

GovTalk

Get to the Point.

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2.4 Design and Presentation Do's and Don'ts

Context is everything and what follows is a distillation of ideas that will help generate PowerPoints suitable to the government context. As the context changes so much in government, there are times that a lot of detail is just what is needed, if the PowerPoint is more for the record than for the presentation. Here it is wise, if there is a presentational component, to have a summary presentation with key messages.

There are a lot of idea here for both design and presentation, but they boil down to two main messages:

- Design to the government context in a professional manner to support the purpose of the presentation, and
- When presenting, the PowerPoint is a visual aid not the presentation itself: that is your job.

Design Do's and Don'ts

- Avoid excessive transitions, crowded pages, images that are obviously stock and of questionable relevance.
- Avoid complicated videos and sound effects that can go wrong.
- Use images that the department or agency uses – usually available from the communications unit.
- Plan carefully: Define you desired outcome
- Do your research.

- Know your audience.
- Time your presentation.
- Check the spelling and grammar.
- Select a single sans-serif fonts such as Arial or Helvetica. Avoid serif fonts such as Times New Roman or Palatino because these fonts are sometimes more difficult to read.
- Use no font size smaller than 24 point.
- Use the same font for all your headlines.
- Select a font for body copy and another for headlines.
- Use bold and different sizes of those fonts for captions and subheadings.
- Add a fourth font for page numbers or as a secondary body font for sidebars.
- Don't use more than four fonts in any one publication.
- Clearly label each screen. Use a larger font (35-45 points) or different color for the title.
- Use larger fonts to indicate importance.
- Use different colors, sizes and styles (e.g., bold) for impact.
- Avoid italicized fonts as these are difficult to read quickly.
- Avoid long sentences.
- Avoid abbreviations and acronyms.
- Limit punctuation marks.
- No more than 6-8 words per line
- For bullet points, use the 6 x 6 Rule. One thought per line with no more than 6 words per line and no more than 6 lines per slide
- Use dark text on light background or light text on dark background. However, dark backgrounds sometimes make it difficult for some people to read the text.
- Do not use all caps except for titles.
- Put repeating elements (like page numbers) in the same location on each page of a multi-page document.
- To test the font, stand six feet from the monitor and see if you can read the slide.

Design and Graphical Images

- Use design templates.
- Standardize position, colors, and styles.
- Include only necessary information.
- Limit the information to essentials.
- Content should be self-evident
- Too many slides can lose your audience but you may want them for the record – do not use all slides, just the highlights.
- Keep the background consistent and subtle.
- Limit the number of transitions used. It is often better to use only one so the audience knows what to expect.
- Use a single style of dingbat for bullets throughout the page.
- Use the same graphical rule at the top of all pages in a multi-page document.
- Use one or two large images rather than several small images.

- Prioritize images instead of a barrage of images for competing attention.
- Make images all the same size.
- Use the same border.
- Use only enough text when using charts or graphical images to explain the chart or graph and clearly label the image.
- Keep the design clean and uncluttered. Leave empty space around the text and graphical images.
- Use quality clipart and use it sparingly. A graphical image should relate to and enhance the topic of the slide. No stick people!
- Try to use the same style graphical image throughout the presentation (e.g., cartoon, photographs)
- Repetition of an image reinforces the message. Tie the number of copies of an image to the numbers in your text.
- Make a single image stand out with dramatic contrast. Use color to make a dramatic change to a single copy of your clip art.
- Check all images on a projection screen before the actual presentation.
- Avoid flashy images and noisy animation effects unless it relates directly to the slide.

Color

- Limit the number of colors on a single screen.
- Bright colors make small objects and thin lines stand out. However, some vibrant colors are difficult to read when projected.
- Use no more than four colors on one chart.
- Check all colors on a projection screen before the actual presentation. Colors may project differently than what appears on the monitor.

Presentation Do's & Don'ts

Overview

- Presentation is about you talking to people, not presenting a PowerPoint slide: it is just a tool. Key to make contact in a professional way by:
 - Introducing yourself to people in the room, ideally by shaking hands
 - Making eye contact and looking at the people you are talking to
 - Remind people why you are there.
 - Never read the slide, look at it or turn away from audience
 - Link to comments of your introducer, especially if it is your boss. "As Dora just said, we are seeking direction today based on some recommendations that I will be presenting in summary form and found in our submission in detail."
- Do's & Don'ts
 - Check grammar! A presentation is the worst time to see misspellings.
 - Don't make too many slides...avoid the "slide rush" (trying to rush through the last 20 slides because you ran out of time).

- Avoid getting hung up on the first few slides, spending too much time on them and rushing to the end – looks really unprofessional.
- Cite your sources on each slide or at the end of your presentation.
- Remember: KEEP IT SIMPLE! It's just a tool!
- Avoid the use of capitalization as an emphasis and the use of exclamation marks
- No emojis
- No "You guys" or "You people."
- Something WILL go wrong- test your presentation before you show it.
- Always have a backup of your presentation on hand.
- Be prepared to do the presentation without the PowerPoint...professionals always print handouts for the audience. Use the three-slide notes print option.
- Talk to your audience, not the slides - face them!
- Don't just read what's on the board...the audience can read that. Use a visual presentation as a starting point. Leave material off the slide so you have something to say
- Avoid apologizing for a presentation
- Leave time for Q & A. Be prepared to be interrupted.
- Speak comfortably and clearly. Avoid cliché or overfamiliar sayings like "You guys..." or "Like,....." and nothing here is awesome.
- Do not read the presentation. Practice the presentation so you can speak from bullet points. The text should be a cue for the presenter rather than a message for the viewer.
- BLUF: Bottom Line Up Front: Give a brief overview at the start. Then present the information. Finally review important points.
- It is often more effective to have bulleted points appear one at a time so the audience listens to the presenter rather than reading the screen. But avoid too much transition.
- Use a wireless mouse or pick up the wired mouse so you can move around as you speak.
- If sound effects are used, wait until the sound has finished to speak.
- If the content is complex, print the slides so the audience can take notes.
- Do not turn your back on the audience. Try to position the monitor so you can speak from it.