

Tips for Your Year-End Presentations

There's something about December that brings out the worst PowerPoint presentations in all of us. From a harmless couple of bullet points thrown together for the company holiday lunch, to impromptu carol sings, with all four verses of every Christmas song ever written—this is the time of year to break out the projector for people who don't often make slide presentations. So, as you're preparing for your year-end board meetings, tipsy New Year's toasts, or candle-lit religious services, avoid these three common mistakes, and keep these tips handy for professional looking visual aids.

Mistake #1: Unreadable Text



Bad fonts and awkward color choices are the easiest places to go wrong. If no one can read the text, it's worse than not having the text at all. Keep your audience in mind. Older adults or young children need bigger fonts. Men have a harder time seeing subtle color differences than women. How big is the room? Can the people in the back see as well as the people in the front? Whenever possible, ask a friend or coworker who fits the average audience member to check for readability.

Discover Your Minimum Font Size



Every projector and screen combination has a minimum size where the text will cease to be legible. Commit this number to memory and don't ever go below it, no matter what.

Go to the venue ahead of time and check your slides to make sure they are readable. If you're unsure, keep the font size above 28 pts.

Use Contrasting Colors

USE BLACK ON
WHITE
YELLOW
BEIGE

USE WHITE ON
BLACK
BLUE
GREEN

RED is the hardest color to read on a screen.
Use sparingly.

And, tempting though it may be at this time of year,
NEVER DO THIS.

Choose SanSerif Fonts

Fonts like **Impact**, **Lato**, and **Arial**

are easier to read from a distance and look better on a big screen. If you really want to use them, save the

fancy fonts

for title slides.

Black or Bold is better than **Light** or **Hairline**.

Mistake #2: Overactive Backgrounds

Supporting graphics are vital to keeping your presentation interesting and lively, but keep them in a supporting role. Don't let your backgrounds overpower your text. Simplify. Simplify. Simplify.

Find supporting images with transparent backgrounds. These can often be used on any color, and text can be adjusted to fit around them.



Use vector icons instead of stock photos to better match colors and fill empty spaces.



Don't be afraid to use a fill color or screen behind text to cover a busy background.

Get creative with cropping and borders. Rounded edges or clipped corners can give your presentation a more elegant or vibrant feel.

Mistake #3: Bad Transitions or Poor Timing

Animations between slides can add energy to a presentation, but they can also be a terrible distraction. Jarring transitions, matched with a poor sense of timing can take a presentation from simply unattractive to unbearable.



An **elegant fade from one slide to the next** is almost always best, but if you want to change it up, **use more noticeable transitions between sections** in a presentation but not between every slide.

Be consistent. Especially when presenting in a dark room, **transitions from black backgrounds to white backgrounds can be very difficult on the eyes.** Try to keep a consistent amount of light and glare to reduce the squint factor.



Don't rush your viewers. Good presenters don't usually read word for word from their slides, but that means that you need to **leave your audience time to read the words that you're not saying.** Pauses in a presentation are always more uncomfortable for the speaker than for the listeners. **Don't be afraid to have a little silence.**



The one important exception to this idea of allowing extra time comes when you're controlling slides that are being read aloud as a group. For example, if you're projecting the **words to a song**, or if you have a group of people reading an oath that is printed on the screen together, **these slides need to be advanced three or four words before the end of the slide.** If you wait until everyone has said the last word, there will be an awkward pause while the slide changes. **Stay one step ahead of your readers.**

Happy Presenting and Happy Holidays