Presentation Guidelines for Fellows and Residents
To page through for the first viewing, simply click with your mouse anywhere on the presentation page.

A “Content links” page is provided for you at the end of the presentation so you can have quick access to all the material after the initial viewing.

The links place you at the beginning of each section.

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It’s become complex
A hundred years ago, the classroom presented the teacher with a simple environment.
Today, the auditorium as an online classroom has become a complex media environment that requires preparation and an awareness of a few basic guidelines.
Based on experience, following these guidelines will result in a trouble-free, quality lecture that will be more easily understood and assimilated by your audience.
Most lectures are presented using Microsoft’s PowerPoint, with images formatted in JPEG to minimize file size.
Before the lecture
Consideration has to be given to the material itself before the lecture, as well as to the characteristics of the complex computerized equipment currently employed to present it.
A presentation that looks fine on your computer may not display well on an online environment due to equipment characteristics and may need to be modified.

Special attention has to be paid to fonts and backgrounds:

Their colors become important.
The time spent in careful preparation results in an efficient lecture that conveys information well and is pleasant to watch.

New lecturers are welcomed and encouraged to rehearse and test their presentations beforehand.
If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I would spend six of them sharpening the axe.

Abraham Lincoln
Backgrounds
Use a light, neutral background. Experienced lecturers have found that a plain one, light blue...
Use a light, neutral background. Experienced lecturers have found that a plain one, light blue, buff...
... or gray in color, used with a black font, is best.

Research shows these backgrounds display material more clearly and are much easier on the eyes of students viewing them for long periods in an educational environment.
Dark backgrounds with light-colored letters look good on a monitor but may be difficult to see online, especially with the use of graphics.

Unfortunately, this scheme has become the standard and what most lectures look like. In fact, PowerPoint help tips even suggest these colors for the beginner!
Dark backgrounds also require an enormous amount of (very costly) toner to print copies of presentations for handouts!
A patterned background can make text hard to read for your audience or viewers.
The same applies to images used as backgrounds.
It can make it nearly invisible to the viewer.
Also, many default design templates supplied with PowerPoint have busy backgrounds that can be **distracting and do not display well**.

Shadings and gradients are best avoided.

Notice the brief optical illusion when you go to the next slide…
Font Colors
Avoid using red or yellow fonts, particularly on a dark background. They are harder to read.

More importantly, the visual equipment characteristics render the letters nearly invisible.
A black font on a light, neutral background is best. Avoid bright font colors altogether in your presentations regardless of the color used for your background.
Be careful with color combinations! Creativity is good but the goal is to make the material readable and understandable.

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Oh, Yuck!
Although not common, you also have to consider students with dyslexia and those who cannot readily discriminate colors from one another.
RED ON DARK BLUE IS HARD TO SEE
YELLOW ON BLUE IS SEEN POORLY

SOME COLOR COMBINATIONS ARE HARD TO READ.

SOME COLOR COMBINATIONS ARE NEARLY INVISIBLE!
Font Size
All titles are a size 48 font.

The font size used throughout this presentation is 24.

A font size of 20, as used in this sentence, is possibly the minimum size font that should be used for a large auditorium, and online, audience.
Using fonts that are too small may be the most common fault in presentations.

Use the largest font you can while still maintaining a balanced page.

Tiny fonts are seen often when scans of books and printed pages are shown to a class:

They do not convey any meaningful information.
The example below is a font size 12. While perhaps readable on a monitor screen, it is very difficult to read in a large auditorium and online, live or recorded.

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. -- That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, -- That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.
Images
Make drawings, charts, and images **large and easy to see**, preferably one to a page, two at most.

Thin chart lines are hard to see and show up faint, or not at all, on a recorded lecture.
When using images, try to use ones with a nice **balanced contrast** so they display accurately. Too bright and they wash out, too dark and their detail is lost.

