

CORE Approach to PowerPoint: How to Be an Effective Presenter

To use PowerPoint effectively as a teaching tool, it can help to understand a few key principles from cognitive psychology and multimedia learning theories.

Please visit the Evidence-Based Slide Design section of the site to read about how these principles are applied to the CORE PowerPoint slide design. The information below describes how this new design can help you be an effective presenter.

Introduction

PowerPoint presentations are everywhere. But good PowerPoint presentations? Those might be few and far between.

A “good” PowerPoint presentation is one that engages the audience in the learning process. Certainly, the quality of the slides and the content of the presentation are part of the formula. But whether the presentation effectively reaches the audience depends very much on the presenter.

Principle 1: PowerPoint is the supporting role, not the star.

- Too often, presenters rely on their PowerPoint slides to tell the audience what they are trying to say. This can result in slides covered with text, which the audience then reads as the presenter is talking.
- When people read and listen at the same time, they are less able to focus on the key points and retain the information.
- The number one mistake people make when giving a PowerPoint presentation is simply reading the content of the slides aloud. This disengages the audience and interferes with learning.
- The audience engages in the learning process when they receive corresponding visual and verbal information – without being overwhelmed by too much of one or the other.

Application to CORE

- In CORE, the slides serve as a visual reference point for the audience. The presenter is the main conduit of information.
- The visible information on each slide highlights only a few key points. This is in keeping with the theory that the audience should spend only about 25% of the presentation passively looking at slides.
- The presenter uses the speaker notes attached to each slide to expand upon the key points visibly highlighted on the slide.

Principle 2: Give the audience signals they can follow.

- It is the job of the presenter to ensure that the audience understands the key points of the presentation.
- Introducing the key points at the beginning of the presentation can improve learning by helping the audience understand the structure of the presentation and be prepared for what will follow. One way to do this is to use an overview slide that lists no more than six key points to be covered in the presentation.
- Signaling the key points throughout the presentation clearly identifies the take-home messages to the audience. One way to do this is to use section headers that mirror the key points on the overview slide.
- Summarizing the key points at the end of the presentation helps the audience reflect upon the information, integrate it with what they already know, and consider how to apply it in the future.

Application to CORE

- Each slide in CORE is designed to visually convey only one or two key points. The title succinctly reflects the key point of the slide.
- Many existing presentations in CORE contain overview and summary slides to help guide the audience through the key points.
- Using examples from the audience, the presenter can link each key point of the presentation to experiences the audience is familiar with. This reinforces learning by helping the audience integrate new information with what they already know.
- The presenter can easily build overview and summary slides to capture the key points of a custom-made presentation.

Principle 3: Talk with your audience, not at them.

- The audience is more likely to retain information when the presenter uses a personalized, conversational style to convey the key points, rather than a more formal style. It can take practice to become comfortable with the content and find the right presentation style.
- Learning is optimized when the audience interactively participates in the presentation, rather than passively listening and viewing slides.
- Using stories or case examples to convey key points can help the audience understand and remember the information.

Application to CORE

- Using the speaker notes attached to each slide, the presenter can practice and find a personalized style in which to convey the information to the audience.
- If familiar with the audience, the presenter can insert relevant stories or case examples into the presentation to reinforce key points. If not, the presenter can ask the audience to share their experiences.

- CORE offers activities, case examples, and other handouts for presenters to download and use to enhance their presentations.

Summary

1. PowerPoint slides are there to give the audience visual cues and highlight the key points of the presentation. The slides are not designed to be the sole focus of the presentation – they are meant to support the presenter.
2. The job of the presenter is to guide the audience successfully through the presentation and convey the key points.
3. Introducing the key points at the beginning of the presentation, clearly identifying them throughout the presentation, and summarizing them at the end can help the audience grasp and retain the information.
4. Presenting information in a personalized, conversational style helps the audience learn better than using a more formal style.
5. Making the key points relevant to the audience through storytelling or case examples can reinforce learning.
6. Interactive audience participation improves learning. For example, asking questions or soliciting relevant stories or case examples can help reinforce the key points of the presentation.

Additional Reading

For a complete list of resources about the theories used to develop the CORE approach to PowerPoint, please visit the Additional Reading section of the site.

Atkinson C. *Beyond Bullet Points: Using Microsoft PowerPoint to Create Presentations That Inform, Motivate, and Inspire*. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Press; 2005.

Collins J. Giving a PowerPoint presentation: The art of communicating effectively. *Radiographics*; 2004;24(4):1185-92.

Goodman A. *Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes*. Denver, CO: Cause Communications; 2006. Available at <http://www.agoodmanonline.com/publications/>. Accessed February 4, 2007.

Hunter LP, Hunter LA. Storytelling as an educational strategy for midwifery students. *J Midwifery Womens Health*; 2006;51(4):273-8.

Lordly D. Once upon a time... Storytelling to enhance teaching and learning. *Can J Diet Pract Res*; 2007;68(1):30-5.

O'Leary S, Diepenhorst L, Churley-Strom R, Magrane D. Educational games in an obstetrics and gynecology core curriculum. *Am J Obstet Gynecol*; 2005;193(5):1848-51.

Paradi D. Presentation Lessons from "An Inconvenient Truth". 2007. Available at <http://www.thinkoutsidetheslide.com/articles/inconvenienttruth.htm>. Accessed May 15, 2007.

Paradi D. *What Annoys Audiences about PowerPoint Presentations?* 2005. Available at <http://www.thinkoutsidetheslide.com/pptresults2005.htm>. Accessed December 21, 2006.

Curricula Organizer for Reproductive Health Education (CORE)
CORE Approach to PowerPoint: Evidence-Based Slide Design

- Stein K. The dos and don'ts of PowerPoint presentations. *J Am Diet Assoc*; 2006;106(11):1745-8.
- Teichman JMH, Richards J. Multimedia to teach urology to medical students. *Urology*; 1999;53(2):267-70.
- Tomey AM. Learning with cases. *J Contin Educ Nurs*; 2003;34(1):34-8.
- Wofford MM, Spickard AW, Wofford JL. The computer-based lecture. *J Gen Intern Med*; 2001;16(7):464-7.