

# PowerPoint Presentation Advice (Abridged)

Mike Splane –© 2006

## Structuring Your Talk:

**Preparing a talk always takes far longer than you anticipate. Start early!**

- Write a clear statement of the problem and its importance.
- Research.
- Tell a story in a logical sequence.
- Stick to the key concepts.
- Organize from the most to the least important.
- Keep your sentences short, about 10-20 words each is ideal.

## Preparing Your Slides:

### Presentation Design

- Keep text or data brief.
- Use 5 to 7 slides (for this assignment).
- Number your slides and give them a title.
- Proof read everything, including visuals and numbers.

### Visual elements

- A font size of 28 to 34. The title default size is 44.
- Use clear, simple visuals.
- Use contrast: light on dark or dark on light.
- Graphics should make a key concept clearer.
- Place your graphics in a similar location within each screen.

### Text

- Font size must be large enough to be easily read. Size 28 to 34 with a bold font is recommended.
- It is distracting if you use too wide a variety of fonts.
- Overuse of text is a common mistake.
  - Too much text makes the slide unreadable. You may just as well show a blank slide. Stick to a few key words.
  - If your audience is reading the slides they are not paying attention to you. If possible, make your point with graphics instead of text.
  - You can use Word Art, or a clip art image of a sign, to convey text in a more interesting way.

## **Hints for Efficient Practice:**

### **Timing - Practicing Your Presentation,**

- Talk through your presentation to see how much time you use for each slide.
- Set the automatic slide transition to the amount of time you want to spend discussing each slide.

## **Delivering Your Talk:**

### **Pre-Talk Preparation**

- Plan to get there a few minutes early to set up and test the equipment.
- Dress appropriately for your audience.
- Turn off your cell phone.

### **Handouts:**

- Edward Tufte, the leading expert on visual presentation techniques, advises speakers to always prepare a handout when giving a PowerPoint presentation.
- Distribute handouts at the beginning of your talk.

### **Opening:**

- Briefly state the problem or topic you will be discussing.
- Briefly summarize your main theme for an idea or solution.

### **Speaking**

- Talk at a natural, moderate rate of speech
- Project your voice.
- Speak clearly and distinctly.
- Repeat critical information.
- Pause briefly to give your audience time to digest the information on each new slide.
- Don't read the slides aloud. Your audience can read them far faster than you can talk.

### **Body Language**

- Keep your eyes on the audience
- Use natural gestures.
- Face the audience.
- Avoid looking at your notes. Talk, don't read.

## **Questions**

- Always leave time for a few questions at the end of the talk.
- If you allow questions during the talk, the presentation time will be about 25% more than the practice time.
- You can jump directly to a slide by typing its number or by right-clicking during the presentation and choosing from the slide titles.
- Relax. If you've done the research you can easily answer most questions.
- Some questions are too specific or personal. Politely refuse to answer.
- If you can't answer a question, say so. Don't apologize. "I don't have that information. I'll try to find out for you."

## **Demeanor:**

- Show some enthusiasm. Nobody wants to listen to a dull presentation.
- Involve your audience. Ask questions, make eye contact, use humor.
- Don't get distracted by audience noises or movements.
- You'll forget a minor point or two. Everybody does.
- If you temporarily lose your train of thought you can gain time to recover by asking if the audience has any questions.

## **Conclusion:**

- Close the sale.
- Concisely summarize your key concepts and the main ideas of your presentation.
- End your talk with the summary statement or question you have prepared. What do you want them to do? What do you want them to remember?