Advice for Quality Presentations

Resource:
1. North Carolina State Library Toolkit:
http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/toolkits/presentations/good_speaking.html
2. The Kaneb Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Notre Dame

Strive for Five C's of Presentation Excellence: Look & sound:

- Confident,
- Credible,
- Competent,
- Convincing, and
- Comfortable.

The Basics

Be conservative.
Be simple.
Be conventional.
Plan for at least 1 minute per slide. 1 ½ minutes is better.
Have slides read from left to right; from top to bottom.
People see graphics first, then text.
A logical flow of information is essential.
If a long presentation, then summary slides are appropriate.

Additional Design tips: Remember goal involves improving retention.
1. Use sufficient white space.
2. Use contrast (dark-on-light or light-on-dark)
3. Design from top left to bottom right
4. Use large font size (minimum 18/24 points)
5. Limit use of bold, italics or underlining
6. Do not write in all UPPERCASE
7. No more than two fonts on a screen (preferably one)
8. Be concise with text
9. One main concept per slide
10. Background patterns make slides harder to read
11. When creating original images, use high quality equipment
12. Edit files to reasonable size

Principles of Good Speaking and PowerPoint:

In most cases, the PowerPoint show is there to enhance your presentation – and not to substitute for it. Despite the presence of the media, principles of good speaking also apply to presentations that incorporate PowerPoint.

- **Focus on the Content:** As the saying goes, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." Don't let use of the media hinder you in addressing your topic.

- **Don't Read from the Screen:** Overly relying on the presence of the text is by far the most common problem with novice PowerPoint users. Your audience can, and should enabled to, read for themselves.

- **Maintain Eye Contact with your Audience:** It's very easy to be distracted by the content on your screen. A minor exception to this guideline is a need to draw your audience's attention to a specific part of your slide. For example, you could use a pointer to identify a trend of a graph. -- Otherwise, there's simply no reason to show your back.

- **Don't Limit your Presentation to the Screen:** Reading from the screen prevents you from elaborating beyond what they see. Consider providing additional information and clarifying your comments.

- **Keep Pace with Yourself:** At first, you may find it difficult to coordinate speaking and showing your slides simultaneously. However, coordination of the two is essential in preventing confusion. Some practice could be required to prevent getting ahead of yourself. You may find it helpful to make notes to yourself of when you need to advance slides. Doing so minimizes the need to look at the screen itself.

Customization: Templates and Master Slides:

- **Templates:** Templates enable you to customize the format of your presentations. If you would like to create a presentation in which all slides show the Old Well on a background of Carolina blue, you can design a template which can be applied to your slides.

- **Master Slides**: Similar to templates, the Master slide allows you to establish a consistent formatting. For example, by using the Master Slide, you can place text that uses a specific font in the same position on every slide.

Prevent Distraction: Minimize Bells and Whistles!

Your priority should be to create a PowerPoint presentation with substantive content rather than a hyperactive show. The overuse of eye-catching features is distracting and could even be annoying. Don't be embarrassed by content-filled slides without fancy multimedia. -- A good motto: "Don't do it just because you know how to!"

- **Powerful Graphics:** Because PowerPoint is visual media, graphics can greatly enhance your presentation.   PowerPoint is ideal for providing diagrams and conceptual representations that help illustrate your ideas. Note, however, that the overuse of large images reduces your amount of usable screen space, so consider limiting their use.

- **Appropriate Graphics:** Are specific images even necessary? Although Microsoft presents many convenient Clipart categories [Office, Travel], these stock images could be inappropriate and irrelevant to your content.

- **Original Graphics:** Hand in hand with the importance of powerful and appropriate imagery is the use of original graphics. Anyone who has seen lots of PowerPoint presentations will recognize the familiar clipart and templates which come with the program. Many clipart sites exist on the Web, and the majority of these sites are free.

- **Consistent Transitions**: Transitions, those effects that introduce slides, should be consistent throughout your presentation. In PowerPoint, you can assign transitions globally (same for all slides) or individually (transitions vary). A common mistake among novice PowerPoint users is the incorporation of too many different transitions. Definitely ignore the "random" transition option.

