

# Pitfalls of PowerPoint

- **Too much text**

It's called a *talk* not a *read*!

The most commonly cited example of PowerPoint audience abuse is the amount and illegibly small size of text.

- **“Shiny Objects”**

PowerPoint has a lot of sophisticated rendering, animation, and slide transition capabilities. All too frequently, users incorporate them into presentations simply for their coolness instead of considering whether they contribute to the message.

- **Cognitive overload**

All too often, slides contain way too much information. This draws the attention away from the speaker and onto the slide, as the audience tries to take it all in.

- **Over-dependency**

The set of slides, or deck, has come to replace a presenter's notes, or worse, any effort to prepare. Consequently, a speaker relies on the slides to drive the presentation, rather than the other way around.

- **Underutilization**

Most users of a software tool barely utilize 10 percent of its capability. For example, with PowerPoint, most users do not take advantage of the Slide Masters to create a formatted and branded template. Properly applied, this feature saves time and effort in a well composed presentation.

- **“Decoration”**

As with “shiny objects,” pretty colors and pictures find their way onto slides with little or no consideration of their contribution, or detraction, from the message of the presentation.

# PowerPoint Best Practices

- **Images!**

The best presentations contain little or no text slides. Consider creating a deck with the only text on a title slide and everything else as images.

- **Light text on dark**

In a bright room, dark text on a light background can wash out. In a dark room, it can blind your audience.

If you must use text, use light colored text on a dark background, which shows up equally well in either a well-lit or darkened room.

- **6 bullets max (no wrapping)**

Use brief, concise terms rather than phrases or sentences that wrap to the next line. Use no more than 6 bullets per slide. Split up your content if you have more than six points.

- **Simplicity**

Simply composed slides will convey your message clearly and make your presentation elegant and compelling.

- **Handouts**

If you have content you want your audience to take away with them, create handouts with the relevant material (**NOT** the printed version of your slides with space for notes!).

- **Design instead of decorate**

As you compose your master slide layouts, choose a simple, sans serif font such as Arial, and set your font sizes to be legible from the back of the room. Titles and Headers at 44 pt work well for most venues. Add only simple branding elements.

When composing the slides themselves, add **only** what supports your message, and nothing more.