



# How to Give an Effective PowerPoint Presentation

An Online Continuing Education Course for Engineers

**Course Number: PD-3004**

**Credit: 3 Hours / 3 PDH / 3 CPD**

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## Introduction

PowerPoint is a presentation program that is included in Microsoft's Office suite of programs. Since its introduction in 1990, PowerPoint has become the most prevalent presentation program on the market. Today, PowerPoint presentations are used in just about every area of modern society including civic clubs, classrooms, business meetings, weddings, churches, and even funerals.

The PowerPoint program has a remarkable array of features to enhance a presentation and has revolutionized speaker presentations. Prior to PowerPoint most visual presentations used viewgraphs (overhead projector slides), 35mm slides, or flip charts. The ease with which a presentation can be put together using PowerPoint is amazing. However there is a downside to PowerPoint – which is poorly done presentations.

PowerPoint has made it easy to put together presentations, but that doesn't mean the end result is a good presentation. Anyone who has sat through a 100-slide PowerPoint presentation that featured an endless number of bulleted points or paragraphs along with fancy transitions will understand the downside of PowerPoint.

The purpose of this course is to provide some guidance on how to use PowerPoint more effectively in presentations. This is not a "how to" course on how use the features of PowerPoint, although a few specific features are explained, but it is a course on how to use the features of PowerPoint to the best advantage. This course assumes that the user has a basic mastery of PowerPoint and wants to make better use of the features of the program.

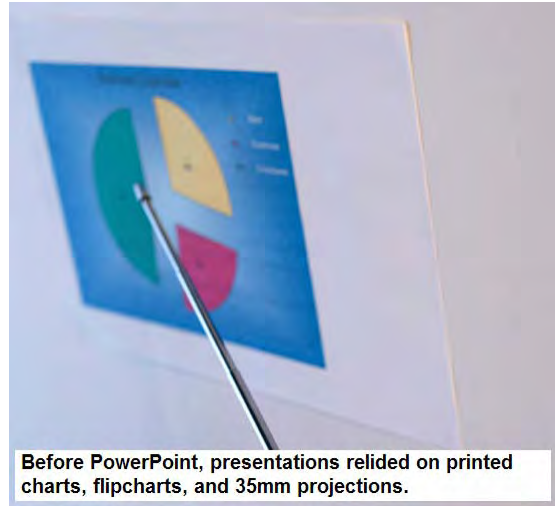
The course is based on the opinions of the author, who has made hundreds of presentations, many of which have surely induced a deep sleep among at least a few participants!

In this course, we will review a few of the common problems found in many PowerPoint presentations and how to use the rich features of PowerPoint as an aid to making presentations without allowing the features to distract from the presenters story. The ultimate goal of this course is to help the reader hold the audience's attention while presenting his story. The story may be presentation to make a business case to upper management, to venture capitalist, or it may be to describe a particular topic to a civic club. Whatever the occasion, the presenter is trying to persuade the audience and PowerPoint is a powerful tool to aid in storytelling.

The layout of the course begins with a brief overview of PowerPoint and then looks as how text is used in presentations, followed by color, graphics, and animation. In addition, we will study effective slide layouts, use of audio-visual equipment, and how to make the actual presentation performance more effective.

## I. Overview

PowerPoint actually began as a program for the Macintosh computer in 1987. The original program offered only black and white and simple drawing tools and was designed by a company known as Forethought. Shortly after Forethought released its first version of PowerPoint (version 1.0) Microsoft bought the company and acquired the rights to PowerPoint. It wasn't until 1990 that Microsoft released its first Windows compatible version of the program. PowerPoint 2.0 was not only compatible with both Windows and Macintosh platforms, but it also introduced many of what we think of today as standard PowerPoint tools such as bullets; drawing fills, and spell checking capability.



Although the earliest versions of PowerPoint were marketed as stand-alone programs, since the introduction of Microsoft Office 2003, PowerPoint has been an integral part of the Office suite of products. As a component of the Office suite, PowerPoint has interoperability among the Office products allowing 'cut' and 'paste' operations from Word and Excel as well as other programs.

One of the attractive features of PowerPoint is its ease of use. It has a simple yet powerful interface that allows even novices to quickly produce a presentation. And there are many powerful features that experienced users can exploit to make even better presentations.

The basic functions of PowerPoint allow the user to develop slides with text, color, graphics, transitions, and animations. The term *slide* is a reference to the old slide projector technology that preceded PowerPoint and is still used to describe an individual view in PowerPoint. In fact, you will still find references to a *deck of slides*, which is a reference to a presentation made from viewgraph overhead projector slides.

**Note: The features discussed in this course are based on Microsoft PowerPoint 2003, though most features and procedures are the same or very similar in other releases of the program.**

## II. Text

Text is the backbone of a PowerPoint presentation so it is important to know how to make the best use of text in a presentation. The most important text issues are the type of font to use, the size of the font, and proper grammatical use.

### Font Types

Fonts can be categorized as either serif fonts or sans serif. A *serif* is a small flair on the ends of the letters that make printed words more readable. Look at the following box which shows both a sans serif font, in this case it is Arial, and a serif font, such as Times New Roman. The Times New Roman font has flairs on the tops and each side of the bottom of the legs of the “M”. If you will notice, a *sans serif* font such as Arial does not have flairs, but instead has straight extensions of the legs of the “M”.



