

# The Proper use of PowerPoint in Teaching

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**Abstract** –The quality and the number of teaching/presenting skills increased as the extensive research showed different effectiveness. Learning is a subjective virtue, yet it can be stimulated using different approaches. The use of presentations in teaching became very popular way in every day lecturing. Many researches showed that this technique is a good way to transfer knowledge to the audience, yet the success requires adequate steps and precaution. The proper use of PowerPoint presentations yields better results and moves the learning curve into higher level. This paper presents the capabilities of PowerPoint, addresses most common issues and recommends the proper use to maximize the transfer of knowledge from presenter to the student.

**Index Terms** – PowerPoint, Prezi, PowToon.



## INTRODUCTION

There are many different software vendors which offer presenting tools, yet PowerPoint is by far the most used. Created by Microsoft Corporation in 1990s as a part of the Office Suite, PowerPoint became the synonym for the presentation files. Since its first release, eleven new editions were published and PowerPoint 2013 is the most recent. Some of the alternative solutions are PowToon, Prezi and Keynote. With every new release, the more features are offered, the more stylish is the interface and arguably easier to use. Today, PowerPoint is used in education, military, hospitals, business and everywhere we present material.

The reason why this software is so popular may come from the fact that the research about the learning and teaching showed significant positive correlation when using presentations. PowerPoint was at a right place at a right time. As research about learning techniques unveil that people react

differently on visual, textual and animated material the use of PowerPoint seems as a natural solution. The ease of use and time efficiency when creating the slides opened the door of success for this software. Coupled with other components of the Office Suite such as Word and Excel, PowerPoint seemed as the best solution.

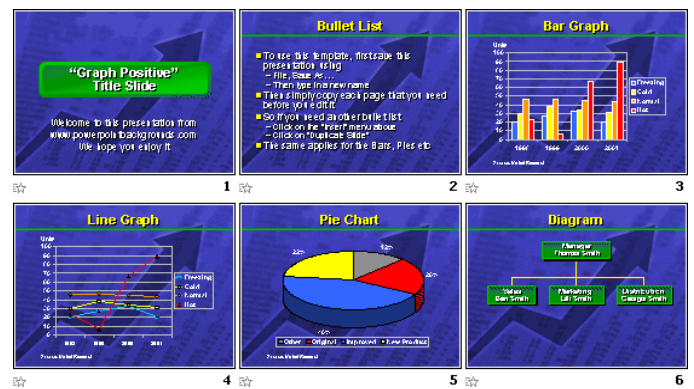
## PowerPoint Features

The main features which PowerPoint offers are based on design, usable fonts, slide and text format, animations, sound-over-slides and integration.

The design of the slide is limited only by the users' creativity. In addition, the templates for different types of presentations are always there to help and make things easier and faster. Almost always, some of these templates will satisfy the need. The additional templates are available on the internet and easy to import.

Enormous number of fonts for different needs and writing styles are easy to use. The slide format is customizable and the orientation can be portrait or landscape. Various types of animations are available and can be used though the slide transitions, text animation, etc. Slides may be accompanied with the voice or any sound for reordered presentations.

Integration is a huge advantage of PowerPoint. User may import different kinds of files such as pictures, links and videos into the presentation and they can be almost any format.



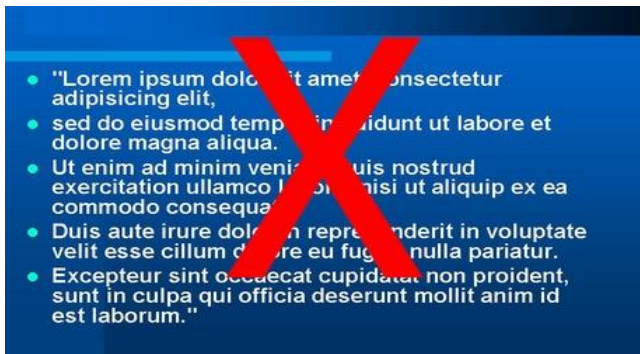
These are just the macro features and it is important to know that PowerPoint offers much more customization and

flexibility. This brings us to the concerns since these options and customization lead to misuse.

### Concerns about PowerPoint and Teaching

There are many disadvantages and perils when using PowerPoint in teaching. Namely, they are not related solely to the quality of the software but in its use.

