

The Top Ten PowerPoint Errors

The message from the November Tech Survey was clear: Both administrators and teachers want to know how to create powerful presentations. In the following weeks, there will be tech tips on how to enhance presentations using PowerPoint. Consider today's tip a checklist of what NOT to do:

1. A powerful presentation speaks for itself. It should NOT be read to the audience.
2. Most presentations contain too much text. Consider six lines of text an absolute maximum. Four or fewer lines would be a better choice.
3. Text that is too small can ruin a presentation. Consider 36-point font for titles and 18-point font for the body as the minimum size.
4. A presentation with text only is more like a handout. Charts, clip art, and pictures draw the audience into the presentation, increase their level of comprehension and the possibility of their being awake at the end.
5. Remember that charts, clip art, and pictures are effective only "if" they emphasize key points in a presentation.
6. Most presentations are created backwards. What is going to be presented to the audience should be typed word for word in the "Click to add notes" section (if PowerPoint is used). The introduction to the talking points will be located on the upper half of the slide, the part the audience will see.
7. Many presentations simply contain too much information. Presentation content should be limited to three or four points. The audience can be provided with a handout to read before the presentation, if necessary.
8. Keep backgrounds or colors simple and clear. What may look impressive on a monitor can often be very hard to see when projected. Themes with a dark background are to be avoided unless the presentation will take place in a pitch-black room (a black background with dark blue text, for example. Yes, this presentation occurred recently).
9. Too many types of animation or sound effects detract from a presentation. There needs to be a specific purpose for every choice that is made.
10. Be sure to have all items needed for the presentation. Many times a presenter will show up without the proper hardware (a set of powered speakers for example) or missing resources (sound or video files) for a presentation. Everything should be tested long before the audience arrives.