Creating Effective PowerPoints

You say, “PowerPoint,”
Students say...

I’ve got your back.

PowerPoints are not known to be interesting and tend to make students cringe at the mere mention of the word.

When creating your PowerPoint always remember it is simply your supporting evidence. You are the main attraction, it is just there to help you out.
Top 6 PowerPoint Traps you may fall into as an instructor

#1 - Paragraphs of Text
- You aren’t doing anyone any favors by writing exactly what you plan on saying while displaying the slide.
- First, everyone will be reading the slide instead of listening to you.
- Second, if you do it so students have a copy of the lecture then you are robbing them of an extremely effective study tool – writing notes.
- If you write the notes for them, they aren’t required to process the information and put it into their own words.

Know the lecture and learn to present from your bullet points.
If you insist upon providing the student with your pre-written information, use the notes area of PowerPoint and then create handouts that include those notes. (Office button > Print > Print What > Notes Page)

Otherwise, I strongly suggest making the students take their own notes. You can encourage this by creating handouts that provide them with a note-taking area. (Office button > Print > Print What > Handouts > Number of slides per page > 3)

Too much information (Too many bullets) – Even if you do present your information truly in bullets (instead of paragraphs) it is still possible to give too much information. If you list all the points at once the students will read through the list while not listening to you and then wait for you to catch up. Plus, often the main point of the information is lost in with the rest of the bullets.

#2 – Too Much Information

- Like paragraphs of text
- Too much information
- Multiple bullet points
- All at once
- Audience will read ahead
- Left waiting for you to catch up
- Main point is lost.
Keep the main point clear. Do something to make it stand out from the rest. Make it a different color, bold, or put it on a slide by itself.

It’s best to keep the number of points per slide to a minimum to help focus the information. This is a delicate balancing act. You want to keep the number of ideas per slide low but you also don’t want to end up with 100 slides per presentation.

If you have to have several points on one slide, be sure to find a way to make the main point stand out and present all the points individually using animation and I don’t mean the kind with the little cartoon characters. (Animations tab > Animate > By 1st Level Paragraph)
I'm trying to be exciting
But really I'm just giving everyone a headache

Distracting styles – You never want the color, font, or effects to become the focus of your presentation and override the information you are trying to communicate. Bright colors are great for grabbing attention in little doses but should never be used continuously through a presentation.

Neutral or muted colors
Use neutral or muted colors to keep the attention focused on the information. And when at all possible, use dark text on a light background.

Sans serif fonts
Use sans serif fonts because they are easier to read. They are the ones without the little extra marks on the ends of the letters. Some sans serif fonts are Arial, Helvetica, or Calibri.
Effects only for Title

Using PowerPoint Effectively

#4 – Animations and Transitions

• Very distracting

• Generally should be avoided

Animations and Transitions – Much like colors, animations are great for calling attention in special circumstances but should not be used repetitively or they will lose their effectiveness. Often animations and transitions are simply distracting and generally should be avoided.

#5 – Unrelated and Bad Graphics

Grapes -> Raisins

• Grow grapes

• Harvest grapes

• Dry grapes

Unrelated Imagery – Adding pictures simply to add pictures is not an effective way to bring interest to information.

Only use effects for the title of the presentation and then only if it is still easy to read.
Grapes -> Raisins

- Grow grapes
- Harvest grapes
- Dry grapes

Avoid clip art

Images should fit the subject matter at hand.

And generally, clip art should be avoided.

Photographs or high-quality images should be used to bring a cleaner look to the presentation.

www.sxc.hu
www.photoxpress.com
www.flickr.com/creativecommons/by-2.0
No Interaction – Nothing stifles learning more than having to sit still and quiet through a 60 minute lecture.

Integrate activities into your presentation that allow the students to discuss or debate topics. Get them thinking, not just watching. When you want them to interact, make the presentation go black. Having a slide showing actually hinders learner involvement in activities. (Press B for black screen and W for white screen)