

10 Common Presentation Mistakes and How to Avoid Them



Learn, Share, Prosper

10 Mistakes and Their Effects		Tips to Prevent or Correct
Design Dilemmas		
<i>Artistic & Multimedia Principles (scientifically supported)</i>		
1.	Cramming slides with dense text or bullets causes cognitive overload and the inability to process all visual cues.	Display only one basic idea per slide. Place the details (your narration script) in your handouts and speaker notes.
2.	Omitting graphic images that serve to symbolize what you say can hinder people's ability to anchor your ideas.	Let <i>relevant</i> photos, drawings, screen captures, charts, graphs, and diagrams do most of the visual "heavy lifting."
3.	Displaying elaborate detail in charts, graphs, and diagrams tends to lower comprehension, retention, and recall.	Keep your slides simple, and put most of the details in your <i>handouts</i> . Avoid using a distracting logo on your slides.
4.	An excessive use of special effects can overwhelm or divert attention, and can make people miss your key points.	Use <i>relevant</i> sounds, videos, animations, transitions, and props in moderation to highlight or demonstrate key points.
<i>Story Principles (scientifically supported)</i>		
5.	Making a presentation all about you or your organization can cause people to wonder whether <i>they</i> have a part in your story, and what's in it for <i>them</i> .	Start by focusing on your <i>audience's</i> role, perspective, and needs. Then introduce the challenge and solution, and recap the actions the <i>audience</i> members can take.
6.	Designing your presentation as a loose collection of "idea lists" forces your listeners to try to organize your ideas.	Create a logical structure and sequence based on a scalable hierarchy of detail, starting with an audience orientation.
7.	Including way too many topics and subtopics for your audience to absorb reduces their retention and recall.	Segment all of the material into just 3–4 main topics. Include review points along the way and summarize at the end.
Delivery Dilemmas		
8.	Breaking eye contact with attendees to read from projected slides interrupts the flow and further splits attention.	Face front consistently, and look back at your slides only if you need to point out something.
9.	Not engaging the audience enough during your presentation invites their attention to wander elsewhere.	Include placeholder slides for questions, icebreakers, polls, exercises, anecdotes, or discussions.
10.	Running way overtime trying to cover too much in the time available dilutes your impact and creates resentment.	Practice first, and "telescope" your talk using the scalable 5-, 15- and 45-minute detail hierarchy from your outline.