Designing and Writing an Effective Capstone Presentation

The Center for Teaching and Learning with Technology
The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Part 1: Design Tips

Image source: Gonzalo Barrientos. Vieja Maquina de Escribir (September 2006). Creative Commons, BY-NC-ND.
Use a Template and Keep it Simple

- **Do** take advantage of templates
  - All the design work has been done for you
- **Do** pick simple, basic templates from your PowerPoint or Keynote software for *academic presentations*
- **Don’t** choose cute or ornate templates for academic presentations
- **Don’t** clutter and distract from your presentation with too many fonts and colors

Templates are included in both PowerPoint and Keynote

Try to pick a simple style that is appropriate for academic work

Pick a Simple Template
Create a Stand-Out Title Slide

- Provide the title and date
- List the name of your faculty advisor
- Include a professional and tasteful picture of yourself, if you'd like
  - A small headshot is sufficient

Structure and Organize your Presentation

- Divide your presentation into logical parts
- Devote a slide at the beginning of your presentation for the outline
- Tell your audience exactly what you are going to present
- Follow your outline throughout your presentation

Presentation Outline
- Part 1: Goals and Objectives
- Part 2: Methods
- Part 3: Observations
- Part 4: Results
Take Note: Presentation Rule-of-Thumb Guidelines

- Use one slide per 90 seconds of audio
  - A 20-minute presentation might ideally have between 15–20 slides
- Don’t have too much text on slides
  - Keep slides to a minimum of five or six lines of text on them
- Stick to one font size for bullet text
  - Don’t resize text to fit it on one slide: insert a new slide!

Follow Tried-and-True Design Guidelines

- Include images to help break up text
- Use copyright-free images; some suggestions are:
  - http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/
  - http://ocw.jhsph.edu/imageLibrary/
  - http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Reference_Shelf.shtml
  - http://www.nih.gov/about/niphotos.htm

Source: B. Brieger. Maternal and child health care, including family planning. Creative Commons BY-NC-SA.
Summarize Data in a Table

- Be judicious with color choices in tables and charts
- Keep colors consistent
  - Use a set of three or four colors throughout the presentation

### My Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>12345</th>
<th>12345</th>
<th>321</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Present Data in a Chart

Always

Source your Material

Remember this Important Rule

- Don’t add images just to add images—they may not even be necessary for your presentation
  - Images should *always* be relevant to your material
  - Don’t ever use cute clip art
    - Unless you are showing an example of a horrible clip art image, as we are providing you on this slide!

Clip art is not appropriate for academic presentations
Part 2: Writing Tips

Use Short Titles

- Put a title on each slide
  - Try to summarize your slide in a few words
  - Avoid long titles; they are cumbersome to read and display
  - Avoid using chart or table titles as your slide title!
Don’t Write a Book

- Structure each slide’s material to *accompany* and *support* what you’re telling your audience
- Write summary points in a bullet list; don’t just type exactly what you’re saying!
- Focus on a few points; don’t give information overload!

Write with Parallel Structure

- **Have** main bullets start with a similar part of speech; verbs are a strong choice (see red text on this slide as an example)
- **Write** just a few lines of text for each point
- **Try** to keep text to a minimum

Image source: WallyG. NYC World Trade Center (June, 2006). Creative Commons, BY-NC-ND.
Get Help if You Need It: Designing Your Presentation

- [http://www.slideshare.net/thecroaker/death-by-powerpoint](http://www.slideshare.net/thecroaker/death-by-powerpoint)
- [http://www.beyondbullets.com/2005/03/the_narrative_b.html](http://www.beyondbullets.com/2005/03/the_narrative_b.html)

Get Help if You Need It: Writing and Organizing your Thoughts

- [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html)
- [http://www.apastyle.org/](http://www.apastyle.org/)
Practice Before you Present

- Present your material to your friends and family—**more than once**
- Make sure your presentation runs for the amount of time you are allotted
- Practice, practice, practice