

## Presentation Tips

(<http://www.powerpointers.com>)

### **The Basis of Good Design when using a PowerPoint presentation:**

#### **The basic question: What do you want the viewer to see first?**

You sit facing your computer, staring at the big slide presentation you've been putting together all day, and you are bored out of your skull. It's not the project. It's not the information. It's the fact that your slides look just like the last PowerPoint presentation you made. And the one before that. And the one before that.

Well, of course, no one can become an instant graphic designer, but understanding a few design basics can transform that presentation from dull to dynamic.

At the heart of all good design is the concept of hierarchy, which is the process of ranking elements (your graphics and text) in order of importance. It is the basis for every design decision and makes you ask yourself the question: "What do I want the viewer to see first?"

Well, you've probably put together enough slides to know you most often want your viewer to see your headline first. But what about all the other elements? Do you give them all similar weight? Are they all of equal importance? Of course they're not. And that is why you must use certain design techniques to set them apart.

The way in which we do this is through the use of contrast. Simply put, contrast means making bold design moves that show differences between elements. (Slight variations, on the other hand, cause conflict, which only irritates the eye and confuses the viewer.) Contrast enlivens the slide, adds visual interest and makes clear where the viewer's eye should go first.

Using contrast need not be a complicated proposition. In fact, the simpler you keep things, the more likely you are to produce a slide that's easy to read. Think of it this way: When you want something melodic and harmonious to come out of your stereo, you don't turn all the knobs up to 10, do you? No, because all you get is noise.

Well, you can run into the same kind of "noise" problem on a slide by turning everything up too high -- making too many elements too big, too bold, and too colorful. Too much! What you need to do, instead, is to start small, experiment and be selective. You'll be surprised how much contrast you can achieve through just one or two design moves.

#### **The Key to Clear Hierarchy: Rank and Simplify**

Start by ranking your elements in order of importance and deciding what needs to go on your slide. Remember -- white space is your friend. Don't try to cram too much in. Next, group related elements -- bullet points, lists, names, for example -- and isolate them for emphasis. Grouping tells the viewer which elements are connected in meaning, and isolating them (spacing them apart from one another) helps to break up blocks of text and graphics on your slide.

Now you're ready to add contrast.

Size is an obvious first move, although you may want to leave this for last, since you can often achieve sufficient contrast through other more interesting design techniques. Keep in mind, though, you should use no more than three type sizes per presentation, or you'll risk running into that "noise" issue.

Next, you may want to try experimenting with the text style. Bolding out a word is certainly one way to set it apart, but italics, a different font, small caps or underlining can produce the same effect.

Color creates lively contrast, whether it is added to a word or phrase, or used for line rules, bands or boxes. Not only does color grab the viewer's attention, but it also helps to isolate your elements. But you must be careful and sparing with color. More is definitely not better. (Again, noise alert.) You must also make sure your choices are bold -- no gray with light blue! -- and that your contrasts are clear.

### **Exaggerate One Item, Not Everything!**

Once you have worked through these techniques, you may want to experiment by exaggerating one or two of them. Exaggeration will help establish a focal point and make clear to the viewer what is most important on the slide and in what order it should be viewed. One, big red word on an otherwise black-and-white slide will help shout that word out, as will capturing it in a band or box of color. Size alone can also be exaggerated. The trick is to keep it in check and be selective.

Most important in making your slides interesting and engaging, however, is to not always go for the most obvious move. Who says a headline has to be at the top of your slide? Through the appropriate use of contrast and exaggeration -- boxing it out, bumping it up, putting it in color -- you can draw the viewer's eye to it first, no matter its position on the slide.

But you must remember, once you have made a design decision, you must stick with it throughout your presentation. You must strive for consistency in order to maintain clarity, and you do this through repetition: Keep your headline in the same place on each slide, repeat type selections, color and line rules, or you will end up with a muddled mess.

Following these design basics -- grouping related elements, isolating for emphasis, contrasting type style, color and size, exaggerating and repeating elements -- may not make you a graphic designer, but your presentations may end up looking like they were put together by one.

## **11 Tips for Using Flip Charts More Effectively**

by Lenny Laskowski  
(<http://lenspeakes.freeyellow.com>)

While everyone seems to be interested in creating high-tech computer generated presentations, the flip chart still continues to be the most effective presentation media of all. One should not assume that investing a lot of money in high tech visual aids & equipment will "make" your presentation. The best visuals have been and still are the simplest. Remember, the purpose of using visual aids is to enhance your presentation, not upstage it.

