

The Little Presentation Skills Booklet



It's "Cool" to be an Instructor

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NOTES

PowerPoint® – Boom or bust?

Has technology overtaken USPS instructors? Various National committees have developed some of the most sophisticated visual aids that can be used by instructors to enhance their presentations. Microsoft PowerPoint is the most widely used program on the market today for developing electronic aids, therefore USPS has adopted it for all course material. You can no longer be content with your black and white overhead transparencies. Technology and competition demand that you expand your presentation skills and utilize electronic aids. Add to this the fact that USPS audiences are becoming more sophisticated, it is clear that the use of electronic aids to enhance your presentations is the way to go.

Just another Teaching Aid

For example, you are going to teach RADAR in the classroom. You likely can't have a working RADAR in the classroom, and simulators are expensive. But you can have PowerPoint slides to act as a simulator: a very effective teaching aid.

In the real world -- you are on your boat with a friend who wants to learn how to use the RADAR. How would you teach that? You would turn the unit on and demonstrate how the various functions work. You would explain the images appearing on the screen. You would answer the questions asked. You probably wouldn't have charts of text for your friend to read, nor would you be likely to read sections of the instruction manual. Basically you would just demonstrate each operation and function as you cycle through them and explain the displays.

So, why should you have screen after screen of text in a PowerPoint presentation in the classroom? Why read material to the class at all? Why not teach the subject the same way you would do it in the real world – going through various graphics and talking about the functions and displays as they appear. The same way you would do it on your boat.

People attend a class or presentation to see YOU present the material, not to read PowerPoint slides. If you let PowerPoint take over the class then you have been overtaken by technology. Your presentation is a bust! If all you are going to do is to present slides of text and read them, do everyone a favor and just mail them the material. PowerPoint is just another teaching aid.

NOTE: Grabbing the supplied CD, dropping it into your laptop and projecting slide after slide, reading the text and clicking on to the next is not the way to give an effective presentation. No matter how captivating or critical the material, this is a surefire recipe for a sleepy audience – not learning what you want them to learn. Most courses provide extra slides to allow the instructor to use those that best fit a particular need or style.

APPENDIX

Learning Theory

The audience is there to learn and get information. There is a basic process of information flow from the presenter to the student

1. The instructor takes a thought or idea existing in his or her brain and converts it to a verbal or visual image, then presents it to the student.
2. The student receives these images and converts them into images in their brain, always connecting them to other images they already have stored.
3. The instructor needs to continually judge the reaction of the student to the new information and adjust or correct with additional information.

Roadblocks to success:

- The instructor knows more than the students and has more experience making it is easy to assume the student knows more than they do or are catching-on faster than they are.
- Also, no two individuals share the same experiences or education, thus they interpret the information differently.
- No two individuals share the same definitions of even basic words.
- Additionally, everything you learn has to be connected to something you already know. If the material is totally “new,” the student will often be unable to learn since the brain won’t know what to do with the information.

Mind Your “Ps”

When it comes to creating a winning presentation, there are three “Ps” to keep in mind:

- 1. Planning**
- 2. Preparing**
- 3. Presenting**

Each part is equally important to success. But all too often some of the steps aren't given enough attention. It is all too easy, and exciting, to spend your time on step two, Preparing, and neglect steps one and three.

Planning

The first step is planning. Too often you start right in creating your show, caught-up in the excitement of making Power Point slides or coming up with examples and stories. Planning is key to a good presentation as it allows a better understanding of the many elements that must come to gather:

- Planning give you a better understanding of the audience.
- Planning gives you control over the material.
- Planning gives control over how you present yourself.

Steps to Planning

1. **Analyze** your audience. What is their education, and experience? Why they are attending in the first place? Write up a brief audience analysis for future reference.
 2. **Analyze** and organize your material. What do I want to present to this audience and how? How much material do I present and to what depth do I want this class to go. What do they need to know when they leave the room? If you are using a USPS produced course, the student and instructor materials provided answer many of these questions. But there may be local issues and knowledge you want to include in your presentation.
 3. **Outline** your presentation. Based on your analysis of your audience and material. This should be as comprehensive as you can make it. This is what you will create your presentation from in the next steps.
 4. **Spend** as much time as you can with your planning. The next step, Preparing, is the fun part and because of this it is often where you start. However, if you do your planning first, not only will the entire development of the presentation go faster, it will be better organized and easier to present.
- **Setup** your own projector and screen in advance of your presentation. Don't rely on someone else to do it for you. Test your equipment before the audience arrives. If your presentation isn't booted, toggle the computer from projection mode to screen mode as you go through the start-up slides.
 - **Adjust** your lighting. Check that curtains can be drawn if necessary and dim some of the overhead lights if possible.
 - **Advance** the slides using a wireless mouse or presenter. Be careful when using a laser pointer, particularly at a distance from the screen, "laser shake" is most distracting.
 - **Don't ask** the audience if they can see. You should already know this. Be sure your screen is large enough to be seen from the back of the room. The room size and shape will dictate your screen size. Know the room configuration. A wide room, or a long narrow room can create difficulties for the class to see and hear. Finally, correct any keystone distractions.
 - **Don't apologize** or get flustered if something doesn't work -- just have a good backup plan. A good plan can be as simple as writing on a white board or flip chart, or passing out critical slides. If the problem occurs near the end of the presentation, gracefully end early.

