PowerPoint Basics

Before planning a presentation, you should analyze the speaking situation (audience, purpose, and context); organize the presentation; create the graphics; choose the language; determine the transitions and animations (very sparse); and choose the medium—PowerPoint, Prezi, Poster Board, etc. In all of your analysis, keep the time frame at the forefront of your mind. If you are given ten minutes, try to end your presentation at 8 or 9 minutes. Never go over the time allotted. Presentations can be divided into two areas: 1) oral presentation and 2) the visuals (PowerPoint, Prezi, Poster board, etc.)

PowerPoint Visual Presentation:

- **Font:** Font size is one way to distinguish levels of importance.
  1. Never use more than three different size fonts
  2. The lower-level information font size should never be less than 32pt
  3. Use professional font style such as Times New Roman. (Avoid decorative scripts)

- **Slides:** Slides should not be cluttered.
  1. PowerPoint slides are talking points
  2. Use Headings and Bullets
  3. Bullets on each slide should be consistent: all phrases, clauses, or single word and of the same part of speech

- **Visuals:** Pictures, graphs, charts, tables, even videos serve one of the following purposes
  1. Enhance meaning—abstract concepts are easier to discuss with visuals
  2. Explain difficult concepts
  3. Emphasis
  4. Provide brief distraction

*Do not use visuals unless they are necessary. If you use other people’s intellectual property, you must cite, and if the work is copyrighted, you must include a legend underneath the visual that provides the copyright information. If you use another person’s information to create a graphic such as a table, you must provide a legend underneath the graphic that explains from where the information came, the copyright or publication information, and, when possible, a page number.*

- **Contrast:** Your slides must be clean and readable
  1. Dark letters on a dark slide or light letters on a light slide make reading difficult
  2. Text on pictures is difficult to read and distracting
  3. Avoid bright backgrounds
  4. Too much color or too loud of color distracts from your message

- **Dazzle:** Professional presentations should not contain flashy animations or sounds.
  1. Avoid distracting animations such as transitions and text-entrance animations
  2. Use professional transitions such as fading in or out or sliding in and out
  3. Do not use bells and whistles or any other sound device
  4. Avoid playing music during your presentation

**Oral Presentation:**

- **Presentation:**
  1. Thank the person who introduced you and the audience for their attention
  2. Face your audience
  3. Give eye contact to as many of the audience members as possible
4. Do not put your hands in your pockets
5. Use your voice to engage the audience (monotone presenters do not maintain the audiences’ attention long)
6. Speak loud enough for everyone to hear
7. Use your hands to provide emphasis but don’t swing your arms around too much: use natural movements
8. Use facial expressions to connect to your audience: smiles usually connect you to your audience; also, raising your eyebrows or opening your eyes a little wider can help you alert your audience of important information
9. Ask for questions or comments at the end of the presentation, and after you have answered questions and discussed comments, thank the audience again and the person who invited you to speak

Specific Components of the PowerPoint:

1. Title Slide:
   a) Contains the title of the presentation
   b) Your name and organization
   c) During this slide, you can explain what the presentation is about
2. Advanced Directive:
   a) Provides a breakdown of the subtopics
   b) Gives the audience a map
3. Content Slides:
   a) Provide your claims, support, illustrations
   b) Provide talking points
4. Final Slide:
   a) Reiterates your claim
   b) Opens the floor for questions or comments
   c) Provides contact information

Guidelines for the Oral Presentation:

1. Provide verbal markers that provide the audience with cues: my second point or my final point
2. Remember to speak to the audience and not to the slides
3. Before you begin, thank the person who invited you to speak or who introduced you, the audience, and anyone else who may have contributed to your presentation
4. Acknowledge anyone who contributed to your information or the technology
5. If more than one is presenting, introduce the speakers after you express gratitude
6. Do not start your presentation off with a joke. It is a rare individual who can pull that off. If you do not know the audience, you may offend someone. Stick to the script
7. Do not try to be cute. Leave your jacket and tie on. If it is hot, before you take the stage, take the jacket off. Avoid appearing too casual