Since most presentations are delivered before small groups or 35 people or less, the flip chart is the perfect size. I feel the flip chart will continue to be the workhorse of most training seminars.

There are several advantages of using a flip chart. Here are just a few:

1. **Flip charts do not need electricity** - You don't need to worry if the bulb will burn out or worry that you forgot the extension chord.
2. **Flip charts are economical** - They do not require you to use any special films or printers to produce them.
3. **Color can be added very easily** - An inexpensive box of flip chart markers allows you all the creativity you want.
4. **Flip charts allow spontaneity** - Any last minute changes can be easily made.

As a speaker, your visual aids should not be the presentation. You are!

Even though flip charts are low tech, they are reliable and don't require any special skill to use them but here are some tips to help you use them effectively.

1. The best flip chart stands have clamps at the top and will hold most type of flip chart pads. Most allow you to hang your flip charts while some stands will only allow you to prop them up. Don't wait until the last minute to find this out.
2. Make sure the flip charts you use will fit the flip chart stand you will be using. Some have different spaced holes at the top.
3. Flip chart pads are usually sold in packages of two and come either plain or come with grid lines on them. Using the pad with grid lines makes your job easier for drawing straight lines and keeps your text aligned. Also, make sure the pad has perforations at the top to allow easier removal of sheets. I have seen many presenters struggle to tear off a sheet evenly.
4. When preparing your charts, it is best to first design your charts on paper first before drawing them on the actual flip chart pad.
5. Lightly write your text in pencil first before using the actual flip chart markers. This will allow you to make any adjustments with text spacing and any figures you will be drawing. Do NOT use all block letters (UPPER CASE). Using upper and lower case letters makes it easier to read. I like to use the 7 x 7 rule. Have no more than 7 words on each line and no more than 7 lines to a sheet. Using a 6 x 6 rule is even better.
6. Use flip chart markers and not regular magic markers. Flip chart markers will not "bleed" through the paper. Also, they do not have as strong a smell as regular markers. You can also find "scented" markers. They usually come in various fruit scents.
7. Avoid using the colors yellow, pink, or orange. These are extremely difficult for the audience to see. Don't make your audience have to strain their eyes to see your points. Avoid using too many colors. Using one dark color and one accent color works best.
8. You can write "lightly in pencil" any notes next to key points you need. The audience won't be able to see them. You may also write what is on the next sheet. Knowing this will allow you to properly introduce your next sheet.
9. If you make any mistakes you can use "white out" to correct any small errors. For larger areas, cover the mistake with a double layer of flip chart paper and correct the error.
10. Have a blank sheet of paper between each of your text sheets. This will prevent the written material from other sheets to "peek" through. 11. Properly store and transport your flip charts in a case or the cardboard box that some come in. This will protect your flip charts and keep them fresh and ready to use each time. Take great care of your flip charts. I have some flip charts I have used over 100 times and they still look as good as new.

Making "prepared" flip charts can take a considerable amount of time. Make sure you start preparing your charts early enough so you can review them and make any changes or corrections before hand. It takes practice to learn how to print neatly. If you do not have neat printing, ask someone who does prepare them for you. A poorly prepared flip chart can be very distracting.

The most important point to remember in preparing your flip charts is to start preparing them early.

### **Add Pizzazz to Presentations With Multimedia**

by Marjorie Brody

(<http://www.powerpointers.com>)

The days of relying solely on flip charts and Magic Markers® for business presentations are long gone. Business owners who want to be taken seriously must take advantage of all the multimedia tools available to them when presenting their companies to investors, potential clients or business associates: overhead projectors, slides, videos and computers.

In contrast with old-fashioned methods, sophisticated visual aids can help the audience understand what is

being discussed by allowing them to see as well as hear the benefits of being presented. Not only does the use of multimedia clearly communicate a point, it holds the interest of the listener and does wonders for the credibility of the presenter.

How can you make these technologies work for you? There is no quick answer or easy solution to properly balance and incorporate these tools. Use this overview to decide which options work best for you.

