

PowerPoint Tips and Techniques

Topics Covered in this Tutorial

- [Presentation Design](#)
- [Guidelines for Presentation Design](#)
- [The Slide Master](#)
- [Using Charts and Graphs](#)
- [Slide Transition](#)
- [Tips for Effective Presentations](#)

Overview

This tutorial presents some PowerPoint tips and techniques for creating better presentations. It covers presentation design, guidelines for elements of presentation design (writing, graphic design, text, graphic images, and color), the slide master, using charts and graphs, slide transitions, and general tips for effective presentations.

Learning Information and Activities

Presentation Design

Preparing an effective presentation is much more than just preparing some slides with a few notes. The purpose of a presentation is to communicate. Words, graphic images, color, layout, and special effects can be used to convey what the presenter wants to say. The success of how these elements are put together greatly impacts the overall presentation.

Presentation Outline

When designing a presentation, begin by creating an outline of what needs to be included. The structure of an outline can vary from presentation to presentation, but many of the basic components stay the same.

Sample presentation outline:

- **Introduction**
 - Define the subject of the presentation.
 - Provide a general overview of what the audience will learn.
 - Give background information about the topic and tell how it relates to the audience.

- **Agenda**
 - List the topics to be covered.
- **Overview or Opening**
 - Give an overview of the subject.
 - Explain the objective(s).
- **Vocabulary**
 - Define terms used in the presentation.
- **Topic One**
 - Explain details.
 - Give an example.
- **Topic Two**
 - Explain details.
 - Give an example.
- **Topic Three**
 - Explain details.
 - Give an example.
- **Summary**
 - Review what has been covered.
 - Describe ways to apply what was learned.
- **For More Information**
 - Training sessions.
 - Books, articles, online sources.
 - Consultants, other sources.

Guidelines for Presentation Design

Once an outline is developed, it is time to write the content, create an overall design, format the text, collect and add graphics, and apply color. The way these elements are used creates an overall image or effect for the presentation.

General guidelines for presentation writing, design, text, graphics and color:

- **Writing Guidelines:**
 - Write an outline for each slide.
 - Eliminate unnecessary words on slides.
 - Place text in a text box if it does not fit into the outline structure or to give a point more emphasis.
- **Design Guidelines:**
 - Put no more than seven lines on a slide.
 - A long list can overwhelm an audience.
 - All text should be 18 points or larger.
 - Fonts should be easy to read.
 - Choose one font and font size for headlines and another font and font size for body text.
 - Do not use more than 3 fonts.
 - Use no more than two levels of bullets (Level 1 headings for main topics and Level 2 headings for subtopics).
 - Organize the elements of the slides in advance. Decide which elements are the most important and the least important and organize them accordingly.
 - Emphasize text with bold, italic, size, color, and spacing formatting.
 - Consider creating a visual theme by selecting colors and graphics related to the topic of the presentation.
 - For slides containing a lot of text, choose simple backgrounds.
 - Use bright colors in small areas for emphasis.

- After designing the slides, stand back and examine them. Make any needed adjustments.
- **Text Guidelines:**
 - Avoid using all caps. (All caps are more difficult to read than upper and lower case type.)
 - Choose readable fonts.
 - If using WordArt, use it sparingly.
 - Write phrases, not sentences.
 - Less is more. Keep the line length of text to no more than 45 to 55 characters, including spaces. Longer lines are difficult for the audience to read.
 - Avoid underlining text. Use italic or bold type instead.
 - Shadowed text can help text stand out, but make sure it looks good on the chosen background.
 - If text is placed over a color graphic, make sure the text is readable on all parts of the slide.
 - Be careful when using rotated and vertical text.
 - Allow for margins on slides.
 - Make sure everything on the slide can be seen or read.
- **Graphics Guidelines:**
 - Limit the use of lines to three to four lines per slide.
 - Choose graphics that relate to the topic.
 - Make use of white space.
 - Limit the number of graphics per slide.
 - Simplify data labels.
- **Color Guidelines:**
 - Use a limited number of colors.
 - Choose colors that contrast for text and background.
 - Because some people have problems distinguishing certain colors, avoid using certain color combinations including: red/green, brown/green, blue/black, and blue/purple.
 - Use cool and muted colors for backgrounds. Bright warm colors are hard to look at for a long period of time.
 - Light backgrounds with dark text can be used to create a soft look.
 - Use PowerPoint's built-in color schemes.