- **All Build Effects are not equal:** Like transitions introduce entire slides, build effects are those means with which bulleted text or graphic objects are introduced within a slide. For example, you may choose to have your points "Fly from the right" side. Selections are generally a matter of preference; however, some build effects could divert your audience's attention. "Swivel," for example, may produce an interesting entrance, but watching the spinning effect takes infinitely more time than reading the text.

- **Minimal Animation:** Used sparingly, animation lends a dramatic element to a presentation. Unfortunately, many new PowerPoint users are far too liberal in the use of animation.

- **Sounds:** Sound should be used in moderation – if at all. Remember, cash registers and screeching brakes could demand more attention than is appropriate.

Planning your Presentation: Communicate Clearly.

The power of public speaking rests in both effective organization and clarity. These elements are also essential when creating PowerPoint presentations.

- **Remain succinct:** PowerPoint inherently is a device for communicating concisely. Be direct with your content. Writing 20 word paragraphs on a slide defeats your objective.

- **Don't overload:** Packing too much content in a single slide could be confusing. Consider increasing the number of slides.

- **Make your slides count:** Is the slide necessary? If not, omit it or combine it with another slide.

- **Maintain depth**: Due to the nature of the media, it's easy to resort to citing facts. However, are you also providing interpretation? Let PowerPoint assist you in conveying complex ideas to your audience.

> Tip: To keep an appropriate pace, aim for showing about 1-2 slides per minute.

Mark your Trail: Providing Directions.

PowerPoint authors should consider several options that could add context to the audience.

- **Announce your Objectives:** Especially for longer presentations, your audience will benefit from knowing what your presentation will be about. Providing an approximate table of contents will assist them. The "Agenda Slide" feature of PowerPoint may be of use to you here.

- **Decide ahead of time whether slides are for simplification or elaboration:** Consider the role of the slide. Should you tend towards detail, or is additional information best saved for later slide?

- **Develop a consistent title convention:** To assist your audience in recognizing what the overall topic is, you can provide context via a descriptive title on the individual slides. For example, preface all slides that address a certain topic with a "Topic: Subtopic" title.

- **Take advantage of the footers option:** Footers enable you to annotate at the bottom of slides, placing your name, your presentation name, date, or customized text for your audience.

- **Frequent Summary:** Every so often, assist your audience in their efforts to recognize the overall picture. Don't let the trees occlude the forest. PowerPoint's "Summary slide" feature may be helpful for this.

Design Tips: Easy on the Eyes!

PowerPoint presentations should be easily readable. Although certain formatting may look appealing at first, you should consider several issues before completing your presentation.

- **Font Size:** Font Size 24 point or larger ensures that those in the back of the room can easily read the text. If you require a smaller size to accommodate the amount of text, consider writing fewer words.

- **Light Colored Templates:** Many people find that reading dark text on a light background is easier to read than light text on a dark background. For example, the lighter templates of "Blends" and "Dad's Tie" could be better choices than the darker templates of "Marble" and "Fireball."

- **Contrast in Font Color:** Within whichever template you use or customize, ensure that you provide an adequate contrast in color. On a yellow background, dark blue font is much more readable than a white font.

- **Font Selection:** Although MS Office offers a wide variety of font types, some fonts cause far more eye strain than others. The familiar Arial font is a "sans serif" font, meaning that it has minimal edges to the letters.

  Conversely, the more exotic Corsiva is a "serif" font that some could find harder to read.

Beyond Delivery: Two more uses of PowerPoint:

- **Handouts:** Speaker Notes for the Audience: Consider using the Speaker Notes view to create annotated screenshots of the slides from your presentation. As such, you can provide comments and clarifications for individual slides.

- **PowerPoint on the Web:** PowerPoint enables you to easily convert your slide presentations into a Web based presentations. The program itself is not required to view presentations on the Web.

Poster Presentations

- **<u>Title, Author and Institutional Affiliation</u>** across the top of the poster (use a large, bold font)

- **<u>Abstract (200 words maximum):</u>** The abstract is a concise summary of the presented research. It should set the stage for your presentation and include the following sections: 1) What is the Problem (relevance of the research), 2) What was done to solve the problem, 3) What was the outcome. Abstracts should never include a cited reference.

- **<u>Introduction and Methods</u>**: These two areas should be kept short to save room for results and discussion. Showing your methods visually is often a good strategy.

