

THE BETTER PRESENTER

We have all been victimized by presentations that leave us bored and confused. In this workshop, you will learn to become a better presenter, and you will learn to use PowerPoint to enhance your presentations, not detract from them.



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Death by PowerPoint why presentations fail

PowerPoint is a deadly weapon, and when misused, it can kill an audience in a matter of minutes. Can you remember the last time you were engaged by a slideshow presentation? Do you struggle to keep your audience's attention? Why does this happen, and how can we stop PowerPoint before it kills again?

First, we must understand why slideshow presentations fail. At the core of this issue is the fact that PowerPoint was designed by engineers, not communicators, to quickly and easily convey information internally within a company. **Templates** were designed to expedite this transfer of information even more. A monster was born, and it thrives in lecture halls and meeting rooms across the world. Audiences need to be engaged with the presentation, and prepackaged templates are definitely not engaging.

Templates stifle creativity and are often counter-productive to a presenter's message. Why do all of

your slides have to look the same? Do you need a logo on every slide? Who came up with these rules, anyway? If you want to break out of this mold, begin the design phase of your slideshow with a blank slide instead!

Another reason that slideshow presentations fail is because they often use **bullet points**. This method for conveying information is ineffective during a live talk. To make matters worse, presenters will often read aloud the bullet points to the audience while they are trying to read to themselves. No one can listen *and* read at the same time, and the audience reads faster than you can talk, so this immediately creates a disconnect between the presenter and the audience.

In PowerPoint, move your bullet points from the slide to the presenter notes window pane. Use visuals on the slide instead. Save bullet points for your handouts, where they're supposed to be!

The number one reason that presentations fail is because presenters too easily succumb to the "**curse of knowledge**." This occurs when the content expert cannot explain their subject in a manner the audience can understand. The presenter must empathize with the audience and feed them what they can reasonably digest... and nothing more. And don't forget that the audience needs *context* for the information they're receiving. Additional information and details can always be provided to the audience after the presentation, online or in print form.

And finally, we must understand (and often remind ourselves), that **YOU are the presentation, not your slides!** Your experience is what the audience is there to see. Your PowerPoint presentation should not be useful without you there to give it life, and it should have one purpose: to enhance your message!

Becoming Zen harmony in preparation

To become a true presentation zen master, you must find the patience to craft your message. Too often we begin the presentation design process by opening PowerPoint and typing into the first text box we find. Try this, instead:

1. **Plan Analog.** The computer can be a crutch and PowerPoint should not even be launched until you have a plan in place for your presentation - a plan that was developed with pencil and paper. The manual process of writing and drawing is natural and stimulating to the brain, while typing into a text box is most definitely not. Storyboards, brainstorming clouds, and walls full of sticky-notes are all meaningful development exercises. Use the computer as a *bicycle* for your mind, rather than a car!
4. **Let go.** As you plan and build your presentation, let go of preconceived notions about how they should look. "Normal" is not necessarily good. If you are human, you are creative. Be confident in your creativity. Children are infinitely creative, and you were once a child. Letting go helps you tap into that creativity once again!

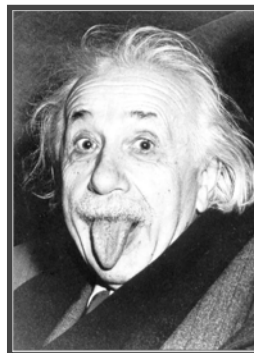


What is "Zen?"

Zen is a Buddhist doctrine that enlightenment can be attained through direct intuitive insight.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen

2. **Purify the message.** Can you state the purpose of your presentation in two sentences or less? If not, you need to take a step back and figure that out. Simplify your message, and know that everything in your presentation should relate to that singular idea. If the audience understands the message from the get-go, they will be more engaged throughout and better equipped to absorb information.
3. **Craft a story.** The best presenters understand the similarities between a podium and a stage, and they know they are performing. They share real life examples taken from personal experience, and craft a story with the information they are sharing. If you can do this, you'll create an invaluable connection with the audience, and provide them with new anchors to the information you're presenting. This all enhances their ability to not only understand your message, but to remember and *apply* it.