The Slide Master

The Slide Master of a PowerPoint presentation can be a very helpful tool in creating and carrying out a presentation design. It is a part of the design template of a slide that stores information about the template, including font styles, placeholder sizes and positions, background design, and color schemes. It functions as the skeleton of a presentation. The Slide Master defines the options for every slide in a presentation.

To make the most of the Slide Master:

- **Format the background** - Create a background for the slides in a presentation. A PowerPoint template can be used, a background can be created using PowerPoint tools, or a background can be imported from another source. Once the background is added to the slide master, it will appear on every slide in the presentation.
- **Define the color scheme** - PowerPoint's built-in color schemes can be used or a color scheme can be created.
- **Select fonts and bullets** - By applying fonts to the Slide Master, font formatting will be applied to all slides in the presentation.
- **Add logos or other elements to each slide** - Any graphic elements that need to appear

<http://online.tusc.k12.al.us/tutorials/ppttips/ppttips.htm>

on each slide can be added here.

Using Charts and Graphs

Charts and graphs can be very effective part of a presentation, but each chart and graph should have a purpose that adds to the presentation's overall effectiveness. A common mistake is adding unnecessary charts and graphs to a presentation. Use charts to highlight key points of a presentation. When designing charts and graphs for presentations:

- **Guide the eye to the main point** - The main point of the chart or graph should jump out at the audience. Arrows, animation, or color can be used to draw the eye to the main point.
- **Limit the number of lines** - Make charts and graphs as simple as possible. A single data series, such as a line or row of bars, per chart or graph is best. Too many lines can be confusing.
- **Use either an axis scale or data points** - Do not use both. Keep charts and graphs as simple as possible.
- **Remove details** - Remove details including grid lines, footnotes, and other details whenever possible. They can distract from the main point.

Slide Transition

Use PowerPoint slide transitions wisely. Many transition options are available, but they should be used with reserve. A good solution is to choose a simple transition and apply it to every slide in the presentation. Rules to follow for slide transitions include:

- When using sections to divide a presentation, a second transition can be used for the introductory slide for each section.
- Slide transitions, like animations, lose their effectiveness when used more than a few times.
- Slide transitions should not distract from the content of the presentation, so the best ones blend into the overall presentation.

Tips for Effective Presentations

Tips for Presentations:

- **Allow one minute per slide** - An audience has a short attention span and if you spend longer than one minute per slide, you risk losing the attention of the audience.
- **Don't read your slides** - Put your key points on your slides and use speaker notes for your presentation.
- **When using charts and graphs, highlight the bottom line** - Re-enforce your message by highlighting the benefits or bottom line results.
- **Dim the lights** - Use dark backgrounds with light-color text. This will provide good contrast for projection in a light-dimmed room.
- **Maintain eye contact with your audience** - Practice your presentation until you are able to discuss your subject without reading your slides. Position yourself so that you can have eye contact with most of the people in the room.

Some General Tips:

- Keep in mind, most people read from left to right and from top to bottom. They also tend

<http://online.tusc.k12.al.us/tutorials/ppttips/ppttips.htm>

to notice dark or bright areas before light ones. Consider this when placing elements on a slide.

- Consider using backgrounds that are neither very light nor very dark. Very dark backgrounds are usually used with white or yellow text for contrast, but the result can be hard on the eye. To create a softer effect, use a medium green or blue, but be sure there is sufficient contrast with the color of the text.
- A watermarked company log can work well as a slide background.

References

Finkelstein, E. (1999). *PowerPoint 2000: Professional Results*. New York, NY: Osborne/McGraw-Hill.

Joss, M. (1999). *Looking Good in Presentations*. Scottsdale, AZ: Coriolis Creative Professional Press.

Rabb, M. (1990). *The Presentation Design Book: Projecting a Good Image with Your Desktop Computer*, Chapel Hill, NC: Ventana Press.