

General PowerPoint Tips

The graphics you project on the screen to support what you say should help clarify ideas, emphasize key points, show relationships, and provide the visual information your audience needs to understand your message.

Here are a few suggestions:

1. Keep the **wording** clear and simple.
 - Abbreviate your message. Don't use complete sentences. Outline the thought to provide a memory trigger.
 - Try to follow the "7-7" rule. Create up to seven words across, seven lines down. Don't hesitate to continue the same title on the next slide with more information. The more you break this rule, the less the audience will see.
 - Use only two font styles per slide. A typical design might be to use Times-Roman for your titles and Ariel for the text below.
 - Upper and lower case lettering is more readable than all capital letters. Current styles indicate that using all capital letters means you are shouting.
 - In bullet point lines, capitalize the first word and no other words unless they normally appear capped.
2. Keep the **design** consistent and appealing to the eye.
 - Use colors sparingly; two to three at most. Be consistent from slide to slide. For example, use one color for all of your titles, another for the text body, etc.
 - Light backgrounds work. White can be too bright depending on competing light levels in the room. Light browns and blues work well. Lettering could be black, dark blue, dark purple or dark green.
 - Dark backgrounds work, too. The most effective background colors are blue, turquoise, purple, magenta, teal, etc. Lettering could be white, yellow, cyan, pink and lighter versions of most other colors.
 - Don't use red in any fonts or backgrounds. It is an emotionally overwhelming color that is difficult to see and read.
 - Graduated backgrounds are more interesting than plain ones.
 - Textured backgrounds can add style to your talk. Simple, light textured backgrounds work well. Complicated textures make the content hard to read.
 - Graphics, illustrations, cartoons, artwork and photographs will bring another dimension to your presentation. Determine your comfort level and match the graphics with your message and your speaking style.
 - A note about photographs: when importing pictures, be sure they are no larger than 2 megabytes and are in a **.jpg** format. Larger files can slow down your show.

- Experiment with animating the transition between slides as well as animating the content within the slide.

3. Keep **graphs, charts and diagrams** simple, if possible. You have been staring at your data for months. The audience only gets a minute. Simple graphs, etc. are absorbed more quickly than complex, cluttered ones.

- Use bar graphs and pie charts instead of tables of data. The audience can then immediately pick up relationships.
- Place labels outside pie charts.
- Simplify scales on the X- and Y-axis.

4. General hints

- If using a laser pointer, don't move it too fast. For example, if circling a number on the slide, do it slowly.
- Don't point the laser at the audience.
- Look at the audience, not at the slides, whenever possible.
- Most slide programs are made to be user friendly so that everyone can make their own slides. However, if possible, don't hesitate to ask a professional slide production person to go over your show and offer hints.
- Run "spell check" on your show when finished.

Your goal is to design a presentation that delivers your message clearly, efficiently and in an interesting manner. How you design your show will reflect your speaking style and your personality. Your efforts will pay off in the long run and ensure that each presentation will communicate the importance of the content and the passion you have talking about it to your audience.