"Making Your Point"
Communicating with PowerPoint

Introduction

PowerPoint (or any other electronic screen presentation software) is a way to connect image and text, graphics and information in an exciting form for presentation to a live audience. This communication skill can be helpful when giving a presentation in a class, e-mailing a recap of your latest adventure to friends, or even during an important job interview someday. Learning how to use this software can involve trial and error, or you can simply go to the web page of the product manufacturer at http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/powerpoint for a tutorial. Below are some guidelines for integrating your presentation into a public speech.

Getting Started

The first step in creating a presentation is to determine the *purpose*. What is the central theme? What do you want the audience to know? Sometimes starting at the final slide can help you develop the presentation in an effective manner.

Once you know the purpose of your presentation, decide what the most important information should be. This is the content that should be incorporated visually into your PowerPoint presentation. The *visual information* should contain only most important pieces of what you need to communicate, not the entire story or "big picture." That portion comes in the *supportive information*, which you supply verbally.

Graphic Design

Graphic layout and design can control the movement of the eye. This important, as the average attention span while looking at a visual is around 8 seconds. Your presentation will be much more effective if you can help the viewer find the most important information in that 8 seconds. The "design templates" in PowerPoint, background patterns created by graphic artists with coordinated fonts, colors and other graphic elements, can help you lead the viewer's eye.

Slides for your presentation should be simple and concise. Complex fonts slow eye movement while simple fonts speed eye movement. Understanding this can be effective in controlling the eye movement of your audience. Other considerations include:

- *Graphics*: Arrows can substitute as pointing devices in a visual presentation. Emphatic headings, geometric shapes, clip art and photographs can contribute to eye movement. All of these can help focus the viewer to the most important part of the visual.

- *Color*: This is important as it can impact the emotional response the viewer has to the information being presented. One background color throughout the presentation is effective. Changing one color to emphasize an important point can also be used effective. Arranging colors from dark on the bottom to light on the top can also influence eye movement in a positive way.

> **Effects of Common Background Colors**
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> Gray: neutral
> Brown: passive
> Violet: magical, mystical
> Green: interaction, feedback
> Red: enthusiasm, warm
> Blue: conservative, credible
> Black: powerful

Making Your Presentation to an Audience

Having an attractive and effective PowerPoint presentation is important, but just as important is the way you present the information. Below are some general guidelines on presenting with PowerPoint or other presentation software.

Stand on audience's left. Most people read from left to right. Because of this it is the natural tendency for us to move our eyes from left to right. Standing on the left helps the audience focus on you-the speaker. Remember that the audience's left will be your right!

Avoid standing in front of screen. The audience will be distracted if they can't see the screen, or if they see a large shadow cast across the information they're trying to see.

Plan how you will change screens. Depending on the setting, you may wish to have someone else change the slide as you speak. A better option is to use a remote control if one is available.

Practice with the equipment you are using and have a back-up plan. Sometimes equipment fails. Often, what works on your computer will look and perform differently on another computer. Think about how you will make your presentation if the equipment fails.

Position your Body. Stand at a 45 degree angle to the room, open to the screen and to the audience. Face the audience when you wish to emphasize a point. Sometimes you will need to point out a feature on a slide. If you need to point to something onscreen, don't turn your back to the audience. If you are using a laser pointer, remember to be careful not to point it at your audience. If you are using a regular pointer, it will be most effective if it is "pointed" sparingly.

Make eye contact with audience - if you feel anxious looking directly at the audience, try looking just above their eyes. Pick two or three audience members scattered around the room to focus on periodically.

Smile - It will make you feel comfortable and more confident. A smile will help the audience feel comfortable too. Audience members know when you are enjoying speaking. Speak with enthusiasm and interest. Be sincere with your audience and you will be effective.

Gestures - Use natural movements to emphasize points. Move with purpose. Nervous movements distract from your presentation. Relax hands at side when you are not gesturing.

Your voice is important - Talk loud enough to be heard in the back of the room. One way to do this is to pick someone in the back of the room and speak so they can hear and understand you. Use different pitch, tone and volume to make your presentation more interesting.

For a more complete guide to public speaking success, check out *Making Your Point: Building Public Speaking Skills* on the public speaking portion of the Missouri State 4-H web page!

Pronounce your words distinctly - Use words that are easy for you to say.

Conclusion

Integrating presentation software into your public speech involves a variety of additional considerations and coordination skills. Experience can be the best method for becoming proficient at this, and the benefits can apply to many other areas of communication and last for many years! Don't be afraid to experiment and find how your own personal style fits in with these guidelines and suggestions. The point is to find success by making it your own.