An AV guy looks at PowerPoint

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What’s wrong with PowerPoint
...and what you can do about it.

The titles are too damn big

Title of the slide ← 44 point

- First level paragraph of text ← 32 point
  - Second level paragraph of text
  - Third level paragraph of text
So what’s wrong with that

• Difference is greater than necessary to distinguish title
• Implies title is always the most important part of the slide.

The text is too damn small especially in lower bullet points

What’s wrong with PowerPoint and what you can do about it

The text is too damn small especially in lower bullet points

A little about type

Title of the slide ← 44 point

First level paragraph of text ← 32 point
  • Second level paragraph of text ← 28 point
  • Third level paragraph of text ← 24 point

Special Precautions ← 44 point

• Don’t lick fingers after using ← 32 point
  • It could kill you. ← 28 point
Type issues

*The medium is the massage*

Go to your room!  
Foilight

Go to your room!  
Helvetica

*Go to your room!*  
Arial Black

My, don’t you look pretty tonight!  
Foilight

My, don’t you look pretty tonight!  
Helvetica

*My, don’t you look pretty tonight!*  
Arial black

Type issues
The medium is the massage

- Monospaced
- Proportional

*Letters*

- Comic
- Times

Type issues
The medium is the massage

- Decorative
- Text

*Letters*

- Vivaldi
- Lucifer’s Pension

*Letters*

- Times
- Helvetica
Type issues
The medium is the massage

Sans-Serif    Serif

Helvetica    Times

From Websters
From The Oxford English Dictionary
From Websters
**Type issues**
The medium is the massage

**Sans-Serif**
- Tend to have a technical, impersonal character
- Helvetica (Arial) has gotten somewhat generic

**Serif**
- Tend to have a personal, humanistic character
- Small sizes can be hard to read on the screen.

**Legibility**

- Bigger type is easier to read
- If you need to use smaller type, you probably have too much on the slide.
- 36 pt `minimum` for all text.
- 24 pt `minimum` for graphics

However - Leave some air.

Very large type with no spaces in between filling the entire space is very oppressive and more difficult to read
Type issues
Legibility

Normal upper and lower case is \textit{always} easier to read than \textbf{ALL CAPITALS}

Use \textbf{bold}, \textit{italics}, \textbf{size}, \textcolor{red}{colors} for emphasis

Legibility

- Upper and lower case words form unique shapes
- All upper case words are all rectangles

All upper case takes up more room without adding legibility
Type issues
Compatibility

If you are presenting on a different computer, it must have the same fonts installed.

*Arial* and *Times New Roman* are nearly universal on Windows

*Helvetica* and *Times* on the Mac

Type issues
Compatibility

In Windows, you can save TrueType fonts with your document.

*This can really screw things up when you move to a Mac*

From the Save dialogue

Type issues
Mixing typefaces

Combine normal, **bold**, *italic*, **bold italic** within a typeface freely

Use to define function

**For emphasis**

Never underline

Type issues
Mixing typefaces

If you mix typefaces, choose two that contrast

*Arial Black* & *Footlight MT Light*

Not *Times* and *Palatino*

Type issues
Compatibility

- If you need smaller type to fit on a slide
  - Use more than one slide
  - Repeat the title if necessary
  - Duplicate the slide to avoid retyping
The strength of presentations
Use to focus & direct attention

The strength of presentations
• One idea per slide
• Don’t dilute your message

Nicholas Negroponte
Being digital
Atoms
Bits
Atoms
• Slides, overheads
• Costly
• Costly to copy
• Costly to move

Cheap
D or Ctrl-D
You’ve got mail!

or
Put as little as you can on each slide!

Presentation problems
• Reading
• Making others read
• Showing off

• Hiding
• Pontificating
• Title, point, point, point

What’s wrong with PowerPoint and what you can do about it

The idea is sequencing
Presentation problems

• Reading
• Making others read
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• Pontificating
• Title, point, point, point

What’s wrong with PowerPoint and what you can do about it

The idea is sequencing

… not animation

Don’t let your presentation compete with your message

• Effects are assigned to
  ✔ Slide transitions
  ✔ Custom animation

• Movement effects are attention getting
  ✔ if used sparingly

• The default effect is
  Fly from left
Motion sickness
• Caused by difference between
  ✓ visual field
  ✓ inner ear perception
• Motion soon becomes repetitive
• Nobody notices anymore
• Until someone throws up

What’s wrong with PowerPoint
and what you can do about it

Everything has the same emphasis
Can’t tell what’s important

Title
• Point
• Point
• Point

What’s wrong with PowerPoint
and what you can do about it

• Save flashy transitions and effects for emphasis
• Gives pacing and dynamics to your presentations

And while we’re on the subject of effects
My pet peeve

You call this a dissolve?
You call this a dissolve?

Oh, well. Smooth yet unobtrusive

What's wrong with PowerPoint and what you can do about it

Background issues

Contrast

Use light objects on a dark background

Or dark objects on a light background

Background issues

Contrast

Low contrast is difficult to read
Even with strongly contrasting colors

The big picture
Background issues
Contrast

Dark objects on a light background

Background issues
Contrast

Use light objects on a dark background

What's wrong with PowerPoint and what you can do about it

Don’t put things on screen you’re not talking about

What’s wrong with PowerPoint and what you can do about it

Don’t leave things on screen you’re not talking about

What’s wrong with PowerPoint and what you can do about it

Seventeen templates
One hundred bazillion users
**Modify the master slide**

- Custom animation can be applied to the master slide
- Save your own template

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**What's wrong with PowerPoint**

and what you can do about it

**It's too text oriented**

**Use**

- diagrams
- models
- maps

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**Show me!**

Don’t tell me!

**Pictures**

Cool ~
What's wrong with PowerPoint and what you can do about it

The defaults for data graphs are goofy

The charting authority

Edward Tufte

“The visual display of quantitative information”

The charting authority

- Emphasize the data ink
  - The line, bars, pie
- Eliminate “chart junk”
  - Excessive labeling of axes, grids, borders, clip art

Chart Simplification
Save your own chart template

- Adjust a chart for your preferences
- Save it as a custom chart type
  or
- Save it as a template
- Open it and change the data
- Copy the slide your new presentation
The power of computer graphics is at your fingertips.

Less is more.

To learn how:
- Handouts available at http://idea.uwosh.edu/nick/handouts.htm
- This presentation available at http://idea.uwosh.edu/nick/platteville.htm