"Make everything as simple as possible, but no simpler."
- Albert Einstein

your slides can be added to your handout! Complicated charts and lengthy prose belong in the handout. You can also choose when to provide the handout. If you don't want the audience to look ahead, you can provide the handout at the end of the presentation.

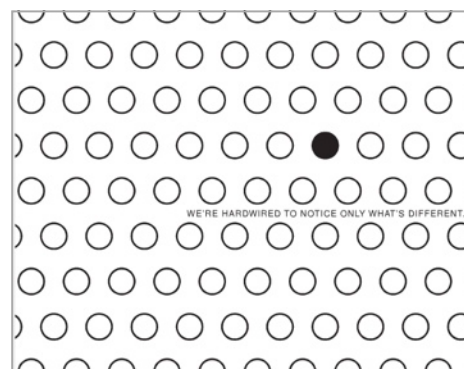
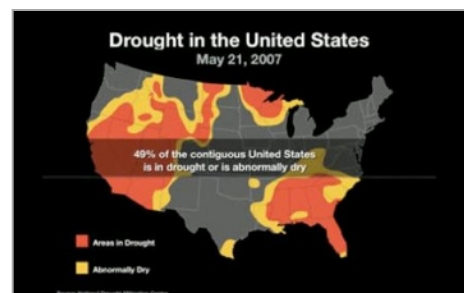
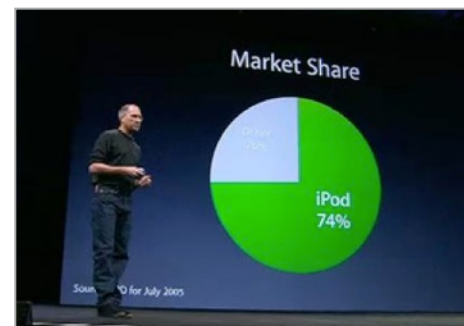
3. **Design with simplicity.** The most common error that is made when creating

PowerPoint slides is placing too much on each slide. White space is an important element in design. Cover one concept per slide, creating extra slides if necessary. Apply the concept of "**amplification through simplification**" to your slides. Elaboration is easy (bad for an audience), but restraint is difficult (good for an audience), especially for content experts!

Slideshow Design tips and strategies

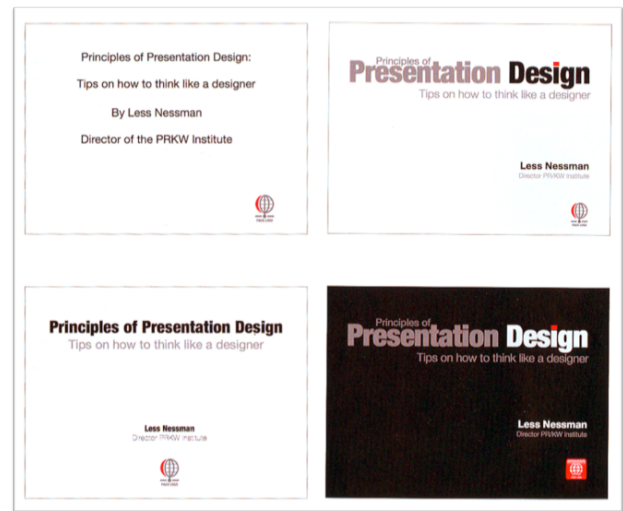
Now that you have found the right state of mind, it's time to put your ideas into practice. The following tips can help you execute your plan successfully:

1. **Use more images.** To maximize your audience's ability to retain information, use visuals that represent common, concrete things in combination with relevant text. Use high quality images (ex: iStock.com) and consider filling the slide with the image. Images that you create with a scanner or your own digital camera can be invaluable, even if they aren't high quality, because they are directed and personal. Charts and diagrams are useful, just remember to keep them simple and clear.
2. **Create better handouts.** If your handouts are just a print-out of your slides, you are taking the easy way out and missing a great opportunity to reinforce your message. A good handout contains the details of your presentation, freeing the audience to pay attention and participate. All of those bullets points that were on



"We're hardwired to notice only what's different."
[\[www.slideshare.net/coolstuff/the-brand-gap\]](http://www.slideshare.net/coolstuff/the-brand-gap)

4. Use basic design concepts. To create a visually appealing slides, utilize basic design concepts that are easy to implement once identified:
- **Proximity** - link important objects together by placing them close together.
 - **Alignment** - place related objects along the same vertical or horizontal plane.
 - **Contrast** - relate or separate objects by changing their color, adding contrast, or including borders.
 - **Repeating** - include objects or concepts more than once on a slide or throughout a presentation to reinforce their importance.



Delivery tips and strategies

You've planned, prepared, and crafted your masterpiece slideshow. Now it's time to deliver your message! Here are few tips for doing so effectively and with style:

1. Engage the audience. A passive audience is a bored audience, and a bored audience will not remember your message. There are many ways to get the audience involved in the presentation, including ice-breaker exercises, impromptu quizzes with prizes, and more. Make the audience feel like their input counts by encouraging them *and* writing their contributions down on the whiteboard. Incorporate group exercises, hands-on exercises, and facilitate group discussion. Just make sure that you create a structure (and a possibly a time-limit) for interactions, to avoid de-railing your presentation.
2. Audience comfort. This is an obvious one - if you don't want your audience to fall asleep, stop turning the room lights off when you present! Check with your audience, and if you have any control over the temperature of the room (opening windows or doors), do what is reasonable to accommodate. Time flies when you're presenting, but you should never talk for more than 60-90mins without providing a bathroom break.
3. Personality. Many of us focus too much on being professional when presenting, and forget about what makes us engaging - our personality. Don't hide this from the audience, because it helps them relate to you and the experiences you're sharing. If you take yourself too seriously, the audience will definitely not take you seriously. And finally, use humor! A well placed joke, funny picture or story that relates to your subject matter is one of the most powerful yet underutilized techniques a presenter can use to connect with an audience.
4. Be present. We all have "busy" lives, and cannot live without our smart-phones, but



your personal life must be set aside when you are presenting. If you're distracted, the audience will pick up on that, and will not give you *their* undivided attention. If you're late, there's no need to share the details with the audience, just like you wouldn't expect an audience member to explain to the entire room why they have to leave early. If you are pre-occupied, write it all down ahead of time, set the list aside, and return to it when the presentation is over.

5. Passion. Believe in your message, and present it with passion. You are much more likely to get "buy-in" from your audience if they can see your enthusiasm for the subject. Give them a reason to care about the presentation.

6. Know when to stop. This concept is very important, and coincides with the *curse of knowledge* concept mentioned on page 1 of this handout. Your audience has a limit to the amount of information that they can absorb in one session. If you push them too far beyond that limit, they'll not only stop listening, they may actually lose some of what they had previously retained. Teach them what they need to know at that moment, and then give them continued learning opportunities after the presentation, such as supplemental readings, web links, handouts or schedule follow-up consultations. Rather than inundating the audience with information, spark their interest and leave them wanting more!



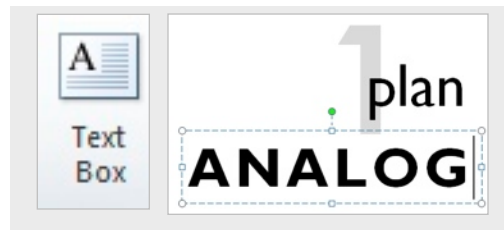
PowerPoint and slideshow tools

tips and how-to's

Creating template-free slides in PowerPoint is not difficult if you understand the basic design tools at your disposal. The following steps are for **PowerPoint 2010 (PC)**. However, you can accomplish these same tasks in any version of PowerPoint on the PC or Mac, and in Keynote.

