

MICROSOFT OFFICE 2007**HINTS AND TIPS: HOW TO LOSE AN AUDIENCE IN 10 EASY WAYS**

Welcome to Bad Presentation Techniques 101. We have all sat through one – a bad presentation. Are there really any bad presentation techniques or just bad presenters, such as...?

- * The reader
- * The unprepared
- * The mumbler
- * And the ever popular animation wizard

Have you ever experienced any of these scenarios while sitting through a presentation?

I Thought You Were Bringing the Extra Light bulb

The audience is settled. You are all set to start your presentation and guess what? The projector doesn't work. You didn't bother to check it out earlier. *Corrected Presentation Technique:* Check all the equipment and rehearse your presentation, using this projector long before your time to present. Carry an extra projector bulb. If possible, check the lighting in the room you will be presenting in, prior to your time in the limelight. Make sure you know how to dim the lights if the room is too bright.

Information Underload

You memorised the content (and it shows, by the way). Someone has a question. Panic sets in. You never prepared for questions and all you know about this topic is what is written on the slides. *Corrected Presentation Technique:* Know your material so well, that you could easily do the presentation without an electronic enhancement such as PowerPoint. Use key words and phrases and include only essential information to keep the audience focused and interested. Be prepared for questions and know the answers.

What's It All About, Alfie?

This is the opposite of Information Underload. You know so much about the topic that you jump from here to there and back again talking about everything there is to know about your brand new widget, and no one can follow the thread of the presentation. *Corrected Presentation Technique:* Use the K.I.S.S. principle (Keep It Simple Stupid) when designing a presentation. Stick to three, or at the most, four points about your topic and expound on them. The audience will be more likely to retain the information.

This is Not a Book Club

An audience member says that she can't read the slides. You graciously tell her you will be reading them and proceed to do so, while looking up at the screen. Each of your slides is filled with the text of your speech. Why do they need you? *Corrected Presentation Technique:* Simplify the content, keeping the most important information near the top of the slide for easy reading in the back rows. Focus on one topic area and use no more than four bullets per slide. Speak to the audience, not to the screen.

When You Don't Have Content, Dazzle Them With Complicated Diagrams

You figured no one will notice that you didn't do much research on your topic if you add lots of photos and complicated looking graphs. *Corrected Presentation Technique:* "Time is Money" is really true in today's world. No one wants to waste their time sitting through a presentation with no substance. Use photos, charts and diagrams only to illustrate key points of your presentation. They add a nice break to the material, and when used correctly, can only enhance your oral presentation.

Did You Bring Your Magnifying Glasses, Martha?

Small, script type fonts might look great when you are sitting 18 inches away from the monitor. You didn't consider the lady sitting 200 feet away from the screen who can't read them. *Corrected Presentation Technique:* Stick to easy to read fonts such as Arial or Times New Roman. Avoid script type fonts which are hard to read on screen. Use no more than two different fonts – one for headings another for content and no less than a 30 pt font so that people at the back of the room can read them easily.

Divine Design

You heard blue was a good colour for a design template or design theme. You found a really cool template on the internet, with a beach scene. Water is blue, right? Unfortunately, your presentation is about some nifty new tools to show at a Woodcarvers' convention. *Corrected Presentation Technique:* Choose a design template that is appropriate for the audience. A clean, straightforward layout is best for business presentations. Young children respond to presentations that are full of colour and contain a variety of shapes.

Yawn -- HOW Many More Slides Are There?

Your vacation cruise was so fantastic that you took 500 photos, and put them all in a digital photo album. After the first 100 slides, snores were heard in the room. *Corrected Presentation Technique:* Ensure your audience stays focused by keeping the number of slides to a minimum. 10 to 12 is plenty. Some concessions can be made for photos, since most pictures will be on screen for only a short time. Be kind though. Think how much you enjoy everyone else's vacation pictures!

Oh No! Now I Have a Crick in My Neck!

You found all the really cool animations and sounds and used 85% of them in your presentation, to impress everyone with your flair. Except – the audience doesn't know where to look, and have lost the message of your presentation. *Corrected Presentation Technique:* Animations and sounds, used well, can heighten interest, but don't distract the audience with too much of a good thing. Design your presentation with “less is more” philosophy. Don't let your audience suffer from animation overload.

Save the Christmas Colours for Holiday Parties

You love unusual colour combinations together. Your PowerPoint presentation is not the time to use them. An orange and blue combination is unsettling to an audience and there may be people present who cannot see red and green due to colour blindness. *Corrected Presentation Technique:* Use good contrast with the background to make your text easy to read. *Dark text on a light background is best, but avoid white backgrounds -- tone it down by using beige or another light colour that will be easy on the eyes. Dark backgrounds are very effective, but be sure to make text a light colour for easy reading. *Patterned or textured backgrounds make text hard to read. *Keep the colour scheme consistent.

The Bottom Line

To be a good presenter you need to be engaging with the audience and know your topic. Keep the presentation concise and include only relevant information. Use an electronic enhancement, such as PowerPoint, as an accompaniment to your presentation to reinforce your point, not as a crutch. Remember – your slide show is not the presentation – you are the presentation.

Resources

- Other QUICK TIPS FOR STUDENTS <http://www.usq.edu.au/learningcentre/tips.htm>
- Online resources on ALSOnline <http://www.usq.edu.au/learningcentre/alsonline/lecttuts/tuts.htm>

The Learning Centre
T: +61 7 4631 2751
E: tlc@usq.edu.au
W: www.usq.edu.au/learnteach/learnsupp/

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SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
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