

How To Avoid BPD

If you have ever attended a seminar, a large meeting or sat through a lecture, you have probably experienced BPD—Boring PowerPoint Disorder. Possibly you are even guilty of passing on this syndrome at least once.

Think about all the presentations you have given or viewed over the years. Maybe nine times out of ten they were crammed with ten to fifteen bullet points per slide, each a full sentence. More time is usually spent reading the slide than listening to the presenter.

Because people abuse those tiny slides, let's take this opportunity to help you try and avoid contracting and spreading Boring PowerPoint Disorder.

Follow these simple guidelines, and you will greatly improve your presentations:

» LIGHTEN UP

Avoid having too much text on each slide. Your slides should support your talk, not be your talk. For this very reason, you should not be writing complete sentences on your slides. If your audience is concentrating on written text, they are most likely not giving you their complete attention. "Four by eight" is a great rule of thumb. Use a maximum of four points per slide and eight words per point. Ideal usage is only three to four bullets per slide.

» NO SPECTACLES, PLEASE

You don't want people to search for their glasses during your presentation. For starters, avoid using a font size less than 22 points. You shouldn't need to use anything smaller if you followed the previous tip. Choose a font that is easy to read. Typically serif fonts, like Times New Roman, are more legible. Also, watch out for chaotic background images. If the room is going to be well lit, a simple, light-colored background with a dark font for your bullets tends to show up the best. If the room is going to be dark, use a dark background with a light font for best viewing.

» KEEP IT SIMPLE

Everyone knows that PowerPoint has the capabilities for you to insert animated text, sounds and fancy transitions. But it is almost never appropriate to use these. These effects can be successful in certain situations but often distract your audience from the main points you are making. Plus, they really aren't that cool.

» CLIP ART IS SO LAST YEAR

Avoid using clip art at all costs. Everyone that has ever used a computer has seen them all before. Don't be mistaken: visual images can be great, but they need to be selected carefully and be appropriate to the points you want to make. Don't just place images on a slide for the heck of it. Having too many elements on one slide is distracting. When you place an image on a slide, ask yourself if it helps demonstrate your point. If it doesn't, get rid of it.



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» DON'T PULL A SWITCHEROO

Avoid switching between programs, such as calling up your Internet browser during your presentation. This takes extra time and can make it difficult for your audience to remain focused.

» GET OFFLINE

If you don't have a need to show a live website, disconnect from the Internet. While you are presenting, you wouldn't want your computer to randomly start downloading a software update. Also, it would be horribly embarrassing if your instant message program popped up and revealed your screen name, *Looking4Luv*.

» PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

It seems so obvious, but so many people skip this step. Always, always practice before you present. This will alert you to any modifications you need to make so your presentation flows well. Also, this gives you a chance to proofread your slides one last time. As everyone knows, spell check doesn't catch everything. You should also go to the room you will be presenting in, test the projector and see how your voice flows in the room. This way, you can avoid any mishaps that could happen during your presentation.

Aside from the clip art, animations and transitions, PowerPoint actually has some very useful functions that you may not be aware of. There are tons of navigational shortcuts that you can use to give a more efficient presentation. For example, when you are in slide show mode, simply type the number of a slide you want to jump to and press enter. There will be a seamless transition onscreen.

So, in conclusion, PowerPoint is a great *support* tool for your presentations. The potential for abuse is huge. But, if used properly, you will present much more effectively. You'll impress your boss, clients and co-workers.

**You have just received your vaccination for Boring PowerPoint Disorder.
Please pass this along and stop the spread of this vicious malady.**