**Overhead projectors and transparencies** -- These may seem very primitive, but you would be surprised how many people don't even use these simple visuals to enhance their presentations. If you don't use any other aid, utilize transparencies for informal presentations to give your audience a break from a monotonous speech. Hold their attention with visuals of pie charts, graphs and bulleted points. Transparencies are very inexpensive (about \$12 to \$25 per 100 sheets), and they make effective visual aids because of their flexibility. You can use them for large or small groups, and you can prepare them in advance or during your presentation. You can make your own by simply purchasing transparency sheets at an office supply store and using a photocopier to duplicate color or black and white pages. If you prefer, most printing shops can make the transparencies for you.

There are several points to keep in mind when using overhead projectors and transparencies:

- If the text is typed, use a simple, 18-point font or larger (at least ¼ inch high). Smaller type will be hard for your audience to read.
- Put the sheets in order of use and number them in case they get shuffled.
- Make an index of pages for easy reference in case you need to go back and reemphasize a point.
- Take advantage of color to make the visuals more appealing.
- Use multiple overlays to convey different ideas.
- Use a pointer and stand near the screen instead of standing at the overhead projector with your back to your audience. No one wants to strain to hear what you're saying.
- Carry extra light bulbs and extension cords in case Murphy's law kicks in.

- 

**Videotapes and films** -- Videotapes and films are both good options for formal presentations that don't require or invite interaction. Both are expensive presentation tools (expect to spend several hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on complexity), but if you make a lot of presentations, it may be worth the investment, especially if the subject matter is particularly artistic or technical in nature. Your audience will be duly impressed if you present a well-organized, professional video or film showcasing your products or services. Try to keep the video less than 20 minutes in length. After that point, viewers may lose interest and begin to get fidgety.

**Computers** -- There are many ways that computers can contribute visually to your presentations. Computers allow you to make simulations of products or structures before they are actually built, which can eliminate the need for expensive prototypes. They also permit you to go online during a meeting to showcase your Web site or dissect your competitors' sites. Computers can be used to create monochrome or color overheads and slides, and features such as color mixing; text outlining, spell check and templates allow you to easily duplicate logos and colors throughout your materials. In addition to color and flexibility, computer presentation graphics offer dynamic effects that enhance film and video such as fadeout transitioning between frames.

Before you decide to incorporate computer applications into your presentations, assess your needs. Know what you want your computer to do: Do you need a color or black-and-white monitor? How much memory do you need? Is it necessary to have a CD-ROM drive? Do you need to have a modem for fax or Internet access? Which presentation software do you want to purchase? These are just some of the questions you need to think about.

Some of the most popular presentation graphic programs are Harvard Graphics (\$279.99, Software Publishing Corporation), Freelance Plus (\$89.99, Lotus Development Corporation), and PowerPoint

(\$89.99, Microsoft). Most presentation software is available in both Macintosh and PC versions. Note: Some of these programs are not intended for beginners. Consider taking a course at a community college if you need instruction.

Here are more tips for using computers for presentations:

- Ensure that your presentation is copied to the computer's hard drive and back it up on a floppy disk.
- Have a back-up plan. Prepare another presentation format, such as transparencies, if technical problems threaten to overshadow your presentation. No matter how comfortable you are with the technology you must expect the unexpected.
- Remember accessories, including a mouse, batteries (if a laptop will be used without AC power), a back-up modem, an external CD-ROM drive (if not installed on your computer), and blank formatted floppy disks.

## 4 Common Ways to Remember Material

by Lenny Laskowski  
(<http://www.powerpointers.com>)

Remembering speeches can be a very intimidating experience. There are many ways one can remember material and I would like to focus on what I believe are the 4 common ways to remember material.

1. Memorizing
2. Reading from complete text
3. Using Notes
4. Using Visual Aids as Notes

1. **Memorizing** - In my opinion, this is absolutely the worst way to keep track of material. People are preoccupied with trying to remember the words to say and not the ideas behind the words (or with the audience). As a result, normal voice inflection disappears. With memorizing, mental blocks become inevitable. With memorizing it is not a matter of "will" you forget; it's a matter of WHEN!

