Tips for Making your Classroom PowerPoint Presentations Accessible

As educators we are always searching for ways to make our classes more interactive and interesting. PowerPoint is a wonderful tool that, when used correctly, can enrich the education experience for all students. It is important to remember that not all students will experience the presentation in the same manner. Here are some things to consider in developing your PowerPoint presentations.

General Considerations

1. Use the slide layouts in PowerPoint. Using the pre-designed layouts enhances organization and accessibility. Title each slide. Use simple non-cluttered design templates. Avoid busy background with shadows and textures.
2. Use fonts that are easy to read such as Arial or Tahoma. Avoid “shadowing” or word art. Colored fonts should be high in contrast such as black on white, white on black, or dark red or blue. Avoid pastel fonts.
3. Keep the text to a minimum (5 to 7 bullets). If using PowerPoint as a “script,” it is better to prepare a handout rather than fitting too much text on a slide. The minimum size for fonts to be read on a handout is 24 points.
4. Describe pictures that convey important information. Always insert pictures and do not cut and paste. Never layer pictures over text. Instead of layering, use a new slide.
5. It is very difficult to read charts, tables, or graphs from the normal printed slides. Use the “print slide” option for printing charts or graphs. That allows the reader to see what is on the table, chart or graph.

Special Considerations for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

PowerPoint presentation can be an excellent tool for students who are blind and visually impaired if the presentation is developed correctly. In addition to the general considerations listed above, these are some specific points to remember. Please work closely with your teacher of the visually impaired (TVI) in preparing all classroom materials in accessible manners.

1. Incorporate sound cues for slide transitions to alert the students that you have advanced to the next slide. “Click”, “whoosh”, or “chime” are good choices.
2. Verbally describe all graphics including tables, charts, and important pictures.
3. Consult your TVI in preparing the handouts for your students who are blind or visually impaired. Your TVI is familiar with several simple options for preparing PowerPoint hand-outs in large print or braille. The handouts should be specific for the needs of the individual student.
Presentation Considerations

1. Ensure the lighting in the room is conducive to seeing the images on the screen or whiteboard.

2. Use the PowerPoint as an outline and not a script. Do not read the PowerPoint word for word from the screen. Work from your laptop computer or tablet, face your students (audience), and elaborate on the bullet points.

3. If using flash or video, provide captions. Include a summary or key points of the video on another slide or separate handout.

Resources

Accessibility and Usability Guide for Penn State, Accessibility Blog, Penn State Web Standards, 2009, [http://accessibility.psu.edu/microsoftoffice#ppt](http://accessibility.psu.edu/microsoftoffice#ppt)


How to Create an Accessible Slide Show in PowerPoint that is Section 508 Compliant, 2011, Learning Development and Instructional Design, ISDexchange.com; [http://www.cew.wisc.edu/accessibility/tutorials/pptmain.htm](http://www.cew.wisc.edu/accessibility/tutorials/pptmain.htm)


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