- **<u>Results:</u>** The Results are the most important section of the poster. Clearly designed graphs and tables are critical. Captions should be self explanatory and informative.

- **<u>Discussion:</u>** The Discussion explains why the results are significant and interesting. Include figure/table references when discussing findings. Arrows can be used to refer reader to the appropriate figure.

- **<u>Acknowledgments:</u>** The acknowledgments section is one short paragraph thanking others for assistance and listing funding sources.

- **<u>Additional Hints</u>**: Design your poster to have eye catching areas that draw the reader to important information. Font should *never be smaller than 18 point*.

Mechanics of PowerPoint:

Edited from website:
http://meeting.asbcnet.org/callpapers/Powerpoint_posters.cfm

Also see:

http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/iss/schools/writing/posters.html

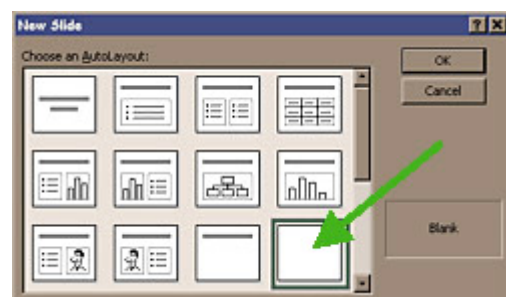**WHY POWERPOINT?**

Although there are many software programs that will create posters, PowerPoint is an excellent choice because it is readily accessible, compatible with most word processing and spreadsheet programs, and
quite powerful, yet user friendly.

SETUP - Creating a new poster

1. When PowerPoint first opens, select Blank Presentation.

2. Select the blank layout (lower right option). Because you will create your own background texture and color, and will insert your own title, text, and graphics, a template is not necessary.

SETTING THE POSTER SIZE

**Important note: use the page setup measurements given below!**

1. Under the File menu, choose Page Setup.

2. In the Slides sized for box, select Custom.

3. Change the orientation to landscape
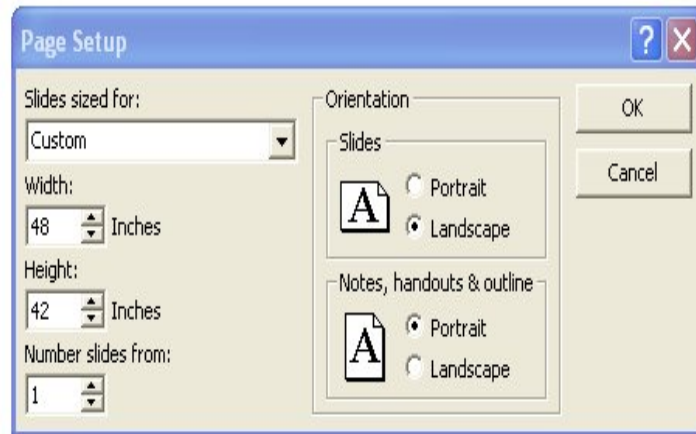
4. Type in the width and height of the poster (usually in inches, although some default to cm). Posters for printing at Southwestern have two options:

    1. Variable width but 36" in Height – this is a smaller poster version and can only be printed on "regular" paper

    2. Variable width but 42" in Height – this is the preferred size b/c you can use the high quality paper. In the past, 4 ft long (48 inches) has been sufficient

SETUP YOUR POSTER WORKSPACE

This might be a good time to select appropriate formatting toolbars. Recommended are the standard, formatting, drawing toolbars. The picture toolbar may come in handy later for making refinements to graphics. The toolbars can be selected from the View menu.
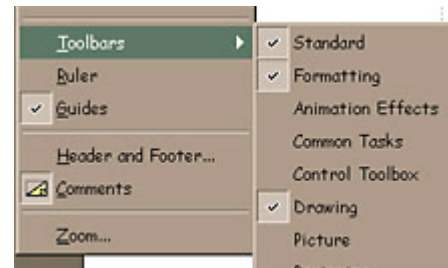
USING GRIDS, GUIDES

Turn on guides
Guides are useful for aligning images and text within a slide. To view guides, click on the View menu and click on Guides.

Add or delete a guide
To add a guide, hold down the CTRL key and drag an existing guide. To delete a guide, drag it off the side. Tip: To hide the guides without deleting them, click Guides on the View menu, Temporarily Turn off Guides and Grid. To temporarily override settings for the grids and guides, press ALT as you drag or draw an object.

