

**Center for Instructional
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Using PowerPoint

PowerPoint can be a powerful way to guide students through a presentation, add visual emphasis, and make use of multimedia to show examples or illustrate a point. Students report that PowerPoint can be helpful, depending on how it is used, but in some ways it can also distract them from what the instructor is saying or overwhelm them with a high-speed flow of information that leaves little time to think, reflect on their questions, or learn. This *Bulletin* identifies considerations for making the best use of PowerPoint as a tool to support learning in your class.

MAXIMIZING VISUAL IMPACT

- Use 24-32 point font. Titles should be an even bigger font.
- Too much information on a slide can be distracting. Use slides to provide structure, emphasis, and supporting visual material.
- Graphics, animation, and images can help enliven, clarify, or highlight material. Use these elements to give emphasis or direct attention to particular parts of the slide. However, using them as frills will distract more than it will help.
- Check slides for readability in your classroom. Slide colors may look different on your computer than they do when projected. High contrast color combinations (white/black, gold/blue, etc.) are most readable.

ORGANIZING SLIDES

- Students learn new information more easily when they see how it is organized. Therefore, it can help to have:
 - One slide with a lecture overview
 - Introductory slides for each key chunk of the lecture
 - Concluding slides that present summaries, remaining questions, or next topics to be addressed
- Use slides to pose problems or raise questions for class discussion that will let you to informally assess student learning or lead into the next section of the lecture.

Difficult to Process

Too much information squeezed onto the slide will overwhelm students and they will pay closer attention to reading than to listening. It is a challenge to read a complex slide, think about how it relates to other course material, take notes, and listen to the presenter all at the same time.

Easier to Process

- Arrange content in meaningful chunks
- Prune all extra words
- Use space and graphics deliberately to signal organization and emphasis

Information for People who Teach
at the University of Washington

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PRESENTING WITH POWERPOINT

- Think of slides as a supplement to help students listen and take notes, not as a replacement for the lecture. Use the lecture to elaborate on slides or add further examples.
- Avoid relying on slides as a replacement for your own lecture notes. Use a separate set of notes to remind you of points to elaborate and relevant examples to cite.
- Students often appreciate being able to print out slides before class. If you can make them accessible, students can use the printed slides as a guide for note-taking.
- Focus students' attention by using slides to present images or attention-grabbing quotes that can help frame your questions or lead into the topics for the day.
- Comment on each slide that students are given, or return to slides later if time runs out. Students are not likely to learn as much by simply reading the slide on their own.
- Give students sufficient opportunity to consider each slide. They are seeing and hearing your lecture for the first time, and will need time to integrate concepts, follow an argument, or think through steps of a problem.
- Ask questions that check students' understanding or prompt students' further thinking. Allow enough time for students to formulate and ask their own questions.
- To incorporate student participation and interaction (for example, while working out problems or eliciting comments during a discussion), be ready to record student input on the board or the overhead projector.

HOW CAN CIDR HELP?

At CIDR, we can consult with you plan your class presentations and assess their effectiveness. Call or e-mail to arrange an appointment with a CIDR consultant.



Center for Instructional Development and Research

CIDR promotes excellence in teaching and learning at the University of Washington through its work with individual faculty and TAs, departments, campus-wide initiatives, and University leaders. CIDR staff are available year-round to collaborate on the design, implementation, and assessment of ways to advance teaching and learning for all students in the diverse UW community. Consultations are confidential and offered at no charge to UW faculty, TAs, and departments.

If you have questions about teaching and learning, or you would like to find out more about working with CIDR, you can call us at 543-6588, send a message to cidr@u.washington.edu, or visit our web site:

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