PowerPoint Presentation Best Practices

Creating an effective presentation involves more than just adding text to slides. We've compiled a few best practices to help make your presentation accessible, engaging, and impactful:

Start with a Goal: Identify the purpose of your presentation early on to structure your content effectively[1].

Choose the Right Font: Your font reflects your message and professionalism. Keep it simple and focus on readability over aesthetics[1]. A sans-serif font is generally easier to read but there are some serif fonts that can also be used effectively[2]. A few safe options include:
- Serif: Aptos Serif, Cambria, Georgia, Lucida Bright, Times New Roman
- Sans Serif: Aptos, Arial, Calibri, Lucida Sans, Tahoma, Verdana

Note: The font must be compatible with PowerPoint (.pptx).

Less is More: Avoid cluttering slides with excessive text or images. Too much text can cause your audience to disengage[4]. Slides should complement your presentation, not duplicate it. Focus on your key points and elaborate on them verbally[1].
- The PowerPoint 6x6 rule suggests limiting each slide to six lines, with each line having no more than six words[2].
- 36- and 44-point fonts are recommended for headers and between 20- and 28-point fonts for body text.

Skip Text When Possible: Consider replacing text with well-designed visual elements that convey the same information in a more appealing format[1]. Images can be more engaging than text and keep the audience's attention during your presentation[2].

Think in Color: Consider readability, contrast, and consistency when choosing a color scheme for your presentation[1].

Avoid Over-Formatting: Keep your slides simple by limiting text formatting. Consider reducing (or eliminating) bullet points and choose between bolding or underlining text[4] – don't do both!

Additional Tips:
- Utilize the NAP Lexicon as a reference
- Avoid using acronyms
- Use respectful, inclusive, and supporting language[3]

[1] Clark, Bryan (2021). 8 Tips to Make the Best PowerPoint Presentations. How-To Geek.
[2] Microsoft 365 Life Hacks (2023). PowerPoint Tips: Make the Most of Your Presentation. Microsoft.
[3] Wooldridge, Shannon (2023). Writing Respectfully: Person-First and Identity-First Language. National Institutes of Health.
[4] Smith, Brad (2024). 60 Effective PowerPoint Presentation Tips & Tricks (Giant List). EnvantoElements.