

# PRESENTABLE PRESENTATIONS

VISUAL AID OR A VISUAL DISTRACTION

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# Presentable Presentations

## A Visual Aid or a Visual Distraction

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PowerPoint Presentations are a quick and effective way to inject visual interest, but they can also spell disaster – even for the most experienced.

### TIPS BEFORE YOU START

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Plan your presentation well in advance. Write a script, then visualise the presentation.

Open the presentation with something surprising, amusing or intriguing, if possible.

Create the presentation as you would a report – beginning, middle and end.

The slides on the screen are only part of the presentation – and not the main part.

Have a Plan B in the event of technical difficulties.

Limit the number of slides and average one slide per minute.

Know how to move back and forward within the presentation. Audiences often ask to see the previous screen again.

Do not apologise for anything in your presentation. If you believe that something will be hard to read or understand, don't use it.

- Speak clearly and fluently – no 'ums'.
- Check the spelling and the grammar on each slide.
- Do not read the presentation. Practice the presentation so that you know it well.
- DO NOT use slides as speaker's notes. The audience will always read the slides rather than listen to the presentation.

### CREATING THE PRESENTATION

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- Plan carefully and do your research.
- Know your audience.
- Time the presentation when it's complete.
- The text should be your cue only, rather than as a message for the viewer.
- Give a brief overview at the start. Then present the information. Finally, review important points.

- It is more effective to have bullet points appear 'one at a time'. In this way the audience will listen to you, rather than reading the screen.
- Use a wireless clicker so that you can move around the floor as you speak.
- If sound effects are used, wait until the sound has finished before speaking.
- Do not turn your back on the audience.
- Standardise the presentation – position, colours and styles.
- Include only necessary information and limit the information to the essential.
- Use a single style throughout for bullet points.
- Use colours that contrast and compliment.
- Select an easily readable font – see Font Size below.
- Keep the background consistent for all slides.
- Do not create too many slides – 11 to 15 slides maximum. The great the number the certainty that the audience will lose concentration.
- Try to use the same style throughout the presentation – eg: cartoons or photographs.
- Avoid flashy images and noisy animation effects.
- It is more beneficial to have a written handout/report for attendees to take away rather than a mere copy of the slides. This also eliminates the need to fill slides with a great deal of text.

## PRESENTATION TEMPLATES

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Templates force you to fit your original ideas into someone else's pre-packaged mould ... and they often contain distracting backgrounds and poor colour combinations.

Try to create your own distinctive look and use the company logo in a corner of the screen.

## SLIDE TRANSITIONS / SOUND and SPECIAL EFFECTS ... .. Best left to the film-makers!

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Transitions and sound effects can become the focus of attention, which in turn become a distraction – and this includes lines of text appearing at the click of a mouse.

Avoid the use of flashy transitions, such as text fly-ins. These features may seem impressive at first, but are quite distracting and become boring quite quickly.

Overuse of special effects, such as animation and sounds, may make a negative impact and damage credibility.

Limit transitions. Use only one type so that the audience knows what to expect.

Focus on your message and not on the technology!

### BUILDS ... .. Lines of text appearing each time you click the mouse,

When employing 'builds' have content appear on the screen in a consistent, simple manner - coming in from the top or the left of the screen is best.

Only 'build' screens when necessary to make your point, because builds can seriously slow your presentation.

### STANDARD CLIPART / GRAPHICS AND IMAGES ... .. Use quality images

Amazingly, these can be quite boring and can show a lack of creativity.

Avoid using PowerPoint's own clip art. If it is included in the software, then the audience would have seen it thousands of times before.

Think about using your own photographs, or better quality graphics from companies such as free ones from:

<https://www.freeimages.com/image/people-families>. The title of this link is misleading, as the site covers:

Animals - Architecture - Army and Weapons - Arts and Design - Automotive  
Business and Finance - Celebrities - Education - Fashion and Beauty - Flowers and  
Trees - Games and Cartoons - Food and Drink - Health and Medical - Holiday  
and Festivals - Home Designs - Industrial - Landscapes and Nature - Movie and  
Music - Outdoor Activities - People and Families - Religion - Science and Technology  
Signs and Symbols - Sports and Fitness - Textures and Patterns - Transportation

Use good quality images that reinforce and complement your message. Ensure that your image maintains its impact and resolution when projected on a larger screen.

- Consider using design templates.
- Use quality clip art ... and use it sparingly.
- Use one or two large images per slide, rather than several small ones.
- Limit the number of images on each slide.
- Prioritise images, rather than using many.
- Make all the images the same size.
- Use the same border.
- Use limited text to explain the chart or graph.
- Clearly label images.