2. **Reading from complete text** - Listening to someone read a speech or presentation is hated by most people. People say, "If that's all they were going to do is read their speech, I could have read it myself." I'm sure many of us have experienced this at least once while attending a conference or two. Below are some reasons why I believe people read poorly:

- The speaker loses normal voice inflection because they lose touch with the ideas behind the words. Listen for pauses, Natural speech is filled with pauses; unnatural speech is not.
- The text isn't spoken language - too often speakers write their speeches in "business language". That is often hard to read, much less listen to.
- The speech isn't static - the potted plant will probably move more. There is little movement, little energy, and little interest behind the lectern.
- There's no or little eye contact - any eye contact is with the text, not the audience. To read text while trying to maintain eye contact with the audience takes a lot of practice.
- The speaker is scared - many speakers read because they are afraid to try anything else. They know reading will fail but at least it will fail with a small "f" rather than a capital one.

NOTE: There are times when speeches MUST be read. Many times it is necessary to read policy statements or company announcements. Also, some speeches must be timed right down to the second.

**3. Using Notes** - This is the most common way for remembering material. Using notes is better than reading since the speaker can have normal voice inflection and make more effective eye contact. If your notes are on the lectern, you probably won't move very far from them. If notes are in your hand, you probably won't gesture very much.

Below are some suggestions to consider if you decide to use notes:

#### USING NOTES

- Use note cards. Include quotes, statistics and lists you may need, NOT paragraphs of text. VERY IMPORTANT: Number your note cards! (Just in case you drop them).
- Don't put too much information on each note card or you will find yourself reading too much. Put only a few words or key phrases.
- Leave your notes on the lectern or table and move away occasionally. Don't be afraid to move away from your notes and get out of your comfort zone. Too many speakers use the lectern to hide behind and this restricts the effective use of your entire body.
- Practice using your note cards. If you find yourself reading your note cards too much, this is a sure clue you need to reduce the amount of written text on each card. Remember, all you need are short phrases or key words, enough to "jog" your memory.
- Use pictures or picture maps to guide yourself. Pictures help you to "visualize" the key points of your speech. Use mental pictures as well to tell the story in your head. This will take some creativity, but will be worth the effort.

**4. Using Visual Aids As Notes** - Simple visual aids can effectively serve as headings and subheadings. Speak to the heading. Say what you want to say and move on. If you forget something, that's okay; the audience will never know unless you tell them.

Practice creating just a few meaningful headings to use and practice using only these headings as your "cues". This will take practice, but practicing using only these few words will force you to better internalize your speech.

This has four important advantages:

- You don't have to worry about what you will say next. Your visual aids provide you with your "cues" of your next major idea or thought. All you need to do between ideas is to use an effective transitional statement. (See my tips on using transitions).
- Having only a few key words on your visual aid allows you to move around the room without the need or feeling you need to go back to your notes. In fact, most inexperienced speakers don't move around at all. Movement also helps you to relax and adds energy to your presentations. Movement also allows the listeners to follow you and pay closer attention to you and your message. Plan your movements during your rehearsals. Decide where in your presentation it makes sense to move. If you find yourself starting to sway from side to side, take one or two steps and stop again, standing evenly on both feet. Keep your weight evenly distributed on both feet. This will help you from swaying.
- You can have good eye contact with your audience. You can look at your audience all the time while speaking - except for that brief moment you look at your visual aid. But that's okay since the audience will probably follow you and also look at your visual aid. This will help the audience to "see" your message as well as "hear" your message. The more you rehearse and the more you become familiar with your visual aids, the easier it becomes.
- Your audience will feel comfortable that you are on your planned track. Well-designed visual aids show the audience you DO have a plan and have properly prepared and are following your plan.

Keep in mind; your visual aids do not have to be only word charts. They can contain diagrams, pictures or even graphs.

When you use visual aids, always introduce the visual aid BEFORE you show it using one of your transition statements. You can even use the "looking back / looking forward" transition: "Now that we have seen the ...let's now look at..."