Overtime, the presentations became not interactive because only the presenter talks and audience rarely asks or answers the questions. This practice is proven to be ineffective because listeners are not encouraged to interact and eventually the presentation becomes the monolog. The next drawback for using PowerPoint in teaching is the wordiness. Very often, slides are overloaded with words and the presenter is reading from it. As a result, the students end up reading the slides and again not interacting or without any critical thinking about the topic. In addition to this problem, the format and size of the text may be inappropriate and hard to read.



The other not very intuitive concern is when the presenter integrates only one learning style to present the lecture. For example, when only the text is used in the presentation. It is proven that people learn differently and the versatile presentations are more efficient. Every type of disorganization in slides will drastically decrease the learning. It happens that the slides do not follow the flow of idea or too many of them are integrated into one slide.

### The Recommended Format of PowerPoint Slides

So far we discussed about PowerPoint features and the problems which may arise. Now, we will show the recommended standards in PowerPoint design and in next section talk about the proper presentations skills.

As we saw in the previous section, PowerPoint offers a lot of tools and customizations which may be overwhelming. For example, choosing a background is important because we want audience to be focused on the presenter and the textual/graphical meaning. The background colors should be transparent and the contrast between the text and other lines distinctive. In other words, text must be on the front. The size of the text and pictures should be properly determined so that the reader can see it from the end of the room. The text font should be chosen carefully because some fonts are very hard

to read and may create a confusing. Very famous rule for wordiness is called 6x6 which means that the maximum lines per slide is 6 and 6 words per line. The slide headline must state the main idea and bullet points the crucial elements of it. Pictures presented in the slides must be a great quality and should express the concept which is hard to explain in words. The enormous use of transitions may create a distraction, so the presenter must sync text, talk and transitions to ensure the flow. Video clips are welcome to use but they should be carefully chosen to fulfill and support the idea. In addition, they should not be very long or fast paced. The number of slides depends on many factors but it is safe to say that one should not contain more than two ideas. Presenter must know how much time should be dedicated to each slide and be sure that the presentation will be finished and questions asked. Do not forget to put the citation in the slides because that is what gives the credibility to the presenter's talk. In next section, we will see the proper use of presentations (PowerPoint) which includes the cooperation between the presented, slides and the audience.

### The Proper Use of Presentations in Teaching

After we are sure that the slide format uses recommended style the tricky part comes. In this section, we will address the most common issues with presentations and recommend the better practice.

The biggest drawback for using PowerPoint in lecturing is the interaction. Over the period, presentations became very passive way of lecturing and students are not encouraged to ask question or even follow the material. The issue can we addressed in many ways. First recommendation is to split the presentation into sets where after every set the Q&A session is provided. At a beginning, the presenter should explain the lecture form to the audience so that they know what to expect. Start with easy questions to create a discussion which will motivate student to follow the rest of the slides. One more way to increase the interaction is the use of clickers. This is a great tool for making sure that everybody follows the material. For example if the majority got wrong answers, the presenter should go back and revise the slide and talks create better results. With the clickers, it is easy to create the incentives and bring additional motivation. Furthermore, presenter should use the examples which require that student role in it. These are some of the most effective tools to break the passive lecturing.

The next concern is the transfer of knowledge. After all this is the reason why the lectures are held and presenter should never forget that. There are many ways to test the efficiency of the presentation, yet the presenter must have it to be sure that it was worthwhile. During the presentation, create a strong memory clues about the material which is easy to remember yet carry a powerful message about the lecture. This may be an anecdotes, illustrative examples, analogies, etc. Slides must not be the only way to present the material during the presentation, no matter how well is prepared. Presenters must use different teaching techniques and be

versatile. The use of whiteboard, physical experiments, sounds, visuals are mandatory in good and efficient presentation. The passion and motivation of the presenter is reflected on the audience and that is what makes a difference.

### Conclusion

PowerPoint is a powerful tool for creating presentations with variety of options and styles. If used with the precaution and with recommended design, the efficiency and the transfer of knowledge may drastically be increased. As we explained in the previous section, the problems of using PowerPoint presentation may not come only from the design perspective, yet the relation presentation-presenter-audience is the key for the proper use and the overall satisfaction.

The concern about presentations being passive in teaching deserved the reputation but that is only why because presenters do not properly use all the tools and teaching techniques altogether. This paper summarized the recommendations which aim to create better and easier learning experience.

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