**Tips for effective PowerPoint presentations**

**1. Have a clear structure.**

Organize it around a beginning, middle and end. Have a clear arc that builds towards some sort of climax; make your audience appreciate each slide but be anxious to find out what’s next; and when possible, always leave them wanting more. This includes an opening slide followed soon by a structure/outline slide with the main points and a closing slide.

**2. Do not have paragraphs.**

Do NOT write paragraphs because they are big chucky blocks of text that bore people. Your slides are the *illustrations* for your presentation, *not* the presentation itself. They should underline and reinforce what you’re saying as you give your presentation — save the paragraphs of text for your script.

Use phrases and bullet points. Use parallel structure when possible.

**4. Pay attention to design**.

PowerPoint and other presentation packages offer all sorts of ways to add visual “flash” to your slides: fades, swipes, flashing text, and other annoyances are all too easy to insert with a few mouse clicks. Avoid the temptation to dress up your pages with cheesy effects and focus instead on simple design basics:

* Use a sans serif font for body text. Sans serifs like Arial, Helvetica, or Calibri tend to be the easiest to read on screens.
* Use decorative fonts *only* for slide headers, and then *only* if they’re easy to read. Decorative fonts (e.g. calligraphy, German blackface, futuristic, psychotic handwriting, flowers, art nouveau, etc.) are hard to read and should be reserved only for large headlines at the top of the page. Better yet, stick to a classy serif font like Georgia or Baskerville.
* Put dark text on a light background. Again, this is easiest to read. If you must use a dark background – for instance, if your company uses a standard template with a dark background – make sure your text is quite light (white, cream, light grey, or pastels) and maybe bump the font size up two or three notches.
* Align text left or right. Centred text is harder to read and looks amateurish. Line up all your text to a right-hand or left-hand baseline – it will look better and be easier to follow.
* Avoid clutter. A headline, a few bullet points, maybe an image – anything more than that and you risk losing your audience as they sort it all out.

**5. Use images sparingly**.

Don’t overdo it. There are two schools of thought about images in presentations. Some say they add visual interest and keep audiences engaged; others say images are an unnecessary distraction.

Both arguments have some merit, so in this case the best option is to split the difference: use images only when they add important information or make an abstract point more concrete.

**6. Have a hook.** Like the best writing, the best presentation shakes their audiences early and then reel them in. Open with something surprising or intriguing, something that will get your audience to sit up and take notice. The most powerful hooks are often those that appeal directly to your audience’s emotions – offer them something awesome or surprising and if possible end with one. Pictures, quotes, details (e.g. of poets, important people) are very effective.

**7. Ask questions.** Questions arouse interest, pique curiosity, and engage audiences. So ask a lot of them. Build tension by posing a question and letting your audience stew a moment before moving to the next slide with the answer. Quiz their knowledge and then show them how little they know. If appropriate, engage in a little question-and-answer with your audience, with *you* asking the questions.

**8. Check for mistakes. Spelling, grammar, typos etc.**

**9. Beware of software compatibility issues.** If unsure of compatibility with software (open office, office, mac software) convert it to pdf.

**10. When delivering it:**

* Don’t turn your back at the audience.
* Point at it from time to time.
* Don’t stand in front of your slides.
* Synchronize your speaking and slide projection. Don’t show them too early or too late.
* Slow it down. Emphasize and appear thoughtful. Make your information easier to digest. Pause often.

**Final general tips:**

* Rehearse rehearse rehearse with the PowerPoint.
* Simple is better than complicated.
* Use as an aid, not as the talk itself.
* Do NOT read. Do not underestimate it.
* Make it interesting. Not boring

**Sample PPT structure**

Slide 1: opening

Slide 2: attention grabber

Slide 3: preview of main points/outline

Slides 4-6: aspect A of topic

Slides 7-9: aspect B of topic

Slides 10-12: personal opinion

Slides 13: conclusion