Regardless of which method you chose to use to remember your material, nothing will help you more than proper planning and preparation. Remember to *prepare, prepare, prepare!*

### Tips before the big day

(<http://www.fpm.wisc.edu/support/PresentationTips.htm>)

- **ALWAYS HAVE A BACKUP PLAN!!** We do everything in our power to make sure that problems do not arise, but sometimes things go wrong. If your lecture is based on a PowerPoint presentation, have overhead backups of each page. Try to have an "alternate no AV" lecture planned, if the system should go down.
- **Check out the room ahead of time.** Before your first lecture, check out the room, and make sure it has everything you need. This will avoid unwanted surprises the first day of class.
- **Practice.** If you have a complex presentation planned, with several different multimedia, go to the room ahead of time, and practice your presentation. We would be happy to meet you at the room and assist with any preparations or extra instructions.
- **Experiment and try new things.** These rooms often have capabilities other than what most people use them for. Something as simple as playing a CD while students enter and exit often adds to the class. We would be happy to assist you in experimenting.
- **Invest in a laser pointer.** They are inexpensive, and are extremely useful.
- **Use slides for high-quality images.** While all of the new technology is useful, good ol' slides still have the best quality and brightness.
- **Use color to influence mood and emotion.** The colors for type, illustrations and backgrounds influence the way they are perceived. Here is a basic guide to using color in your presentations.

<b>Red</b> – excitement, alert	<b>Green</b> – growth	<b>Yellow</b> – confidence, warmth, wisdom	<b>Purple</b> – dignity, sophistication
<b>White</b> – professionalism, new, innocence	<b>Blue</b> – truth, trust, justice	<b>Black</b> – authority, strength	<b>Orange</b> – action, optimism
<b>Brown</b> – friendliness, warmth	<b>Grey</b> – integrity, maturity		

- **Apply appropriate timesteps for readability.** For handouts or take-home material print the paragraph copy in a serif typestyle. This style has been proven to be 30% easier to read. Type that is projected on a screen, using a slide, overhead or multimedia projector, should be in sans serif type. That's because in the projection process letters lose some of their sharpness, and serif type can look muddy when projected.
- **Include photographs to inject realism.** The more true to life you make the issue you are presenting, the better your audience will understand and identify with it. Remember the impact you can add by using photos or video of people on location, using products or talking to the audience.
- **Insert illustrations to clarify or emphasize.** If your topic is complex, an illustration lets you simplify the way it looks. Also, illustrations allow you to show exploded views or views normally not seen, such as interiors.

## Microphones

- **Use the microphone!** Even if you talk loudly enough, or it is a small room, use it! Students can't hear when you turn to the chalkboard or away from them. A mic will insure that you will always be understandable.
- **Place the microphone correctly.** The top of the microphone should directly face your mouth. Place the microphone about 4-6 inches below your mouth, in the center of your chest. Try to avoid wearing chains or necklaces that can hit the microphone.
- **Use other microphones.** If you are having a guest speaker, or a panel discussion, bring in additional microphones.

**Make sure that the content of your presentation is worth the effort — for you and your listeners.** First of all, there is a difference between the spoken and written word. If you are presenting a paper that has been created for reading, you will have a challenge keeping the audience's attention, especially if they know that they will have a copy to read later. What was so special about the presentation in question was that the presenter had kept in mind the difference between the written and spoken word. She must have read her speech aloud many times before she shared it with us. She filled it with engaging, personal stories that established immediate rapport, and many quotations from others that fit right into her presentation at the right time and place. Yes, her content was informative, inspiring and well researched. We all benefited from what we heard and I wondered if she would have been able to share so many fine quotes if they hadn't been written down.

**Physically plan your written document so it works with the least amount of distraction for you and/or your audience.** I didn't see what the written words looked like, because the papers were placed on a lectern at the perfect height for the speaker and out of our view. I do know that if you are reading from a printed piece of paper, the fonts need to be large enough — and not all CAPS, which are difficult to read — with the lines spaced so you can easily see them and follow along without losing your place. The speaker I enjoyed so thoroughly didn't appear to be turning pages or following along with her finger, but she "didn't miss a beat." She shared so much material that there must have been many sheets of paper, however, we were unaware of them.

**As always, know your subject inside and out.** Fortunately, we had time for questions following the presentation. Our presenter continued with the same ease, command of the subject and obvious knowledge as before. She answered questions with charm, professionalism and to our satisfaction. It became evident that her reading of her presentation never served as a "crutch." It is a method that works perfectly for her. She speaks on a regular basis to all ages and is in demand as a speaker, so has found a technique that successfully fits her style.

**Remember, every rule can be broken, but make sure that the reasons make sense and the results are superb.** After all, some of our greatest orators have been politicians whose speeches were written — by them or by speechwriters.