

# Common Design Flaws with Powerpoint and how to fix them

From Mississippi University

In September 2003, a survey was conducted to discover what viewers considered the most annoying aspects about PowerPoint presentations. Each person was asked to select the top three annoying elements from a list of elements. Participants could also write in annoying elements. The responses indicated that the most annoying aspect of bad PowerPoint slides is the text.

1. The speaker read the slides to us .....60.4 %
2. Text so small I couldn't read it .....50.9 %
3. Full sentences instead of bullet points .....47.8 %
4. Slides hard to see because of color choice .....37.1 %
5. Moving/flying text or graphics .....24.5 %
6. Annoying use of sounds .....22.0 %
7. Overly complex diagrams or charts .....22.0 %

## 10 Common mistakes in PowerPoint

### 1. Too Much Emphasis on PowerPoint Features

**BAD:** bells and whistles are the main part of the presentation. Each slide has a different transition, all animation effects are used, sounds accompany each slide, and each slide has a different color scheme.

#### How to Correct

Content is the most important element.

Each slide should have meaning and relevance to the content.

Slides should not be thought of as ornaments.

PowerPoint features should be used to:

- Increase student engagement
- Improve content comprehension
- Increase retention rates
- Explain complex facts and processes
- Reinforce key points
- Make abstract ideas concrete
- Leave a lasting impression

### 2. Text is Too Small

The students can not read the slide because the text is too small.

## **How to Correct**

Titles should be 36 - 40 point size or more

Body text should be no lower than 24 point size

Good rule to remember for each slide

- No more than 8 words per line
- No more than 8 lines per slide
- Some indicate 10 x 6
- Bottom line - limit text and increase font size

Type of Fonts

- San Serif fonts are more readable than Serif fonts
- Do not use capitalization of all words

## **3. One Huge Paragraph is Used**

Slides that contain all text are extremely difficult for students to read and understand the key concept.

### **How to Correct**

Use statements

Keep statements short

Use Key words - focus on your message

Use parallel construction of text

- On the same slide, use keywords or sentences - not both
- Use all verbs, adjectives or noun phrases
- The information should flow
- Be consistent in writing

## **4. Too much information on the slide**

Students can be overloaded by too much information on one slide. This mistake is commonly made when using charts and graphs.

### **How to Correct**

One main concept per slide

Limit the amount of information to display

Add another slide for additional charts and graphs

## **5. Layout is too cluttered**

There are too many pictures, graphs, charts and other elements on a slide. Students do not know what the most important concept of the slide is.

### **How to Correct**

Slide layout should contain:

- Harmony -----Elements should fit together
- Proportion -----Emphasis will be placed on the largest element
- Balance -----Elements should stand together

## **6. Animations are Distracting**

Every object flies in or fades in to the slide. Students begin watching the animations and

wondering which animation will be used next. Students are not focusing on the content. Too many animations often signals a new PowerPoint user.

#### **How to Correct**

- Use animations that emphasize
- Use animations sparingly

### **7. Sounds are Annoying**

Every object that is animated has a sound associated with it. The sounds can be aggravating to the viewers.

#### **How to Correct**

- Use sounds that emphasize
- Use sounds sparingly

### **8. All Elements are Different - No Consistency**

Each slide contains variety in multiple elements (font size, font color, background, template, etc.). Students find it difficult to follow a presentation that doesn't contain consistency.

#### **How to Correct**

- Similarity is the key, not variety
- Backgrounds should be consistent
- Font type and color should be consistent
- Use no more than 2 font types per slide

### **9. Bad Color Choices - The Presentation is Hard to Read**

Colors have meaning and can evoke emotions. On the basic level, some color combinations are hard to view. After content, color may be the next most important element in your presentation.

#### **How to Correct**

- Use a color format that gives good contrast between background and text
- Dark backgrounds with light colored text work best
- Use PowerPoint color and template tools
- Color coding words, objects and backgrounds creates a system of guidance
- Color can:
  - Differentiate headings from subheading
  - Identify related topics
  - Signal a subject change (changing the background of a slide)
  - Color themes can imply associations with subjects
- Blues and greens - suggest safety
- Yellows and reds may imply warning or danger

### **10. Graphics Do Not Support the Content**

Graphics such as clip art and pictures do not have anything to do with the content of the slide.

#### **How to Correct**

- Use only graphics that support the content
- Cute graphics are no substitute for poor quality of content.