



## Voice over PowerPoint Presentations

Voice over PowerPoint is a powerful tool and easily integrated into online courses. However, it can be poorly implemented and over used. Feedback from students has been mixed, but many have complained about “death by bullet.” So, what can you do to make your presentations more palatable?

Some of the same guidelines that apply to video and audio files fit the PowerPoint Model. While the files are not as large as straight video, download time is still an issue. So keep your voice over files short and concise. Also, keep the number of slides down. I like the 10/20/30 rule. That’s 10 slides presented in 20 minutes and the font size should be no smaller than 30 in an approved ADA font (Times New Roman, Verdana, Arial, Etc.). Why the large font size? According to Guy Kawasaki (How to Change the World):

The reason people use a small font is twofold: first, that they don’t know their material well enough; second, they think that more text is more convincing. Total bozosity. Force yourself to use no font smaller than thirty points. I guarantee it will make your presentations better because it requires you to find the most salient points and to know how to explain them well.

So, keep it short and know your topic (which means you won’t read the slides). So, what is on the slides? I encourage mind joggers or related key concepts that will help the student to later recall your comments; think outside the box. Too many instructors use the slides as reading cards or as a method to keep track of where they should be in the lecture and the student has been forgotten. I also recommend white backgrounds. Don’t be disappointed. It is simple math, a background color can double the size of the file. If you add images, you could triple the size making the download time simply unmanageable for the student. So, keep the images and backgrounds to absolute necessity only.

Now, for some lessons learned. When you move from one slide to the next, stop talking before you advance the slide. PowerPoint stops recording the audio when you press the space bar and does not cue back up until the next slide loads. So, if you keep talking, PowerPoint will create voice gaps.

Don’t use animation such as flying text or moving critters. It adds to file size and depending on which Microsoft Office package you have, they may not work anyway. Noisemakers, like camera flashing or whistles interfere with your voice. Not all of your students will have PowerPoint. So make sure you provide a plug-in to the free PowerPoint Viewer and provide a number or email for student support services. Also look at your presentation from the perspective of a student with a disability. Yes, you need a text alternative. Lastly, if you don’t use voice over and just load PowerPoint slides, make sure they are accessible. I have yet to find one publisher based PowerPoint Presentation that is ADA compliant. The market is not concerned with compliance. Only your attention to the failure will change that fact.