POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS: PRO TIPS

Design and Prepare an Effective PowerPoint Presentation

Microsoft PowerPoint is a well-known tool for putting together presentations. Whether you're speaking at a conference, hosting a webinar, or training poll workers in your election office, PowerPoint can be a great platform for your presentation.

But while PowerPoint is easy to use, that doesn't mean it's easy to use effectively. We've all probably witnessed presentations using PowerPoint that failed to capture or maintain our interest. This collection of tips is intended to help you get the most out of PowerPoint so that you can create compelling, effective presentations.

Note: PowerPoint has been around for over twenty years and in numerous editions. This tutorial is based on the 2010 version, and if you're using a different edition, you may need to adapt these directions. Also, the screen images are taken from a PC; images may look different on a Mac device.

TIPS FOR DESIGNING SLIDES

PowerPoint slides are basic in their default form -- a plain white background with some text boxes that you can type into. But you can add customization in order to give your slides a memorable and consistent look.

Backgrounds

It's easy to add a background to your slides, whether it's a solid color, a pattern, a texture, or a picture. Right click over the slide and select "Format Background." All of the basic background options are in the Fill menu.

- Color: Select "Solid fill" or "Gradient fill" and choose the color and settings that you like. If your office has a signature brand color, you can use it by selecting More colors and inputting the Red, Green, and Blue color codes that compose your signature color.
- Picture or texture: Select "Picture or Texture fill" and then "Insert from … File" and choose the picture file that you want to use. When using picture files, it's a good idea to add transparency so that any content you put on the slides doesn't blend into the background. Adjust the transparency bar at the bottom until you get the appearance you want. For texture, select a texture from the dropdown of available choices. Like with a picture, you will probably want to add transparency.
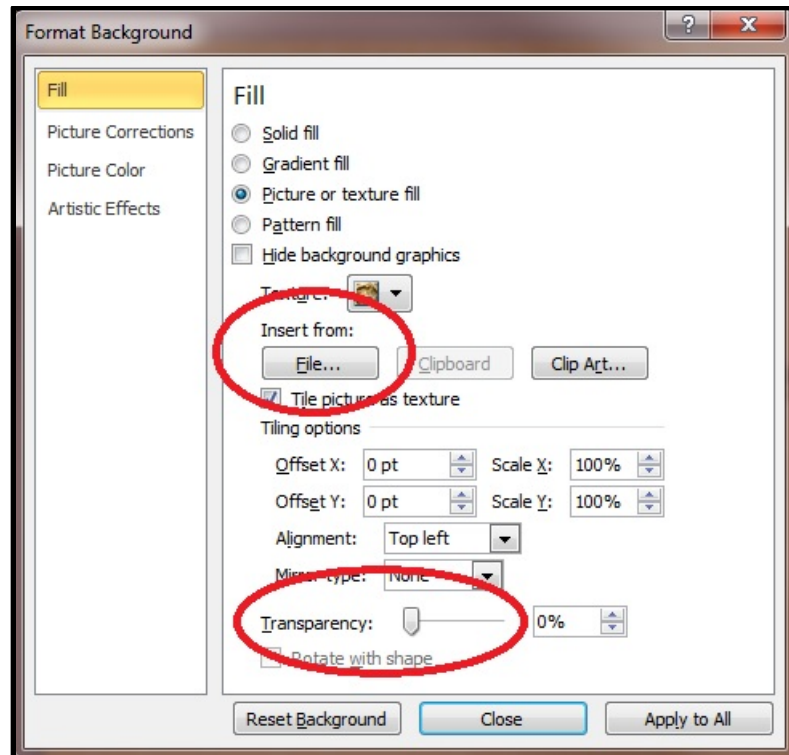
- <u>Pattern</u>: Select "Pattern fill" and then choose your pattern and define foreground and background colors.

Whichever background you select, you can choose to either use the background just for that one slide (Click the Close button) or for all of the slides (click the "Apply to All" button).

Fonts

There are many options for adding fonts to your presentation. Whichever font you choose, it's important to be consistent. To establish a consistent font, you can either:

