VT VIRGINIA TECH™

Building Construction

Change the World, Build Your Future

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

> *To maximize your effectiveness, consider the following suggestions when designing your slides.*

Suggestion 1: Keep it Simple

A popular rule of thumb is no more than 5 (+ /- 2) points on a slide. A more useful rule of thumb may be no more than 1 idea per slide. A good slide guides the viewer towards the essence of an idea, rather than listing of the idea's attributes.

Suggestion 2: Less is More (More or less)

Try not to clutter a slide with too much text, graphics, or color. Research from Wharton School of Business suggests no more than 4 colors per slide and a minimum spacing of 1/2 inch between items. Rules like this (of course) are made to be broken, but it is a good general principle. Don't put anything you are going to say on a slide - the audience is likely to be bored. Be extremely cautious about incorporating animations or sound effects. Virginia Tech provides standard professionally designed slide templates that can help your slides be more engaging but not overwhelming. See www.unirel.vt.edu to download standard slide templates - your PID and password will be required to download.

Suggestion 3: Make it BIG

Use a minimum 18 point font size. This allows people to see from the back of the room and limits you to approximately 7 line of text (which helps you to meet the guideline in suggestion 1).

Suggestion 4: Pictures can be worth a thousand words

It is a good idea to sometimes emphasize your points with the use of a graphic object. Pictures can provide the appropriate context for an idea. They are more visually stimulating and more easily remembered. Don't use art for its own sake - try to tie the picture into the idea you are presenting. Pictures should add to the idea being presented rather than distracting. If you use pictures developed by someone other than yourself, be sure to cite the source for the picture somewhere in the slide and provide full source information in the notes section of your slide.

Suggestion 5: Watch your Color Combinations

Some background and foreground color combinations are difficult to read. For example, green writing on a yellow background or blue writing on a red background are difficult to make out. Stick to the standard combinations: black on white background, white on a blue background, yellow on black background. Be VERY careful about using Hokie colors as background or text for your slides.

Suggestion 6: Test your Slides

Run through the whole slide show to check for consistency of formats/colors/effects. Also, try your presentation out on the equipment you will be using for your presentation, in the room where you will present. You will get a better idea how things will look and can make appropriate changes. Try to test at the same time of day to be sure room lighting doesn't wash out your slides.

Suggestion 7: Pace your Delivery

A good rule of thumb for total number of slides is to have no more than one slide per minute of presentation time. Thus, for your pre-defense, you should try to limit your total number of slides to no more than fifteen. If your findings are more extensive than this, don't try to present all of them. Instead, focus on typical findings, or highlight unusual or unexpected results.

Suggestion 8: Don't Limit Yourself to Slides

Look for opportunities to introduce props, demonstrations, or other materials as part of your presentation while staying within your time limit. Remember that using multiple modes to deliver your information can engage your audience and further emphasize your points, but be careful not to distract attention away from your message.

Suggestion 9: Practice!

Take the time to go over your slides with a third party (preferably your advisor) before you submit them. This can help catch typos, identify extraneous content and potential pitfalls, and fill any gaps in your train of logic. You may also want to practice delivering your slides to a group of friends or peers who are also presenting. This will help you become more comfortable with your material and identify potential "hiccup" points in your delivery that you need to address.