Align objects on a grid
By default, any time you draw, resize, or move a shape or other object, it will position or "snap" to the lines in an invisible grid. This grid of evenly spaced lines helps align objects more precisely.

You can also align or "snap" objects to other shapes so that the new objects will align themselves with the pre-existing shapes. For example, if you want to stack shapes neatly on top of each other, or have lines meet the edge of another shape, you can turn on the Snap to Shape option.

On the Drawing toolbar, click Draw and then point to Snap. To automatically align objects on a grid, point to Grid and check to see that it is selected (it will look "pushed in").

To automatically align objects with grid lines that go through the vertical and horizontal edges of other shapes, click To Shape.

HOLD IT!

SAVING YOUR POSTER

1. Save your poster soon and often!!! To save your poster go to the File menu, click SAVE and save the poster in a folder located somewhere that you can easily remember. Give your file a name that is readily recognizable….i.e.. apsposter_yourname.ppt.

2. To set PowerPoint to save automatically, go to the Tool menu and choose Options. Click Allow Fast Saves, which will allow the latest changes to be added to your program when you save, rather than resaving the entire program each time you save. Also click the Save AutoRecover info. Set the minutes for 10-15 minutes. Should your computer hang up or should the power go off, the next time you open PowerPoint, your poster will reappear as it was the last time it was auto-saved.

BACKGROUND

PowerPoint has many options for backgrounds. **Choose carefully… the background should not detract from the poster content.** The colors should be soft, and if textured, should be selected to enhance the content of the poster.

1. To place a background on your poster, go to the Format menu and select Background. The Background menu will appear on your screen. From the drop-down menu bar, you may select a color fill or select from the Fill Effects.

2. **The Fill Effects** offers 4 folders: Gradient, Texture, Pattern, and Picture.

3. **The Gradient** folder allows you to choose one, two, or a preset arrangement of colors. As mentioned above, you will want to be careful to choose colors which are compatible and colors which are "light to lighter" or "dark to darker". The "light to dark" option is not usually a background that is easy to work with.

4. **The Texture** folder is often the background of choice, with lighter earthy colors being most popular. Twenty-four textures are provided with PP.

5. **The Picture** folder converts a picture into a background. You do not want to use the background option to insert a picture. Instead – insert it into the Master Slide – **View – Master - Slide**

   1. **Pictures can be a good or bad idea…**they are hard to discern, they can seem to clutter the poster, and can provide an uneven light/dark image to place text and graphics upon. **ALSO SOME SUBDISCIPLINES TRADITIONALLY DO NOT USE THE PICTURE AS BACKGROUND OPTION.** If you choose a picture, you will need a large file to get good resolution. Scan the image to the size of the poster at 150 pixels per inch or more.

> *TIP:*
> *When using a picture background, create your poster FIRST, then insert the background. The large size of the picture will create lengthy delays when your poster refreshes each time an action is done. Note: A picture background will slow down the printing time for the poster considerably.*

TEXT

Inserting text within PowerPoint

Insert Text Box from the Insert menu or click the Text Box Tool from the Drawing toolbar (as show in the figure below), then click where you want the text box to appear in your poster workspace. You will be able to move the text box at any time.

- Titles and headings are best when using a sans serif bold font such as Helvetica or Arial; serif fonts such as Times New Roman or Garamond are better suited for body text.

Recommended font styles

Arial
Verdana
Times or Times New Roman
Garamond
Georgia
Symbols, math - Use only the most basic symbols.

Suggested font sizes:

- Title - sans serif, 48 to 60 to 72 pts

- Subtitles - 36 pt, sans serif

- Section Titles - 24 pt, sans serif

- Main Text - serif font, no smaller than 18

- Avoid shadow, emboss, engrave or underline formats for text

- Keep text horizontal

- Use several columns

- Use lines or reasonable gutter spaces between columns

Changing the color of text:

Select the text you want to make a different color. Click the right mouse button and select Font and click a font color in the font box. To apply the color most recently applied to text, click Font Color in the Drawing toolbar at the bottom of the page. To apply a different color, click the arrow on the right of the Font Color button, select the color you want, and then click the button.

