

# Marketing 101

# PowerPoint Tips

PowerPoint has become a common workplace communication tool. You've likely sat through many presentations that you thought were excellent, and many others that needed some help. What can you do to ensure that your presentation is high quality, interesting, and enjoyable to your audience?

The basic rule with PowerPoint presentations is: less is more. The most effective slides are short, to the point, and legible. You'll lose your audience if they're busy trying to figure out poorly written or poorly designed slides.

## Be concise

Design slides to highlight important points, not to duplicate your entire presentation. Never read your slides to the audience.

Carefully consider words and images used on each slide, making sure they help enhance your message. Many people try to crowd too much information onto a slide, which waters down the main messages and can be confusing and cumbersome for the audience. Many experts recommend using bullets (not complete sentences) on the slides, and then expanding on the bullets in your comments. Here are some more general rules to follow. Use:

- Three to five text slides per major concept.
- One main concept per slide.
- A maximum of six-seven words per line.
- A maximum of six-seven lines per slide.
- Double spacing between text lines.

## Be consistent

Make the color, type, and style the same on all slides. In PowerPoint, you will have the best luck accomplishing this by designing a master slide.

## Contrasting colors

Strive for visual balance on your slides. Slides project best and are most appealing if designed with contrasting text and backgrounds. Many experts suggest using light text on a dark background (but not black).

PowerPoint has many color scheme templates from which to choose. These templates include professionally designed color, font, and design combinations. To create a new template, choose File, New, Design Templates. Click once to preview a template and double click to select it.

## Big type

Type should be of a size and font that is easy to read. Title text should be a minimum of 36 to 40 points in size. Body text should be at least 24 points for your audience to follow along and avoid serious eyestrain.

If you find yourself thinking or saying to the audience, "you probably can't read this..." then you should not include the slide in your presentation. Often this happens when trying to show a chart that is too small. Here's a few options to help solve this sort of problem. First, consider creating a new chart that shows only the most important elements you're trying to highlight. Second, summarize the major elements from the chart in bullet points. Third, consider dividing the information evenly between two or three slides.

Check the readability of your slides. If you can't read a slide from the back of the room, don't use it. Be sure to leave PowerPoint slides up long enough for the audience to read them.

## Few fonts

Although there are many fun and interesting fonts available today, experts recommend using two fonts (others say three) in a presentation. An important side note on font use is to consider which computer will be used for the presentation. For example, let's say you designed a presentation in an unusual font on one computer, then gave the presentation on another computer with just the standard fonts. In this situation, the unusual font will be substituted with the default font on the second computer.

## Keep it simple

PowerPoint includes numerous special effects, which, if used appropriately, can add to your presentation. However, many PowerPoint users fall into the trap of overdoing. They incorporate all of the fancy features the program offers into one presentation, simply because they can. But just because you can, doesn't mean you should. Too much commotion can leave your audience confused and distracted. Remember you are the focus of the presentation, and the slides merely emphasize your message.

## Use graphics to emphasize points

Carefully chosen and placed graphics can emphasize your points. Pictures are easier to understand and more interesting than plain text. You can often replace bulleted text with charts, tables, or photos.

Remember to make sure graphic images add to your message, not to detract from it. Including unrelated graphics, or too many of them, can water down an otherwise effective presentation. Additionally, since graphics take a lot of memory, using too many can bog down your computer.

## Check spelling

Misspelled or incorrectly used words make the audience doubt the presenter's intelligence, credibility, or attention to detail. Make sure to proofread your presentation. You can also use the spelling tool by choosing Tools, Spelling (or click the Spelling button). Another option is to use the Check Spelling As You Type feature. Click Tools, Options, and then click the Spelling & Style tab. Check the box for Check Spelling As You Type and then click OK. When this feature is on, PowerPoint flags misspelled words by placing a wavy red line beneath them.

## Prepare, practice

The best presenters make their talks appear effortless, but only because they've practiced. One sure way to fall flat during a presentation is to give a talk without practice.

You can use the Rehearse Timings feature in PowerPoint to practice the overall length of your presentation, as well as how long you're spending on each slide. To use the Rehearse Timings feature, choose View, Slide Sorter so you can see your presentation in slide sorter view. Click the first slide to select it and then click the Rehearse Timings button. Talk about each slide just as if you were actually giving the presentation, clicking the mouse to move to the next slide. When you're finished, choose Yes in the message box to see your slide timings in Slide Sorter view.

You may also want to arrive early for your presentation to check the equipment and meeting room.

## Have a backup plan

Consider storing your presentation on several different media (such as your computer hard drive and a CD) in case one fails. Depending on the importance of the information you're presenting, and your comfort level using PowerPoint, you may also consider making copies of the slides for a handout, in the event of technical difficulties.

## For more technical help

This fact sheet was designed to give you some basic tips on designing a PowerPoint presentation. It was not intended to be a comprehensive technical resource. If you need technical information, there are many good sources available to help. Your PowerPoint manual is a good place to start. It includes a lot of information and ideas, as well as a tutorial. Below are a few resources we found on the internet. Please note that several of them have strict copyright rules. Good luck and happy powerpointing.

<http://www.bitbetter.com/powertips.htm>

<http://www.bitbetter.com/powertips.htm>

<http://wwwnew.towson.edu/ciat/tips&techniques/support/ntapril01qt.htm>

<http://www.microsoft.com/>

---

### Sources:

<http://www.etsu.edu/tlc/Resources/PowerPoint%20Presentation%20Tips.htm>

[www.smartcomputing.com](http://www.smartcomputing.com) (*Avoid the Mistakes of Powerpoint Rookies* by Linda Bird)