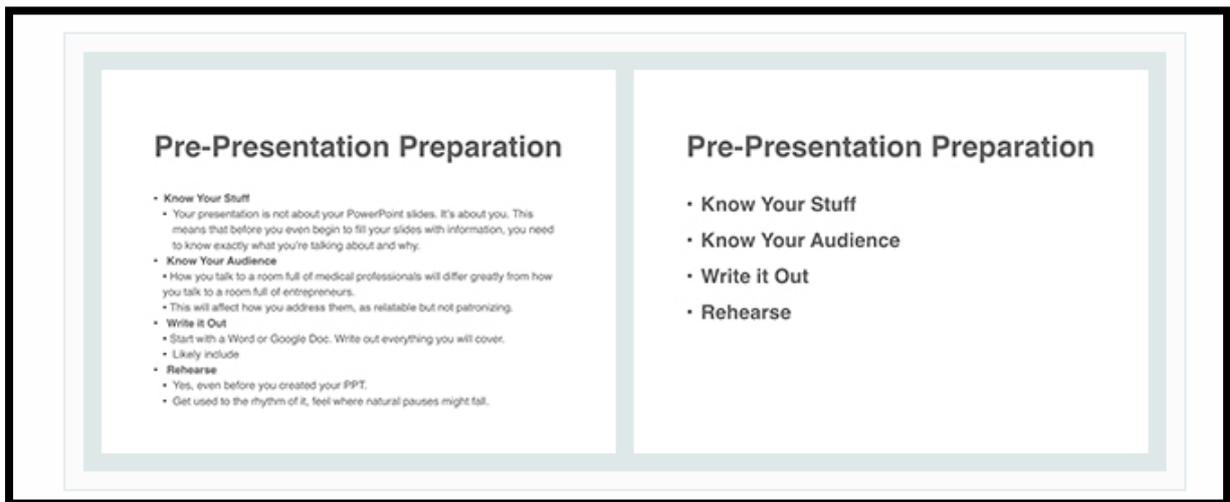
- Keep the design clean and uncluttered. Leave empty space around the text and graphical images.

## TEXT-HEAVY SLIDES

The most common mistake that slide presenters make, is to create slides overfilled with text. Slides are a poor medium for detail and also for reading.

Text-heavy

As it should be ...



Limit slides to a maximum of five lines of text and use words and phrases to make points. This limit makes it easier to digest and retain key points.

Simplify and limit the number of words on each screen. Use key phrases and include only essential information.

DO NOT put words in capital letters.

Wider margins will enhance readability.

Limit punctuation. Do not use exclamation marks – instead, emphasise your point while speaking.

## SCANNING

Do not scan a table or a graphical image directly from existing material to include on a slide.

The results of scanning to slides are almost always sub-optimal. These images are often too small and too detailed for an adequate presentation, and need to be seen from as short a distance as 8-12 inches from the screen.

Use sans serif font at all times. Serif fonts are more difficult to read – especially for the sight impaired. Use fonts such as Arial, Helvetica or Calibri.

The font size for a presentation should be 38 – 40 point and certainly nothing smaller than 14 point. This size will accommodate a wider audience, rather than those just sitting immediately in front of the screen.

Use the same font throughout.

To test the font is easy to read, stand 6ft away from the monitor and see if you can read the slide.

- Use bold and different sizes for captions and headings.
- Use larger font to indicate importance.
- Use different colours, sizes and style (eg. Bold) for impact.
- Do not use Italics, as they are more difficult to read – especially for the sight impaired.
- Avoid long sentences.
- Do not use abbreviations or acronyms.
- Limit punctuation marks.
- Use no more than 6 – 8 words per line.
- For bullet points – use one thought per line with no more than 6 words per line and no more than 6 lines per slide.
- Use dark text on a light background, or light text on a dark background. This makes for easier reading – especially for the sight impaired.
- Do not use capitals, except possibly for titles.
- To test
- Do not use capitals, except for titles.

Text and graphical images should be large enough to read, but not so large as to appear “loud”.

Use contrasting colours for text and background. Light text on a dark background is best. Patterned backgrounds can reduce readability of text.

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READING ... .. Spoken language is shorter, less formal and more direct

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Do not ever read from your slides.

A verbal presentation should focus on interactive speaking and listening, not reading by the speaker.

Reading your text ruins a presentation. It is imperative to capture and hold the audience's attention.

If you hand out material before the presentation, remember that the audience will always read the handouts rather than listen.

Do not 'speak at' the slides. Too many presenters face in the direction of the screen, rather than facing and interacting with the audience.

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## WORDS AND PUNCTUATION

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Simplify and limit the number of words on each screen.

Use key phrases and include only essential information.

Limit punctuation and avoid putting words in all capital letters.

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## FAMILIARISE YOURSELF

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Familiarise yourself with the presentation, practice it and be ready to engage with the audience, regardless of the technology that is available.

Remember that, on the day, technology may let you down!

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## COLOUR

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- Limit the number of colours on a single screen.
- Bright colours make both small objects and thin lines stand out. However, some vibrant colours are difficult to read when projected.
- Use no more than four colours on one chart.