

Common mistakes to avoid when making a PowerPoint presentation

A lousy slideshow damages the audience's impression of you, and worse, disengages the audience. If you're trying to convince them your idea is worth investing time and resources in, you want them engaged! Use these tips and your slideshows will be cleaner, flow better, and further engage the audience!

There are some issues, which are very prevalent in many PowerPoints we have seen. If you want to make sure that you do not make one of the mistakes that people commonly make then read on and avoid doing any of these.

Too much text

It is easy to see why people make this mistake so often. They want to tell the full story and they end up putting too much text on the slide. If you think that text is the only thing that will convey what you want to convey then maybe you should simply write about the project instead of creating a PowerPoint. If you are set on creating a PowerPoint then you need to **let the visuals talk**. Understand that the PowerPoint itself is telling a bit of the story. A PowerPoint isn't meant to tell the full story; it is meant to provide highlights about a particular topic.

People want more details from the presenter than is actually in the PowerPoint. They can read your slide faster than you can say it. This one might take the prize for worst possible mistake during a PowerPoint presentation. Reading your slides word for word will bore the audience, and makes you seem rigid instead of dynamic. PowerPoint slides are simply a tool you use to better communicate. You shouldn't need your slides to stay on topic. If you need notes to stay on track, then use the presenter's notes to put your thoughts in and print out Presenter Notes for yourself.

A good rule of thumb is to **limit yourself to five bullet points per slide, with no more than five words per bullet point**.

Bad color schemes

Many people end up using inappropriate and unprofessional color combinations, which can end up looking really tacky. Make sure you choose colors that fit the occasion. If you are making it for an office project it is better to stick with black, grays, and darker shades of blue. If you are making the PowerPoint for a club then you can use brighter, livelier colors. Or just one lively color, used as an accent color in the PowerPoint theme.

Take the extra few minutes to find a template that fits your presentation, or even make your own if you're so inclined. While some of the built-in PowerPoint templates might seem a little generic, you'll likely find one that's sharp without being overbearing. Don't choose anything that's too wacky with all sorts of colors, but feel free to find something unique.

Unreadable Text

Too many PowerPoints have text that is too small or the wrong color. You need to have an idea about how your PowerPoint will be look *from the furthest row in the audience*. **Your font size should no smaller than size 24.** If you need more room for all your text, *make another slide!*

And some fonts, while fancy and fun, are just plain hard to read. Stick to readable fonts. If you want to use a fancy font, reserve it for only one word and increase the size of that word to demonstrate very specific emphasis. But don't do this on every slide! In fact, keep the fonts the same throughout the presentation to communicate consistency of ideas.

Also make sure that the text contrasts nicely with the background of the PowerPoint or the graphics over which you will enter the text. If you are not sure about the text then you can always go with white text with a black outline as it is easily visible on almost any color.

Too many elements

Limit what you will put on a slide, including images, text, and animations. PowerPoint does a lot of cool things, but too many will make your presentation look like a collection of elements instead of an organized PowerPoint, which will diminish your message.

Charts are great, but it's important that you don't go overboard with them. The audience won't have the patience to decipher all sorts of colors, trend lines, keys, and text. If the chart isn't self-explanatory for the average audience member, or if you can't explain it in a sentence, you need to make it less complicated.

Slide Transitions

Every new version of PowerPoint includes more wacky slide transitions, but you shouldn't use those. Aside from being resource-intensive on weaker machines, many slide transition effects are distracting and don't add anything to your talk.

You should certainly use a transition to keep the slideshow interesting, but stick with something simple like a wipe or slide. And **never, ever select the Random option** since it will undoubtedly choose the wildest transition at the worst time. You don't want your audience to worry more about what transition is coming next than what you'll say next.