

## 10 Tips to Powerful PowerPoint® Presentations

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1. **Organize the presentation using a different tool:** Many people use Microsoft PowerPoint itself to organize their thoughts on their slides, but the software is especially clunky for this purpose. I find that other tools are easier and better. My personal favorite is Inspiration ([www.inspiration.com](http://www.inspiration.com)). This software allows you to work either in outlining mode or mind mapping mode, and it's great for both. Particularly in outlining mode, Inspiration allows you to move thoughts around very easily, switch outlining levels, until you feel that the material flows together smoothly.
2. **Use PowerPoint for what it was intended – as a visual *aid and support* – not to fill the entire talk:** PowerPoint is very effective at displaying visuals. Words filling a page are not a visual. Words filling a page are merely a visual distraction. PowerPoint should be used for visual impact. That includes an emotionally-engaging photograph or a graphic that displays relationships between data in an important, significant way.
3. **Use key words and phrases to reinforce key ideas:** These can serve as a roadmap for the talk, which helps both you and your audience know where you're going. Know your material well enough so that you don't have to depend on the slide show for all the details of your talk. Avoid full sentences on the slide. The ratio of spoken words to words on the slide should be somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,000 to 1. Probably the most deadly use of slides is for the presenter to read the slides word for word. This is the fastest way to lose your audience.
4. **Use the white board instead of slides:** One of the most effective ways to engage your audience is to get them to think along with you. If they can watch a model being built live rather than being given the model already made, they will be much more involved in the material. A pre-fabricated slide show eliminates the possibility for discovery for both you and your audience.
5. **Use a remote control device to control the slide show:** I use the Kensington remote which is much like a TV clicker. The advantage of this device is that you no longer have to be close to the keyboard in order to run the slide show. You can use the remote to move forward and backward and to blank out the screen. It also has a laser pointer that you can use to point to specific areas of the slide.
6. **Use the “B” key liberally:** The B key blanks the screen with a black background. (The “W” key does the same thing but gives a white background and can be a bit jarring.) Use the B key anytime you are not addressing the contents of the slide so that the audience can easily figure out what to pay attention to.
7. **Use stories and metaphor to illustrate your point:** Why do we speak? If communication were simply about transmitting information, then we would hand out a document, let people

read the document, and be available to answer questions. This would be far more efficient, and save boring meeting time. We speak to inform, inspire, motivate, educate, get buy-in. This is far more than the mechanical transfer of information. In effect, we speak to change the mind-set of our audience in some way or another. However, people define their reality based on a model of their existing view of the world. These models are very sticky; they can't be changed easily. Something has to cause your audience to break out of its model in order to be receptive to a new model. Stories, metaphors, and powerful images, much more than bulleted slides, have the power to do so.

8. **Keep the lights in the room on as much as possible:** One problem with PowerPoint is that lighting becomes an issue. If the room has to be dark in order to see the PowerPoint, your audience will lose visual connection with you. This is an issue even if the B key is used liberally. This becomes a significant issue when the slide show is carrying the entire load of the communication process. One solution is to present an occasional slide, turning down the lights for the slide, and then turning them back up when the slide is done.
9. **Create a separate set of handouts that is more verbally complete than the slide show:** Often speakers feel they must include everything on the slide show so that their audience has a complete set of handouts. The mistake is thinking that what is appropriate for the handout is also suitable as a visual display during the presentation. Slides and handouts serve two very different functions meeting very different needs. Consequently, they should be prepared in different formats, either two versions of the slide show – one to display on the screen and one to handout – or create a separate handout as a word processing document.
10. **Work with a public speaking coach to become a more comfortable speaker:** In improving your presentations, the mechanics of PowerPoint are only a small part of the entire picture. The most important thing is to learn how to be relaxed and comfortable, and to create a real connection with your audience. A public speaking coach can help enormously in these areas. Choose a public speaking coach who:
  - Is an expert in the effective use of PowerPoint.
  - Is skilled at the use of story and metaphors.
  - Can show you how to relax and enjoy yourself during the presentation.
  - Will help you connect deeply with your audience.

Rather than using dense, wordy slides as a crutch for your speaking anxiety, find a good public speaking coach who can help you learn to relax and enjoy speaking.

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Carla Kimball, M.A., M.B.A., can help you deliver your presentations with confidence, presence and impact. She is president of RiverWays Enterprises, a public-speaking training firm based in Cambridge, MA. With a background as a web designer and her extensive experience as a public speaking coach, Carla Kimball is uniquely qualified to be able to assess the visual impact of a slide show. She can also help you stay connected with your audience while presenting with PowerPoint. To learn more about her work, visit her website at [www.riverways.com](http://www.riverways.com).

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