

Teaching with Powerpoint: Dos and Don'ts

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Preparing for Class

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DON'T:

- Wait until the first day of class to check out your classroom
- Put off requesting a room change until the last minute (unless you want to end up in Fisheries)

DO:

- Check out the equipment available in your classroom ahead of time via the Classroom Support Services website (<http://www.css.washington.edu/buildings/>) and in person
- Request necessary room changes early
- If you're using podium computers or DVD/VHS players, pick up a podium key from CSS

Preparing for Class

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DON'T:

- Assume that your Powerpoint slides will look beautiful on an unfamiliar computer
- Panic if you experience equipment problems

DO:

- Make a .pdf backup of your slides
- Page through your slides quickly before class to check for formatting errors (also remember to test audio)
- Bring paper notes (at least an outline) in case of equipment failure
- Call Classroom Support Services when necessary:
206-543-9900

Sharing Slides

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DON'T:

- Be afraid to ask previous professors/TAs for their slides
- Wait until you're on the spot to decide whether you'll be making slides available to your students

DO:

- Pick and choose content from previous instructors' slides that you find to be useful
- Decide before class starts whether you want to post slides on the course website

Slide Formatting

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DON'T:

- Use light colored, small, or otherwise difficult to read fonts
- Use patterned templates or templates with large graphics that take up most of the slide
- Use painfully slow slide transitions

DO:

- Use fairly consistent formatting throughout your slide deck
- Leave some space around the text of your slides on all edges
- Test your classroom projector to see if colors are showing up lighter or darker than they do on your home computer
- Discover the magic that is Powerpoint's format painter

Slide Formatting

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DON'T:

- Squeeze too much text into one slide
- Present all text in full paragraphs
- Try to get through 100 slides in an hour

DO:

- Break up your text with bullet points
- Pay attention to whether your students are still writing before moving on
- Practice to learn how many slides you can get through in your class time
- Remember to factor in time for questions

Powerpoint Pros

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- Can help keep you on topic and moving at a steady pace
- Usually easier to read than overheads
- Relatively simple to insert things like links, audio files
- Easier to project figures than recreate them on the chalkboard
- Can paste in slides from previous lectures to transition between topics or review concepts
- Easy to reuse in future teaching and share with colleagues

Powerpoint Cons

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- Formatting may not be consistent between different versions of Powerpoint (remember .pdf backups)
- Obsessing over formatting may add up to more hours of class preparation than you anticipated
- If your slides are posted online, some students may be less likely to attend class (alternatives: don't post slides online or only provide students with outline slides)
- More formal than some other modes of instruction
- Nonstop slides can be boring – interspersing lecturing from slides with class activities and discussion can counteract this

Comments?

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