- <u>Use built-in theme fonts</u>: In the Design menu, go to the dropdown Fonts menu and choose a theme font that you like. The fonts will automatically be applied to new fonts when you create them.
- <u>Define a new theme font</u>: In the same Design ---> Fonts menu, scroll down to "Create New Theme Fonts" and choose fonts for an original theme.
- <u>Choose fonts you like and duplicate</u>: Select fonts you like in one slide, and then, when creating a new slide, right click and select "Duplicate slide."
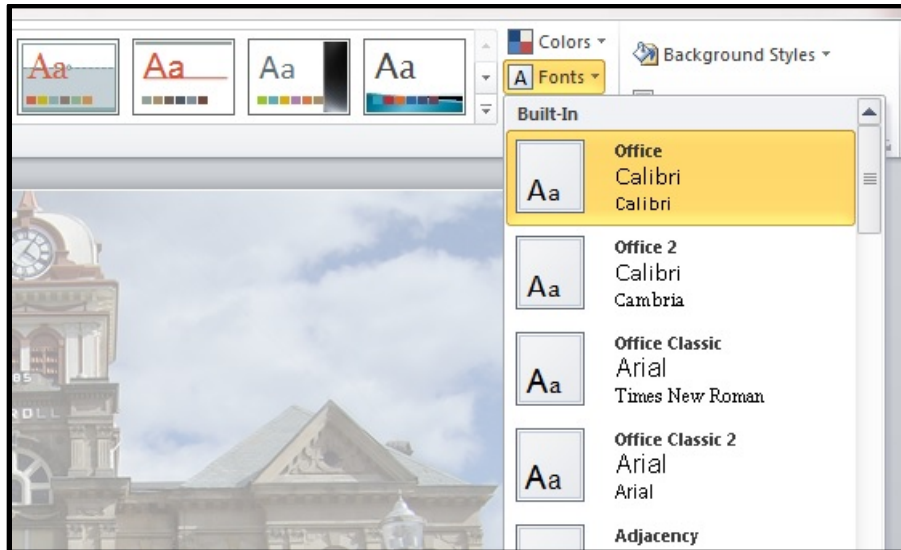
When it comes to selecting fonts, make sure they're basic and easy-to-read. See the suggestions about fonts in the list of tips below.

Media

You can easily add media enhancements to your presentation. If used carefully, video and audio content can illustrate ideas for audience members while giving you, the presenter, a moment to pause and catch your breath.

If you're using PowerPoint for pollworker training, for instance, you may choose to add a video demonstrating how to set up voting equipment.

- Insert video: Within the Insert menu, go to Media and click on the Video drop-down menu. You can choose to insert a video from a file stored on your computer, or you can embed a video from a website (YouTube).
- Insert audio: In the same Insert ----- > Media menu, you can select the Audio dropdown and choose an audio file on your computer or record a new audio clip.
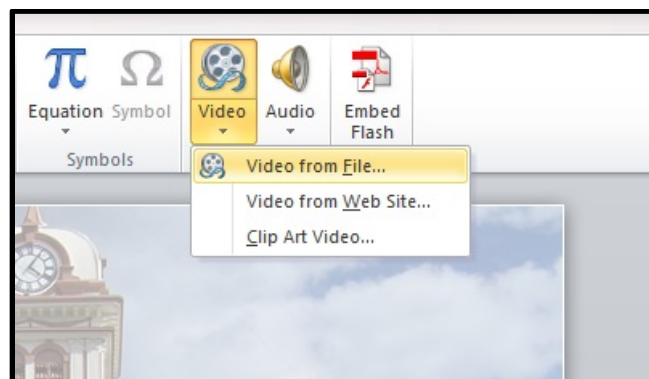

As with all PowerPoint add-ons, make sure that audio and video files enhance the points you want to make instead of distracting from them. Also keep in mind the lengths of media clips; shorter is usually better.

TIPS FOR PRESENTING SLIDES

Planning your slides

- When creating your slides, consider crafting a **narrative** -- a story with a beginning, middle, end -- background, conflict, and resolution
- Consider making your first slide an **agenda or outline**. Preview the main topics and objectives of the presentation before you dive into them.
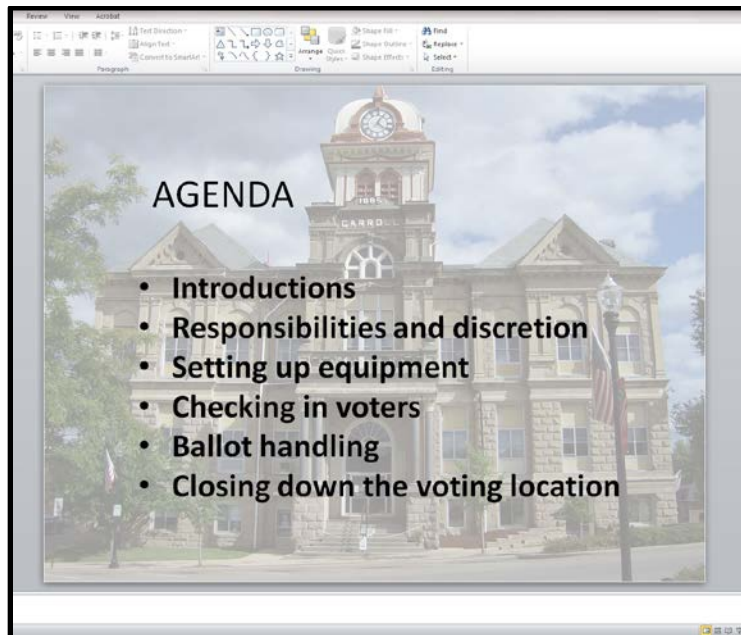

- When putting **text** on your slides, plan to use the slides as verbal cues -- not a script. The slides should not make you, the speaker, redundant or unnecessary. Consider using the "6x6 rule": no more than 6 lines of text and no more than 6 words per line on each slide.
- Don't use **too many** slides or plan to advance them too rapidly. You'll overwhelm your audience, and when you're speaking, you may end up being preoccupied by advancing your slides and lose focus on your ideas. A good guideline is to try to keep each slide up for at least a minute.