The serifs make printed words easier to read, but can make text on computer screens and projected text more difficult to read. For computer screens and projectors, a sans serif font should be used. Here are a few of the popular sans serif and serif fonts,

<b>Font Options</b>	
<b>Sans Serif</b>	<b>Serif</b>
Arial	Times New Roman
Tahoma	Courier
Verdana	Garamond

Verdana is a popular font for websites and is also a good choice for PowerPoint presentations. Serif fonts may be used in PowerPoint, but they should be restricted to titles or very large and brief bullet points.

### Type Size

Once a font is selected, the next step is to select a font size. The font must be large enough for the text to be readable by everyone in the audience. Let’s look at a few font

sizes. Fonts are described in points. In typography a point is 1/72 of an inch. Therefore, a 72-point font is one-inch tall and a 36-point font is 1/2 inch tall. However, electronic fonts are affected by the resolution of the computer screen, so a 72-point font may not be 1-inch tall on the computer display. Based on the resolution of the screen used in developing this course, a 72-point font is about 3/4 of an inch tall. Listed below are a few common point sizes.

### Examples of Font Sizes

This is 12-point type

This is 16-point type

This is 24-point type

This is 36-point type

This is 48-point type

This is 72-point

A common question is “how large of a font should I use?” The answer is the font needs to be big enough! Of course the question then becomes, “how big is ‘big enough’”? Several methods have been suggested to answer this question.

#### “Five foot” rule

When designing a presentation on a computer a very simple approach to determine how a particular font size will appear in the actual presentation is to just push back from the computer screen about five feet and see how it looks. Just put your foot on the edge of the desk at the computer screen and push your chair back by extending your leg. From this distance a PowerPoint slide on a typical screen will look about the same as when projected on a screen in an average size meeting room. Obviously this method is very

unscientific and there are plenty of reasons why it is not sufficient such as different screen sizes, different meeting room sizes, etc, but as a general rule of thumb the five-foot rule is a good test.

### Room-Screen Ratio

A more scientific approach to determine a font size is the *room-screen ratio* test. To use the room-screen ratio test divide the depth of the room by the diagonal projector screen size (in feet). The resulting ratio is the minimum font size that should be used. For instance, if a room is 50 feet deep and the screen size is 4-feet diagonally, then the smallest font size to use is,

$$\text{Font} = 50 / 4 = 12.5 \text{ points.}$$

For a 100 foot room with a 4-foot projection screen, the minimum font size should be  $100/4$  or 25 points.

### Painter's Rule

The "Painter's Rule" comes from the sign painting profession. Sign painters say that to be readable the text on a sign should be at least one inch tall for every 10 feet from the target audience. Applying this rule to a PowerPoint projection, the projected font should be at least 1" tall for every ten feet to the viewer. So if a last seat in the room is 50 feet from the projection screen, the font should appear at least five inches tall on the screen.

The painter's rule is probably the best method for consistent results. The problem is that this procedure does not define a font size since it is based on what is actually projected onto the screen, and even a 12-point font can be large on the screen if the projector is at a sufficient distance from the screen.

A combination of the P... will yield consistently good re...

### Room Size

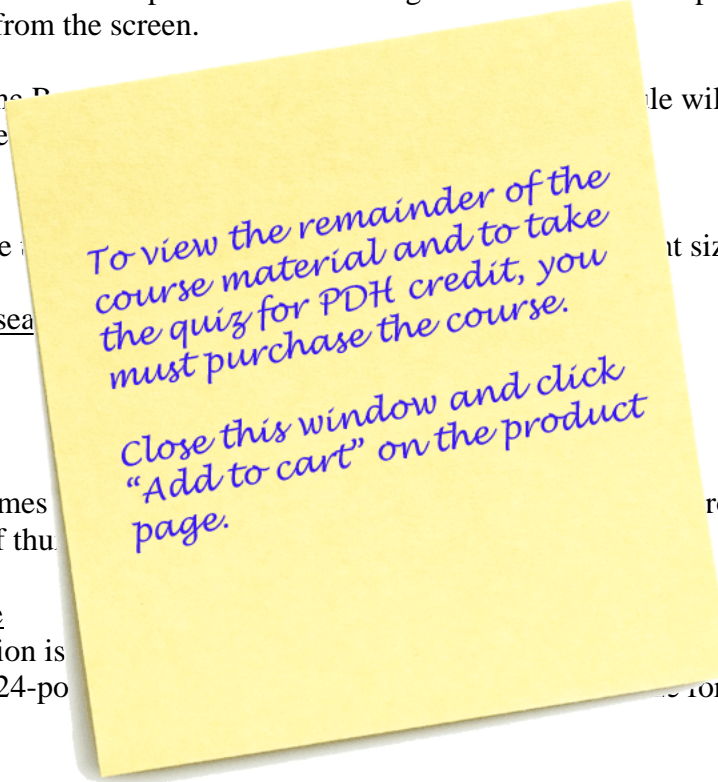
Some presenters use ... at sizes.

<u>Number of seats</u>
<50
50 – 200
>200

This approach assumes ... room and is only a rough rule of thu...

### Minimum Font size

Another consideration is ... size should be no smaller than 24-po... for the body of the slide.



To view the remainder of the course material and to take the quiz for PDH credit, you must purchase the course.

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