"Good trainers have one or two activities they use in training; great trainers use a variety of activities to keep participants engaged"

"Good trainers are clear and articulate; great trainers ask questions"

That Winning Look

- **Annoying** mannerisms are very distracting. Try to catch these when verbally reviewing your presentation. Also ask your practice audiences to watch for such things as you practice. These can be either physical (such as waving your arms) or verbal (“uhhhh” before every sentence, “you know”).
- **Smile.** Teaching is fun; show you are having a good time. If you think back to your school days, the teachers you remember the fondest are those who enjoyed what they were doing. Add humor to your presentation: tell a short joke if appropriate, pertinent, and in good taste.
- **Look** at every person in the audience, don't focus on just one person or stare off into space.
- **Body Language** is important. Don't pace – no dancing feet. Moving is fine, just don't wander aimlessly. Don't flail your arms. Keep your hands close to your upper-body and face – keep the focus on you.

The Presentation Lives Here – Physical Environment

While understanding the student is the most important, understanding the physical environment and equipment also needs to be addressed. Nothing is more bothersome to the audience than the unprepared presenter.

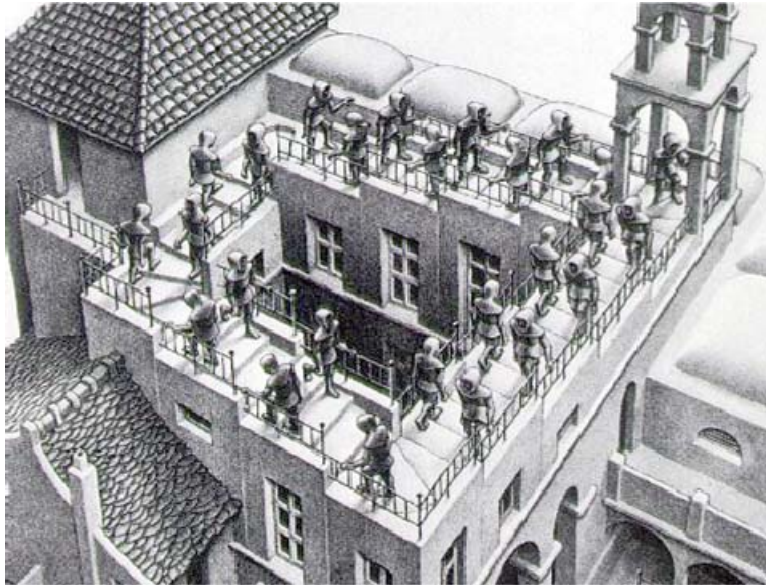
Preparing

After you develop your plan and outline your presentation, it is now time to get into PowerPoint and start creating or customizing your slides. As you prepare your show, become your audience, listen to yourself, even read the material aloud. If it doesn't sound right or doesn't seem to fit, throw it out and replace it. Most professional writers rewrite material many times and throw away more than they actually publish.

Prepare your “show”

1. **Create** your main topic headings for each slide from your outline.
2. **Add** the graphics, they are the most important part of a PowerPoint presentation, so they should be added next. You can either create your own artwork or find some you can use. Remember, local content and photographs really add to any presentation. Also, consider using callouts to elements on each graphic.
3. **Write** the necessary text. Keep the text on each slide to a minimum. Where appropriate use bulleted lists, but don't over use them. Remember PowerPoint isn't a word processor.
4. **Finalize** your slides. Add animations, but don't animate for just because they are available – each one should have a purpose and not be over used. Where appropriate reveal your text item by item, but don't overdo this either.

5. **Create** your lesson plan. Later on, as you practice your presentation you might make changes, this is OK, even to be expected. But not starting with a solid plan makes the task much harder.
6. **Practice** your presentation over and over. As you do this, time your presentation. If it is too long cut something out if possible. If not, maybe you need to create a second part to the presentation.



Practice, Practice, Practice ...

Presenting

It's all about you.

Finally, it is time to give the presentation. But, the slides aren't the presentation -- the audience came to see you teach the class. Don't read the slides (if that is all that is needed, just give the people the slides or printed copies, they can read it by themselves -- they will thank you for it). Talk to the audience just as you would if teaching a friend on your boat. Remember, you are the reason they came in the first place. So face them and talk to them -- don't talk to the screen.

1. **Rehearse, Rehearse, Rehearse.** This can't be emphasized enough. Enlist your family or friends to be your audience and ask for feedback.
2. **Involve** your audience. Develop class exercises. If there is homework, go around the room and discuss answers (if you don't, often the homework won't be done). Ask overhead questions as you go along to see if the class is with you.
3. **Acknowledge** questions -- "that's a good question." If the room is large repeat the question before giving your answer. If you can't answer a question, say so -- answer it next week. Keep questions focused on the material. Ask for examples.
4. **Practice, Practice, Practice.** This can't be emphasized enough. Good actors and good comedians spend hours working on their material; as a presenter you should do no different.