PowerPoint Presentation Advice (Abridged)
Mike Splane –© 2006

Structuring Your Talk:
Preparing a talk always takes far longer than you anticipate. Start early!
• Write a clear statement of the problem and its importance.
• Research.
• Tell a story in a logical sequence.
• Stick to the key concepts.
• Organize from the most to the least important.
• Keep your sentences short, about 10-20 words each is ideal.

Preparing Your Slides:
Presentation Design
• Keep text or data brief.
• Use 5 to 7 slides (for this assignment).
• Number your slides and give them a title.
• Proof read everything, including visuals and numbers.

Visual elements
• A font size of 28 to 34. The title default size is 44.
• Use clear, simple visuals.
• 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.
  o Too much text makes the slide unreadable. You may just as well show a blank slide. Stick to a few key words.
  o If your audience is reading the slides they are not paying attention to you. If possible, make your point with graphics instead of text.
  o You can use Word Art, or a clip art image of a sign, to convey text in a more interesting way.
Hints for Efficient Practice:

Timing - Practicing Your Presentation,

- Talk through your presentation to see how much time you use for each slide.
- Set the automatic slide transition to the amount of time you want to spend discussing each slide.

Delivering Your Talk:

Pre-Talk Preparation

- Plan to get there a few minutes 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.
- Distribute handouts at the beginning of your talk.

Opening:

- Briefly state the problem or topic you will be discussing.
- Briefly summarize your main theme for an idea or solution.

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.
- Face the audience.
- Avoid looking at your notes. 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.
- You can jump directly to a slide by typing its number or by right-clicking during the presentation and choosing from the slide titles.
- Relax. If you’ve done the research you can easily answer most questions.
- Some questions are 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.”

Demeanor:

- Show some enthusiasm. Nobody wants to listen to a dull presentation.
- Involve your audience. Ask questions, make eye contact, 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:

- Close the sale.
- Concisely summarize your key concepts and the main ideas of your presentation.
- 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?