenter
4. F – Sometimes it is useful to surprise people
5. T – More than 3 columns and you are likely to have very small text
6. NG – Not Given
7. T – Strong contrast is important, because projectors are not as good as LCD screens at displaying information
8. NG
9. NG
10. T – It says useful for students and lecturers.

Teacher's Hints

Do you disagree with any of the ideas in this handout?

- Some students may not want to reduce the number of animations - The concern with animations is that they take attention away from the presenter and their message. (Such animations are great for Kiosks where there is nobody to watch)
- Some students may feel that 6 slides is not enough for a sales presentation – Research in the area has shown that people purchasing products have an attention span of just 7 minutes. Encourage students to research this information on the Internet and they will find plenty of evidence of increased sales because of reduced presentation length. You could start with: Thornton, Virden. (2006, June 29). The Two-Hour Sales Presentation Vs. A Seven-Minute Attention Span. *EzineArticles*. Retrieved June 06, 2007, from <http://ezinearticles.com/?The-Two-Hour-Sales-Presentation-Vs.-A-Seven-Minute-Attention-Span&id=232494>

Do you think PowerPoint represents good value for money when Impress is available for free?

Here are some useful Websites, that will help students to make an informed decision:

- <http://www.openoffice.org/>
- <http://office.microsoft.com/>