

Practical advice for enhancing your teaching and learning

Using

PowerPoint

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What is PowerPoint?

PowerPoint is a widely used presentation software product. It enables you to prepare quality visual aids using computer technology that can be readily projected on to a screen for a large audience to view as you speak.

The electronic copy of the presentation can also be made available online, or printed off, copied and distributed as a hard copy. This software provides the flexibility to print your slides in a number of different ways (e.g., 3 to a page with space for notes, 6 to a page as a handout).

PowerPoint is commonly used by lecturers in tertiary institutions as a teaching tool and by students when making class presentations. PowerPoint is also frequently used for conference and seminar presentations.

There are many technical aspects to using PowerPoint that computer support staff can assist you with. This booklet focuses on the educational design guidelines that will assist you to prepare effective PowerPoint presentations.

Will using PowerPoint improve your teaching?

Preparing a PowerPoint presentation requires that you plan beforehand what you intend to do in the teaching time. That preparation often involves activities that will enhance your teaching and includes:

- defining learning outcomes.
- determining how much can be achieved in the time available.
- identifying the key points.
- giving thought to how these issues will be elaborated on during class.
- providing an appropriate framework for the content.

Using PowerPoint enhances the quality of visual aids by overcoming issues associated with handwriting that is difficult to read. PowerPoint can also be used effectively to display diagrams, graphs, tables and photographs.

What design aspects will ensure your PowerPoint presentation is effective?

- **Template and transition choices**
Ensure your combinations of borders, logos, fonts and transitions are not unnecessary distractions.
- **Background**
Slides are most effective when uniform in appearance for any single presentation as students read format as well as content when deriving meaning from the display.
- **Text colour, font type and size**
Choose either pastel backgrounds with dark text or dark backgrounds with light text. Simple common fonts are recommended, such as, Arial and Times New Roman. Suggest 24 pt for main text and 36 pt for headings. Italics are harder to read than standard fonts.
- **Amount of information per slide**
Condense information to key words and phrases. Include up to six points per slide.
- **Number of slides**
The number of slides will vary according to content, audience and length of presentation.

Other useful tips when using PowerPoint

- **Rehearsal**
Have a practice run through beforehand to help consolidate your oral presentation, particularly if you are not an experienced user of this technology. A rehearsal will also give you a better idea about how much time your presentation will take.
- **Setting up**
Set up before the audience arrives. Have a quick trial run through to check that everything works.
- **Disk versus hard drive**
For reliability and speed, run your presentation from the hard drive of the computer rather than from a floppy disk.
- **Spell check**
Prior to your presentation, check to ensure correct spelling and grammar are used as errors may detract from the slide show.

- **Timing**
Pace yourself, give the audience time to read each slide and keep to time.
- **Number each slide**
Having each slide numbered is useful if you lose your place or if you are using them as overhead transparencies.
- **Backup plan**
Prepare overhead transparencies as a backup, preferably in colour as per your slide show. It is also a good idea to print out your slides with speaker's notes and refer to them during your presentation. A hard copy can also be used under a document camera if necessary.
- **Final slide**
Have a signal to indicate when you reach the last slide, for example, a slide saying "Thank you" or repeating the title slide. That way, it is clear to the audience that you have completed your presentation.

For more information

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<http://www.catl.uwa.edu.au/resources/advice.html>