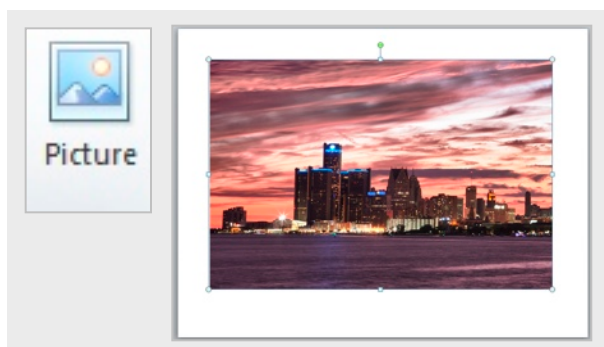
Text boxes. Don't let PowerPoint's pre-made text boxes dictate the placement and formatting of your text. Instead, create your own.

1. Click on the **Insert** tab in the ribbon, and then click the **Text Box** button.
2. Your mouse pointer will become a small cross-hair.
3. **Click-and-drag** to draw the text box on your slide.
4. Type into the text box and format as desired.



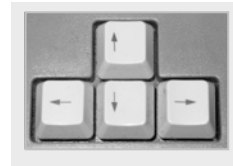
Inserting images. There are two ways to add images to your slides:

- 1a. Move the PowerPoint window to the side of your desktop, then drag-and-drop the image file's icon onto your slide.
- 1b. Click on the **Insert** tab in the ribbon, and then click the **Picture** button. **Browse** for and select the file.



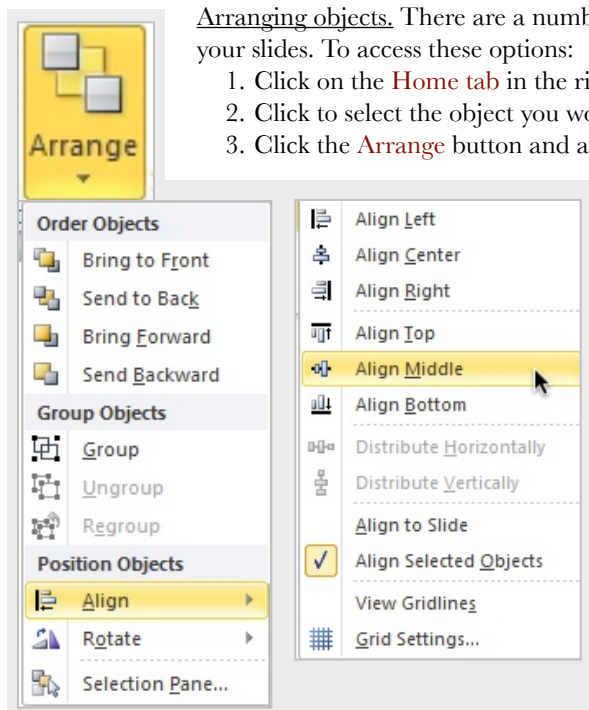
PowerPoint will automatically size the image to fit within your slide's borders. To resize the image manually, simply click-and-drag a corner point. To move the image, click in the middle of the image and drag it into place. To further adjust the image, double-click on it to reveal the Picture Tools > Format ribbon, and use the formatting options provided.

Nudging objects. Sometimes it is difficult to move objects into place with the mouse. Instead, click once on an object to select it, then **use the arrow keys on your keyboard to nudge** it in any direction. For a finer adjustment, hold the CTRL key while nudging. *NOTE: To select a text box, you have to click on its border.*



Arranging objects. There are a number of useful tools available for adjusting the arrangement of the objects on your slides. To access these options:

1. Click on the **Home** tab in the ribbon.
2. Click to select the object you would like to affect. To select multiple objects, hold SHIFT while clicking.
3. Click the **Arrange** button and apply the desired command.



