



Tips on PowerPoint Presentations Used During VCs

PowerPoint Slides

PowerPoint is a useful tool for producing multimedia presentation materials that combine text with images, sounds, and links to the Web. The software can also be used to produce handouts.

Slides are an eloquent device for organizing and demonstrating your ideas, concepts, and examples. When designed correctly, slides help enhance your presentation by allowing you to cue anchor ideas for emphasis. Additionally, they can also increase participant interest in, and learning of, the subject matter.

The GDLN Experience

Slides that do not follow the guidelines on font size and color specification are difficult for participants to view. Slides should be used prudently and as a resource to guide the presentation. It is not helpful or effective to simply read from them. Slides are not an effective way to present large amounts of lecture material.

Slides should be sent to the local sites at least two days before the activity begins so that they can be distributed to the participants before the session. Slides for activities that require interpretation or translation should be sent to the local sites at least one week ahead of time. Slides allow you to “cue” your presentation. Cueing a presentation means using slides to “anchor” ideas, for emphasis, and as an outline. Elaboration of your ideas, examples, and fine points can then be made orally and brought out through lecture. And to keep the presentation interactive, intersperse some discussion questions or problems throughout.

Use it if...

- You want to organize and reorganize information efficiently so that participants see the structure of your session.
- You want to illustrate concepts with pictures and other multimedia.
- You want to cue your audience with key ideas and concepts.

Stay away from it if...

- You just want to read from your slides.
- You want to present complex mathematical or chemical symbols and equations, graphs, and charts.

- You are not willing to follow the principles for creating good slides.

Design Suggestions

Following are recommendations for designing effective presentations slides:

- **The 666 Rule.** Use no more than 6 words per bullet, 6 bullets per slide, or 6 word slides in a row. If you have more than 6 words per bullet, then it is not a bullet point — bullets should not be complete sentences. More than 6 bullets per slide and your audience will have difficulty reading the slide. Six word slides in a row means you've been talking for at least 10 minutes without a visual. You may be losing the audience's attention.
- **Landscape format for videoconferencing.** The TV screen format is 4 units by 3, that is, wider than it is high, so use the horizontal, or landscape format, rather than the vertical, or portrait format for your slides.
- **Keep a safe distance from the edges** — use the “safe area.” Most TV monitors (not LCD projectors) overscan the image onto the screen, so some information around the edges of an image is lost. It is best to leave a “safe” area of 10 percent all around the edges when entering text in a PowerPoint slide.
 - **Use appropriate font size.** A 24-point font size is the minimum you should consider using on a presentation slide over videoconference.
 - **Use a title on all your slides.** When a slide presentation is converted to web pages, the title is used in the navigation frame. If there's no title, it's difficult for your audience to follow the presentation.
- **Use bold and italic to emphasize text, not as the main text style.** Bold and italic text is useful to make certain words stand out, but it's tiring to read an entire paragraph in bold or italic.
- **Don't “flashy” colors and animations.** In videoconferencing, yellow, pink, light blue are almost unreadable due to video conversion. In addition, animation effects are poorly reflected.
- **DON'T USE ALL CAPS in titles or body text.** One way people read is by recognizing the shapes of words. If words are all in caps, they are all shaped like rectangles, which make them harder to read — especially in body text. All caps also take up more horizontal space. Instead of all caps, use a larger size text, a different color, or a different font.
- **Use sans serif typefaces, like Arial, Helvetica, or Verdana for presentations.** The serifs clutter the slide, making it more difficult to read.
- **Always use your software's alignment tools** (center, right justification, custom tab stops) instead of lots of spaces and default tabs to align text.
- **Use JPG format for images embedded in a presentation.** JPG is a compressed bitmap format. Converting your images to JPG can reduce the file size of your presentation considerably. Also be sure to crop and size your images appropriately.
- **Carefully double-check your slides for spelling and grammar errors,** and remove extra spaces or hard returns.