Inserting Text from Another Program

Rather than cutting or pasting text from a different application, using the following steps will give you more flexibility and freedom.

1. Select the text in another program and copy (Ctrl +C).

2. In PowerPoint, go to the Edit menu and select Paste Special. Choose Formatted Text. Click "OK"..

3. The text will enter as a text box.
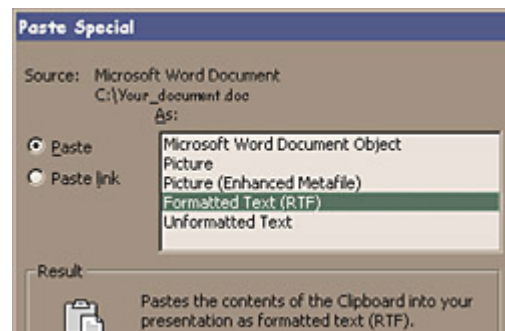
Viewing text to see what it will look like in your final poster.
The upper right hand corner of your PowerPoint screen has a "zoom" feature. It is best to work with your poster in the "fit" mode, but when you wish to see proper sizing, select 100%. What you see on the screen will be what will print out.
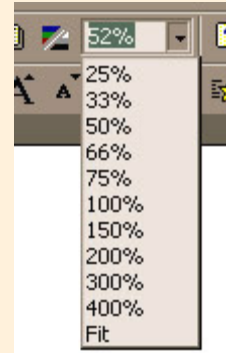
FIGURES –

Best to insert as Individual PowerPoint slide saved as a JPG or Windows Enhanced Megafile. – see demo

TABLES

You can use Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, or Microsoft Access to create a table. Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word can automatically format the table for you. In Microsoft Access, you can format an entire datasheet.

- For a table you can easily include in a PowerPoint poster, use Word.

- For a table that includes complex graphics formatting (such as bulleted lists, custom tabs, numbering, hanging indents, individual cell formatting, and cells split diagonally) use Microsoft Word.

- For a table that includes complex calculations, statistical analysis, or charts, use Microsoft Excel.

To insert a table

1. Copy the table from the program you used.

2. In PowerPoint select Paste Special from the Edit menu, then select Picture (Enhanced Metafile). This imports the file in as a graphic file. It cannot be manipulated or changed because it is not linked to the original, but like the chart, a table inserted as a graphic file is much better for printing purposes.

GRAPHICS, photos and figures

Digital images are representations of pictures, drawings or graphics stored electronically as files in a variety of file types. Digital imaging refers to the process of acquiring, editing and presenting digital images. Among the most common file types that can be imported into PowerPoint are .wmf; .jpg; .bmp; .gif; and .tif. Each type has unique properties and advantages:

- .wmf - this image format is scaleable within PowerPoint.

- .jpg - an efficient and recommended format when saved at high image quality settings (low compression)

- .tif - preserves maximum image quality, but files sizes are large

- .gif - good for graphics but may not be rescaled; supports only minimum colors but allows for transparency

> *Did you know:*
> *Images captured from web pages are of very low resolution and if enlarged will appear pixilated in your poster. These graphics are not recommended for poster presentations.*

A word about image resolution

Remember that you are composing your poster at one half size the final size. Therefore our recommendation is that a photographic image should be at least 150 pixels per inch at the final size desired in your poster. For instance, if you wish an image to be 5 inches wide by 4 inches deep in the final poster, the image resolution should be minimally 750 pixels wide x 600 pixels deep. Resolutions up to 300 pixels per inch will deliver better final image quality, but resolutions above 300 pixels per inch will not be noticeably better and will add considerably to the file size. In this application, the terms dpi (dot per inch) and ppi (pixels per inch) are synonymous.

Inserting Images and other important image considerations

- Insert graphics by selecting Picture from the Insert menu, .

- Preserve the aspect ration of your images by using the Shift key when you resize graphics.

- If you are scanning images for your poster be sure the images are either 150 to 300 dpi. This will allow for resizing if it becomes necessary.

- Avoid using pictures you find on the web. They are usually optimized at 72 dpi and can look very grainy or "pixilated" if resized.

- Do not use WordArt in your posters. It does not print well at larger sizes.

- The tiff (*.tif) format is good for printing images. Jpeg (.jpg) is an excellent choice at the higher quality image settings. The jpeg format is a good compromise of image quality and efficient image size.