Ordering - When objects overlap one another (like a text label on an image), you may need to adjust their stacking order. The Order Objects options provide commands to either bring an object forward, or to send it behind other objects. You may have to do this multiple times to get the desired result.

Grouping - To move multiple objects as one, and to prevent their alignment to one another from shifting accidentally, group them together. You can also ungroup them if you wish to edit them individually again.

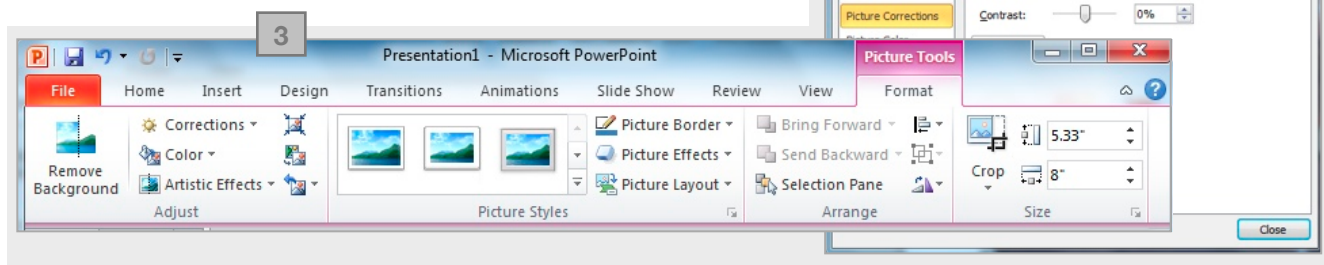
Aligning - The align and distribute commands allow you to line-up object precisely, relative to one another. You can also adjust the spacing between objects with the distribute options.

NOTE: If any of these commands are "grayed-out" and you cannot activate them, it's because you don't have the correct object, or objects selected!

Formatting styles and effects. PowerPoint offers a number of formatting options, which you can apply to images and text boxes. Among these options are outlines, shadows and even 3-D effects. You also have the option to adjust an image's brightness, contrast, and more. The key to good slide design is consistency and clean, purposeful styling, so do your best to keep it simple!

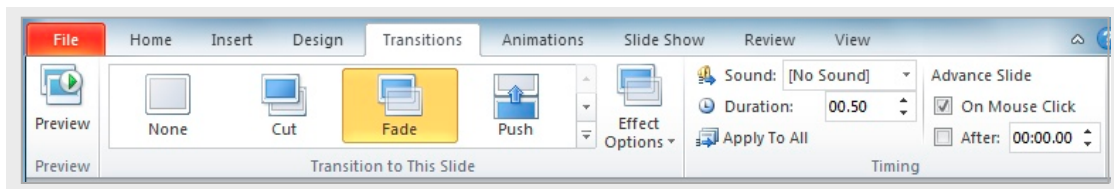
There are three ways to access formatting options for images and text boxes:

1. Using the buttons within the **Drawing group** on the **Home tab**.
2. **Right-click** on the object, and select **Format Picture** from the pop-up menu.
3. After you select an object, a new tab will appear in the ribbon. Click the **Picture Tools > Format tab** to open the extra formatting options.



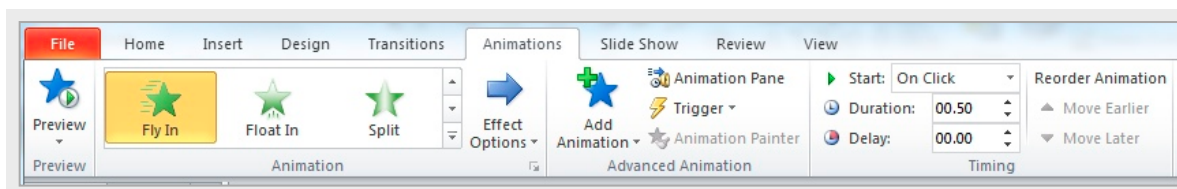
Transitions. Slide transitions are animation effects that happen when you advance to a different slide in Slide Show mode. The most common transitions are the fade and push, which are simple and do not draw attention to themselves. If you use “fancy” transitions, you risk detracting from your message. Transitions that are longer than .5 seconds can affect your timing and flow, and can make it difficult to skip between slides quickly. Keep your transitions simple and quick, or don't use them at all! To add transitions:

1. Click the **Transitions tab** in the Ribbon.
2. Choose a **Transition** from the list provided.
3. If necessary, adjust the transition by making a selection from the **Effect Options** button.
4. Set the transition **Duration**.
5. Click the **Apply To All** button to make the transition happen consistently throughout your presentation.



Animations. To apply movement to objects on your slides, add animation effects. There are a number of preset to choose from, and you can even define your own paths. As a general guideline, animations should only be used when you need to direct your audience's attention. For example, you may want to gradually reveal portions of a graph, rather than the entire graph all-at-once, giving the audience a chance to come to their own conclusions before they see the final results. Like transitions, it's very important to keep animations simple, and fast! To add animations:

1. Select the object or group of objects that you wish to animate.
2. Click the **Animations tab** in the Ribbon.
3. Choose an **Animation** from the list provided.
4. If necessary, adjust the animation by making a selection from the **Effect Options** button.
5. Select how the animation will begin, using the **Start** options (whether it happens automatically, or after you click the mouse).
6. Set the animation **Duration**.
7. Click the **Preview** button to test your animation.



Workshop exercise

put your zen into practice

It's time to put our new ideas into practice. In this exercise, you will evaluate one of your presentations and identify areas for improvement.

1. Break into groups of two or three.
2. Very briefly demonstrate your presentation slideshow and explain its purpose to your group.
3. Select one concept (which may be represented by one or a few slides), and discuss its current effectiveness.

4. Identify areas of improvement for this one concept. How can the message be clarified? How can the visual representation of that concept be refined?
5. Repeat this process for each member of the group.
6. Summarize and present your discoveries to the class.

(Alternate exercise, search presentation design books provided for a useful tip, and then share it with the class.)

Resources

reference and continued learning

Books - There is a growing collection of books on the subject of using PowerPoint effectively, but don't overlook the books about becoming a better presenter:

- *Presentation Zen* by Garr Reynolds
- *Presentation Zen Design* by Garr Reynolds
- *Slideology* by Nancy Duarte
- *Presentations in Action* by Jerry Weissman
- *Made to Stick* by Chip and Dan Heath

Image sources - There are many ways to acquire images for your presentations that include free online sites, paid online sites, and creating your own:

- compfight.com (use only "creative commons")
- www.flickr.com/creativecommons
- office.microsoft.com/en-us/images
- www.freedigitalphotos.net
- www.freestockphotos.biz
- www.istockphoto.com
- Scanners (CL-240 Tech Commons)
- Digital cameras

Online presentation help and ideas - The following websites provide new ideas and tips for improving your presentation skills:

- www.ted.com (innovative, inspirational people and their presentations)
- www.presentationzen.com (Garr Reynolds' blog)
- blog.duarte.com (Nancy Duarte's blog)
- <http://bit.ly/ggEYTe> (Duarte at TEDx on storytelling)
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-ntLG0yHw4 (present like Steve Jobs)
- www.sethgodin.com/freeprize/reallybad-1.pdf (Seth Godin's paper on really bad PowerPoint)
- www.nytimes.com/2010/04/27/world/27powerpoint.html?hp (U.S. Army discovers PowerPoint makes you stupid)
- www.slideshare.net (the Facebook of slideshows)

Blog - Collaboration space for UCSF Presenters

- blogs.library.ucsf.edu/betterpresenter/

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To contact us, fill out our contact form www.library.ucsf.edu/services/cit/contact, or email us directly at CITsupport@ucsf.edu. You can also call 415-476-9426.



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