Images are easily corrected with modern software.
Be mindful of the images’ format. **Use only the compressible JPEG format** to keep image file size as small as possible.

Big files create severe storage problems.
You need an image size only to fill the small area in your presentation. **Bigger images are wasted and do not produce a better quality image.**

The following page shows two images, but one is more than *twice* the pixel and file size as the other.

Can you tell the difference?
Take a close look then see the next slide for image properties…
Wasteful!

360 x 480, 60 kb.

600 x 800, 122 kb.
Notice that the larger original image does not produce better results. The software just reduces it to fit the space in your slide.

This waste can make files much larger.
Other Considerations
As a back-up, always make sure to bring a copy of your lecture.

You will be very glad you did.
Keep it rather simple, do not put too much on a slide. If a slide looks crowded, it is that much harder to see -- better to break up the material into more slides.

Crowding is a very common error.
Do not use fancy fonts - the podium computer, as well as the home viewer’s, may not be able to reproduce them.

Pick your font for its ease of reading. Those without serifs read best.
A presentation should be consistent and maintain a particular format throughout as far as its layout, color scheme, and choice of fonts.

Avoid mixing many different colored backgrounds and texts within a presentation.

**Design should not interfere with content.**

A presentation has to stand on its own: the lecturer cannot read or explain the material shown.
If videos are embedded in your presentation, **make sure the video files are included in your media.**

As compared to images, PowerPoint only **links** to these files, which must be present in the local computer’s same subdirectory as the presentation in order to be viewed.
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and interfere with the presentation!
Some examples
• White font on dark blue background…

• The graph on the right would be virtually invisible because of:

  • a small, low contrast font and thin, colored lines,

  • the chart is rather small in size,

  • the use of red and yellow.
• A high contrast area within a dark background can show as a washed-out area.

• A good presentation has consistency of colors and layout throughout.
A Really Bad Slide

- Artistic expression elevates mankind but does not make for a presentation that conveys useful information to viewers.
This one is much better!

- Pleasant contrast.
- Thicker chart lines.
- Simple, bigger font.
- No red or yellow.
- Chart not in a white box.
Some Limits
Keep image file size as small as possible. Make sure to use the JPEG format whenever possible instead of GIF, TIFF, etc.

This is very important because of the increased use of graphics.

Embedded images add the most to the size of any presentation.
Keep the number of slides in a lecture within reason.

Even if the file size is small, there is a limit to the slides that can be presented to a class over a fifty minute period without overwhelming students.

Remove unnecessary slides.

If a presentation’s file size is getting too big, remove slides that are not essential to the presentation.
Audience Response System
When available, an **Audience Response System**, also known as “clickers”, can record answers to questions placed in a presentation in an a, b, c, d, e format. The answers are either dynamically displayed or at the end of the voting period in graph form.

It is really very simple to learn and use.
Answering Questions
All questions should be repeated before giving an answer, otherwise the online viewer, or the student sitting on the other side of the auditorium, will have no clue as to what was asked and may not make sense of the answer.

This is important and often overlooked during lectures.

It is really important in a Distance Learning setting.
Distance Learning
Distance Learning transforms the presentation for the lecturer, who now has to consider part of his class an internet-connected group of students.

Good presentation design becomes essential.
An online presence requires special attention to sound reinforcement, repeating questions, and generally making sure the material being taught is clearly transmitted to the distant learner.

Teaching to online classes will inevitably require forming a few new habits over a short period of time.
There is literally **one class**, only divided into separate locations and connected to each other through the wonderful Internet medium.
Further reading

• Peter Urs Bender (1995) *Secrets of Power Presentations*
  Firefly Books, New York

• Sally Brown, Phil Race (2002) *Lecturing: a practical guide*
  Stylus Publishing, Sterling, Virginia

• Christine A. Stanley, M. Erin Porter (2002) *Engaging Large Classes: Strategies and Techniques for College Faculty*
  Anker Publishing Company, Boston, Massachusetts
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