Selecting Visuals

- Establish a **consistent theme/image/brand** for the slides using backgrounds, signature text, logos, etc.
- Include **photos** that are high quality (and don't seem "stretched") and that emphasize your message. Avoid cheap-looking pictures and clip art.
- Make sure visuals are **not distracting**, not too busy. Try to choose background and text colors that contrast with each other, and keep some white space. Avoid special effects, animations, sounds, and other distracting elements.
- Make your **font size** large and thus visible. Small fonts can seem fine when you're looking at the presentation on your computer, but they're hard to read for somebody in the back of a room when you're presenting. This is true of webinar and conferencing platforms, too, which shrink your Powerpoint display. In a Word document, you're

probably used to 12-point font, but for a Powerpoint, 30 or 40 is a good idea. Don't be scared of large fonts.
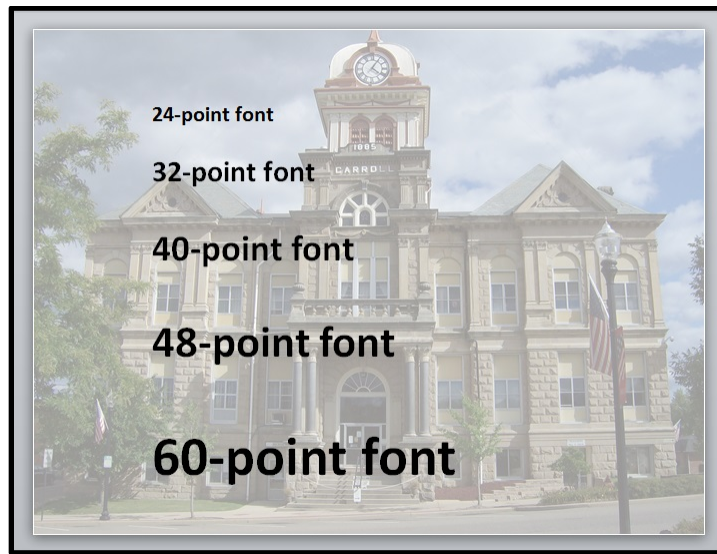
- Choose a **sans serif font** for easy readability (e.g., Arial, Helvetica, etc.)


(Wikipedia: "Serif")

- When **selecting a font**, choose a common one so that it will show up correctly regardless of the computer and edition of PowerPoint you're using (e.g., Arial, Times New Roman, Courier New, etc.).

Speaking Effectively

- **Coordinate** your slides with your points so that they complement each other instead of drawing attention away from each other. For instance, don't advance to a slide with an unusual visual or a funny joke at the same moment that you're trying to make an important point. Your audience will be distracted. Your most important points should be coordinated with your simplest slides.
- To keep track of your timing, use Powerpoint's **Rehearse Timings** feature (in Slide Show menu) so you can see how much time you're spending on each slide and in total
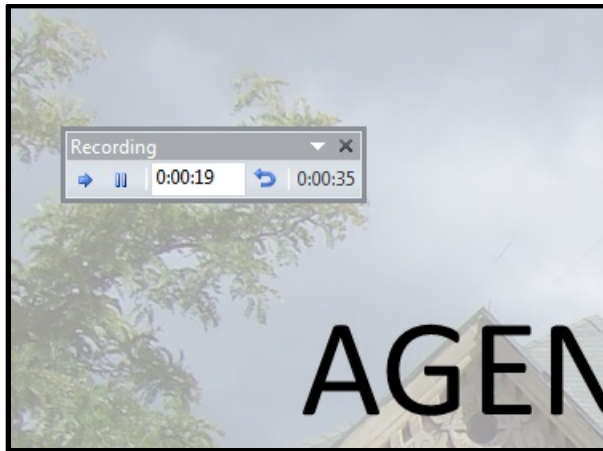
- Don't **announce** during the presentation that you will be making the slides available afterward. This gives your audience good reason to stop paying attention. Wait until you're done to explain that audience members can access the presentation later.
- Make a **backup plan** just in case some technical aspect of the presentation doesn't work. Having a printed copy of your slides is a good example.