

## Structuring Your Presentation:

### **Preparing a talk always takes far longer than you anticipate. Start early!**

- Write a clear statement of the problem and its importance.
- Research. Collect material which may relate to the topic.
- Tell a story in a logical sequence.
- Stick to the key concepts. Avoid description of specifics and unnecessary details.
- If you are making a series of points, organize them from the most to the least important. The less important points can be skipped if you run short of time.
- Keep your sentences short, about 10-20 words each is ideal. This is the way people usually talk.
- Strive for clarity. Are these the best words for making your point? Are they unambiguous? Are you using unfamiliar jargon or acronyms?

## Preparing Your Visuals:

### **Presentation Design:**

- Let the picture or graphics tell the story - minimize the use of text.
- Don't overload your slides with too much text or data.
- FOCUS. In general, using a few powerful slides is the aim.
- Number your slides and give them a title.
- Prepare an Agenda or Table of Contents slide. You can reuse the same slide at the end of the presentation by changing the title to Summary.
- Proofread everything, including visuals and numbers.
- Keep "like" topics together.
- Strive for similar line lengths for text.

### **Visual elements:**

- A font size of 28 to 34 with a bold font is recommended for subtitles. The title default size is 44. Use a san serif font for titles.
- Use clear, simple visuals. Don't confuse the audience.
- Use contrast: light on dark or dark on light.
- Graphics should make a key concept clearer.
- Place your graphics in a similar location within each screen.

### **Text:**

- Font size must be large enough to be easily read. Size 28 to 34 with a bold font is recommended.
- It is distracting if you use too wide a variety of fonts.
- Overuse of text is a common mistake.

- Too much text makes the slide unreadable. You may just as well show a blank slide. Stick to a few key words.
- If your audience is reading the slides they are not paying attention to you. If possible, make your point with graphics instead of text.
- You can use Word Art, or a clip art image of a sign, to convey text in a more interesting way.

#### **Numbers:**

- Numbers are usually confusing to the audience. Use as few as possible and allow extra time for the audience to do the math.
- Numbers should never be ultra precise:
  - "Anticipated Budget of \$660,101.83" looks silly. Are your numbers that accurate? Just say \$660 thousand.
  - "The Average number of students per class is 1048.16. Are you teaching fractions of a unit?"
- If you have more than 12-15 numbers on a slide, that's probably too many.
- Using only one number per sentence helps the audience absorb the data.

#### **Statistics:**

- Use the same scale for numbers on a slide. Don't compare thousands to millions.
- Cite your source on the same slide as the statistic, using a smaller size font.

#### **Charts:**

- Charts need to be clearly labeled. You can make more interesting charts by adding elements from the drawing toolbar.
- Numbers in tables are both hard to see and to understand. There is usually a better way to present your numerical data than with columns and rows of numbers. Get creative!

#### **Backgrounds:**

- Backgrounds should never distract from the presentation.
- Using the default white background is hard on the viewer's eyes. You can easily add a design style or a color to the background.
- Backgrounds that are light colored with dark text, or vice versa, look good. A dark background with white font reduces glare.
- Colors appear lighter when projected. Pale colors often appear as white.
- Consistent backgrounds add to a professional appearance.
- For a long presentation, you may want to change background designs when shifting to a new topic.

#### **Excitement:**

- Sounds and transition effects can be annoying. Use sparingly.
- Animation effects can be interesting when used in moderation, too much animation is distracting.

- You can insert video and audio clip, but use sparingly.
- You can also use hyperlinks.

### **Practice, Practice, Practice:**

#### **Timing - Practicing Your Presentation:**

- Talk through your presentation to see how much time you use for each slide.
- Are you using the right amount of time per slide? Decide which slides or comments need alteration to make your presentation smoother.

#### **Content:**

- Make a list of key words/concepts for each slide
- Read through the list before you begin.
- Don't attempt to memorize your text;
- Your words will probably be different each time you practice.
- Think about the ideas, and your words will follow naturally.

### **Delivering Your Presentation:**

#### **Pre-Talk Preparation:**

- Plan to get there early to set up and test the equipment.
- Dress appropriately for your audience.
- Turn off your cell phone.

#### **Handouts:**

- Edward Tufte, the leading expert on visual presentation techniques, advises speakers to always prepare a handout when giving a PowerPoint presentation.
- Make about 10% more handouts than you expect to use.
- Distribute handouts at the beginning of your talk.

#### **Opening:**

- Jump right in and get to the point.
- Give a rehearsed opening statement; don't improvise at the last moment.
- Use the opening to catch the interest and attention of the audience, tell a story.
- Briefly state the problem or topic you will be discussing.

#### **Speaking:**

- Talk at a natural, moderate rate of speech
- Project your voice.
- Speak clearly and distinctly.
- Repeat critical information.
- Pause briefly to give your audience time to digest the information on each new slide.

- Don't read the slides aloud. Your audience can read them far faster than you can talk.

#### **Body Language:**

- Keep your eyes on the audience
- Use natural gestures.
- Don't turn your back to the audience.
- Don't hide behind the lectern.
- Avoid looking at your notes. Only use them as reference points to keep you on track. Talk, don't read.

#### **Questions:**

- Always leave time for a few questions at the end of the talk.
- If you allow questions during the talk, the presentation time will be about 25% more than the practice time.
- Relax. If you've done the research you can easily answer most questions.
- Some questions maybe too specific or personal. Politely refuse to answer.
- If you can't answer a question, say so. Don't apologize. "I don't have that information. I'll try to find out for you."

#### **Length:**

- To end on time, you must PRACTICE!
- When practicing, try to end early. You need to allow time for audience interruptions and questions.

#### **Demeanor:**

- Show enthusiasm. Nobody wants to listen to a dull presentation. On the other hand, don't overdo it. Nobody talks and gestures like a maniac in real life. How would you explain your ideas to a friend?
- Involve your audience. Ask questions, make eye contact, and use humor.
- Don't get distracted by audience noises or movements.
- You'll forget a minor point or two. Everybody does.
- If you temporarily lose your train of thought you can gain time to recover by asking if the audience has any questions.

#### **Conclusion:**

- Concisely summarize your key concepts and the main ideas of your presentation.
- Resist the temptation to add a few last impromptu words.
- End your talk with the summary statement or question you have prepared. What do you want them to do? What do you want them to remember?
- Consider alternatives to "Questions?" for your closing slide. A summary of your key points, a cartoon, a team logo, or a College/University logo may be stronger.