- Make all significant changes to an image in an application other than PowerPoint. However, you can crop, resize, and perform some contrast and brightness adjustments within PowerPoint.

- Slides, Photographs, and drawings that are not in a digital format can be scanned and saved as graphic files. We encourage you to save the file as a TIF or JPEG (at the maximum quality setting). It is important that you scan your images in at the size you need them to be printed out. If the image is going to be 8 inches by 10 inches, then you need to set the scanner for that image size at 250 dpi - 300 dpi (dots per inch). In this regard, dots per inch and pixels per inch are synonymous. Note that the larger the file, the longer it takes to print. Smaller files are also easier to manipulate and manage.

AutoShapes

PowerPoint comes with a set of ready-made shapes that you can use in your posters. The shapes can be resized, rotated, flipped, colored, and combined with other shapes to make more complex shapes. The AutoShapes Menu on the Drawing toolbar contains several categories of shapes, including lines, connectors, basic shapes, flowchart elements, stars and banners, and callouts. You can add text to AutoShapes by clicking in the shape and typing. Many have an adjustment handle (a yellow diamond) that you can use to change a special aspect of a shape.

Position, align, and space text in an AutoShape

When text is attached to an AutoShape, such as a callout or flowchart symbol, you can change the position of the text, change the shape of the object to fit the text, make the text wrap in the object, or change the amount of space between the text and the edge of the object. To attach your text to an object, click the object and type the text. Note: You can also use the same procedures to position, align, and space text that was added by using the Text Box tool on the Drawing toolbar.

Add a line

1. Click AutoShapes in the Drawing toolbar, point to Lines, and then click the line style you want.

2. Drag to draw the line. To constrain the line to draw at 15-degree angles from its starting point, hold down SHIFT as you drag. To lengthen the line in opposite directions from the first end point, hold down CTRL as you drag.

Change the color of a line or border

1. Select the object you want to change.

2. On the Drawing toolbar, click the arrow next to Line Color, or right click and select Format, Autoshapes.

Change the style of a line or border

1. Select the line or border you want to change.

2. On the Drawing toolbar, click Line Style.

3. Click the style you want or click More Lines and then click a style.

Add or change a fill

You can fill objects with solid or gradient (shaded) colors, a pattern, a texture, or a picture. Any time you fill an object, the new fill replaces the old one. If you change an object's fill, you can easily change it back to its default.

LAYOUT CONSIDERATIONS

Grouping

The Draw menu has many options to help you work with your drawing objects. The first three, Group, Ungroup and Regroup, are for multiple objects. Use the shift key to pick up more than one object at a time.
Order is a menu that can be pulled free. It allows you to choose within the layers of objects which object is in front of the others.

Grid

Select Grid from the drawing toolbar. PowerPoint
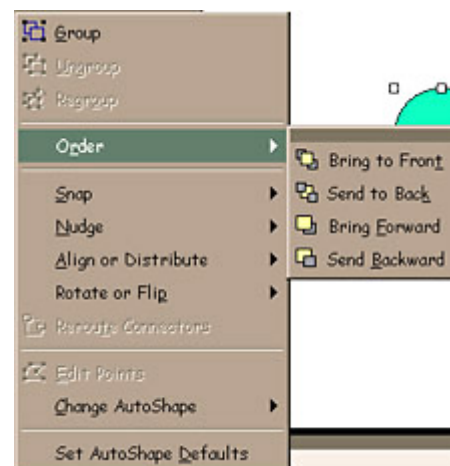
has an invisible grid that objects snap to. This option window will allow you to adjust that spacing. The arrow keys on the keyboard and the Nudge option on this menu will move the object to the next grid location. However, you can always nudge your objects just a little bit by using Ctrl and the arrow keys on the keyboard.

In addition, no matter where you place your objects you can always have them line up where you want them to or distribute an equal amount of space between them by using the Align or Distribute feature. If the Relative to Page button is pushed, you only need to have one object selected. The Edit Points option allows you to edit the wrap points around an object. Change AutoShape option allows you to change the selected object into any other shape. It will maintain its size, colors and position. If you draw a object and then change its options, you can then choose the Set AutoShape Default option such that every time you draw that shape again it will retain your customized colors and line styles.