

CFD's Tuesday Tech Tips #4



Welcome

Many of us use PowerPoint for teaching and making professional presentations. Here are some guidelines for making our presentations “user friendly” for our audiences.

By the way, check out Jared Seay’s workshops in Addlestone Library!

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Creating audience-friendly PowerPoints

1. Visibility:
 - a. If you are presenting in a darkened room, use a lighter background; similarly, in a light room, use a darker background for contrast and visibility.
 - b. A single background throughout an entire slideshow adds continuity.
 - c. Turn down some lights, if necessary, but avoid a very dark room—ZZZZZZZZZZZZ.
2. Font
 - a. Check out your font size from a distance similar to that from the back of your presenting room to the screen where your presentation will be shown. Usually, premade backgrounds include pre-selected large font sizes. Choose a minimum of 24 point font size.
 - b. Use a clear, readable font; no more than two or three variations of the same font or fonts per show.
 - c. Use uppercase for major headings only; uppercase is less readable than lowercase.
 - d. Use brighter colors in fonts for emphasis; pre-made backgrounds also include a selection of colors that suit that particular background.
3. Content
 - a. Observe the “Joy of Six.” Okay, let’s read that one again! As a rule of thumb each slide should contain no more than six lines; each line should contain no more than six words. Your audience will be encouraged to listen if you don’t give everything away on the screen. Six is an approximate guide for slide content. There are exceptions: important definitions and examples, and very important quotes.
 - b. Use Custom Animation to allow only one bulleted item or sentence to enter the screen at once. That way, your audience will attend to your explanation and refrain from writing everything on the page, missing your discussion.
 - c. Edit carefully for spelling, grammar, and mechanics. These errors somehow become very large on the screen.

4. The distraction factor: Less is sometimes more
 - a. Use graphics only if they enhance your points; graphics should be cues to help your audience remember your content.
 - b. Be sure your background graphics are simple and remain in the same screen location throughout the slide show. Graphics moving from side to side per slide can cause the audience to lose focus.
 - c. It is not necessary to recreate the Jimi Hendrix Experience in your presentation; be sure your color contrasts do not create “flashing” for viewers. Using the pre-selected fonts and colors in premade backgrounds ensures that your audience does not get that blast from the past.
 - d. On the same note, PowerPoint does provide some really neat visual and auditory transition options for moving from slide to slide and point to point. However, watching the checkerboard transition and hearing a trumpet solo between each slide will guarantee that you won’t have to finish your presentation, unless your remaining audience is unconscious, that is.

5. Presenting
 - a. Begin and end with a blank slide; a blank at the beginning helps focus your audience on your initial content slide. At the end, an additional slide adds continuity of background and doesn’t signal as strongly as does a black screen that the presentation is over. Quite often, very important questions and discussions occur at the end of a slideshow.
 - b. Provide handouts of your slides in notes form; this encourages listening rather than copying of material on slides.
 - c. Don’t read slides to your audience—use minimally stated important points as cues for your elaboration, discussion, and questioning.

Good teaching,

Sara