

Dr. Pittman's Tips on Making PowerPoint Presentations:

NUMBER 1 RULE: Keep it simple!

LAYOUT:

- **Maintain Attention; Don't Distract:** The best presentations walk a thin line between having elements that maintain the audience's attention without becoming distracting.
- **Use light color background with dark text:** Many color schemes use light colored text on a dark colored background. In my experience this scheme requires the room to be fairly dark (not a good thing if you want your audience to stay awake). Using a light colored background with dark text will allow visibility even in brightly lit rooms.
- **Be creative and original!** Design your own background or color scheme, it's easy. To change the background colors you can use the command:

Choose **Format Menu** → **Background** → Then you can select a basic single color (boring) from the pull down menu box at the bottom of the window OR you can select the "fill effects" option. Under this option you can select the background to fade between 2 colors and choose the direction of the fade (vertical, horizontal, diagonal). This can be a nice effect. There are also preset color patterns that you can choose from but remember to keep it simple and keep in mind how the colors will interact with your text on each screen.

Another option is to add elements to your background in addition to the basic color. For example, I do this on my slides by adding a logo of Wofford in the upper left corner and lines of varied thickness to separate the title of the slide and the text. You can add elements to the backdrop by editing the Master Slide:

Choose **View Menu** → **Master** → **Slide Master** Now you can change the font type, font size, and size / shape of the text boxes for all of the slides in your presentation. Any pictures, borders, lines, etc. that you insert on the Slide Master will show up on each slide as part of the background. When you are done select the "Close" button to return to your content slides.

- **Use the guide lines:** Choose **View Menu** → **Guides** to turn on the horizontal and vertical display guides (dotted lines) that you can move to use in lining up graphs and objects in the same location from slide to slide. You can have more than one horizontal and vertical guide by holding the "control" button down, grabbing the guide, and pulling to a new location.
- **Resources:** I have put some Wofford Images and PowerPoint templates at this web address: <http://dept.wofford.edu/Psychology/pittman/PPResources/>

TEXT:

- **FONTS:** Use easy to read and common fonts (not all computers have identical font types installed so use a type that you know all computers have).
- **SIZE:** 32 pt is best don't go smaller than 28 pt
- **STYLE:** Use **bold**, *italics*, and color to highlight important words or summary points.
- **CONTENT:** Don't put entire sentences or worst yet paragraphs of text on the slide. You want to have bulleted points. Some of the worst presentations involve the presenter reading text off of the slide to the audience. If you just have incomplete sentence / main

points as the text, then you can't fall into the trap of reading the slide text back to your audience.

ANIMATION:

- **Use it!** Using animation is about the only difference between having an overhead presentation and a PowerPoint presentation so use it! You should “turn on” the animation tools. This is different depending on the version of PowerPoint: for 2000 version choose **View Menu → Toolbars → Animation Effects**; for the 2003 version choose **Slide Show Menu → Animation Schemes**.
- **Test it!** You always, ALWAYS must TEST your slide show to make sure that the animation works and is in the correct order!
- **Avoid Gimmicks:** Use the animation capabilities of PowerPoint but keep it professional and avoid gimmicky effects (distracting category). Test the slides as if you were presenting them to see if the timing and effects will work with your delivery of the material.
- **Avoid Sounds:** Don't use sound effects with your animation unless it makes a significant contribution for a particular point. Sound effects fall under the “distracting” category.
- **Animate Your Results:** Use the animation to present your results. You can set-up the audience by showing the control effects and explaining the graph so that the audience can be hit with the results and immediately appreciate the data. As opposed to putting up the whole graph or text and explaining it – the audience won't get that “ah-hah” effect this way.

An easy way to animate your graphs: Copy the graph that you want to present from EXCEL using the “shift-button → Copy picture” command. Paste the graph into your PowerPoint slide and resize it to what you want. Then use the guides to frame the graph and select “Insert → Duplicate Slide” from the menus. Go back one slide to the first of your duplicate slides. Now, go back to EXCEL and select your “results” data and delete the points (make sure that you've saved this file somewhere else so you don't screw up your graphs). Hopefully, the results data can be deleted from the graph without changing the graph appearance (x-axis, y-axis, fonts). If anything does change make sure to fix it and then use the “copy picture” command to copy and paste this “control graph” into the first of the two duplicate slides in your PowerPoint presentation. Resize the control graph to fit on top of the “results” graph. When you are satisfied, right-mouse click on the “control graph” and choose “Order → Send to Back”. Now you should be able to select the “results graph” and delete leaving only the control graph. You now have a control graph on the first slide and a complete or “results” graph on the second slide. For an extra effect you can choose the “Slide Show” menu → Slide Transition for the “results graph” slide and select a transition such as wipe left or dissolve. Now in your presentation it should look like the results magically appear when you go from one slide to the next. Again, always test this!