

**Using PowerPoint Effectively in an Oral Presentation**  
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**WARNINGS!**

1. Use PowerPoint *only* if it will enhance audience attention, understanding, or retention.
2. Be selective about what you put on slides. *Don't put the entire presentation on slides.*
3. Use visual and audio effects *only* if they serve your purpose and *do not call attention to themselves*. Make the technology *serve* the presentation. Don't let it *dominate*.

**BEST PRACTICES**

1. Design slides so they're easy to read and understand.
  - Use fonts, images, and graphics that are large enough.
  - Choose text and background colors for good contrast. Avoid ready-made backgrounds and templates that work against you in any way--distracting, bad color, overused, etc.
  - Eliminate unnecessary text. Use key words and phrases.
  - Be consistent with format, style, fonts, colors, capitalization, punctuation, etc.
  - On graphics, be sure to clearly label columns, rows, axes, units, etc.
  - Include all *relevant* data, but eliminate clutter (what Edward Tufte calls "chartjunk"). Don't just take charts, tables, maps, and graphs wholesale from other sources. Put up only what you need.
2. Cite the source on every slide where borrowed material appears. But don't make the citation so big it dominates the slide, and don't use complete Internet addresses. They clutter up the slide. Identify websites by their basic names (e.g., [www.toyota.com](http://www.toyota.com), [www.hamilton.edu](http://www.hamilton.edu)). If listeners want the exact URL, they can get it from you later.
3. Practice physically "relating to" the PowerPoint slides.
  - Use gesture, pointer, or color to direct audience attention to what you want them to see.
  - Don't turn completely away from your listeners. Keep your body "open" to them.
  - Don't stand in the light from the projector.
4. Integrate PowerPoint with your oral presentation.
  - Show a slide only when it's relevant.
  - Clearly connect what's on the screen with what you're saying. If it doesn't connect, don't use it.
  - Provide context when it will help your audience understand the visual.
  - Point out what the audience should be seeing and explain what it means. You know the stuff; they don't.
  - Recap the essence of complex slides before moving on.
  - Provide oral transitions between slides. Show the logical connections; smooth the flow.
5. Keep private or "backstage" elements out of sight.
  - Don't display your e-mail on the screen while you set up your PowerPoint presentation.
  - Don't run PowerPoint within the browser frame.
  - Use black screen or a blank slide to hide slides you're not ready to show the audience.