

Designing Multimedia

Slide presentations aid in student learning, especially when the slides follow good practice in multimedia design. The following is a summary of some of LERN's multimedia consultant Diana Howles' benchmarks for good practice. For In-Person class media your goal is not necessarily to include every strategy in each presentation, but to use several to create variety in teaching techniques and to use them to improve learning.

- 1. Move copy from lists to diagrams.**
Whenever appropriate and possible, change bullet points or lists in your slides to information topologies or charts and schemas that indicate relationships between the points. The information topologies (diagrams, flow charts, circles) are free in PowerPoint.
- 2. Create single large images.**
At least 1 of every 3 slides should consist of a large visual, usually a single image, with only 1 to 7 words on the screen that describe the concept or point that the visual helps make.
- 3. Use teacher notes feature.**
Instead of speaking to the slides, make notes of what your audience will see in the slide show below. Your whole approach and effectiveness will change when you stop talking to the slides and start talking to your students. The "notes feature" can make that happen.
- 4. Reduce words.**
Reduce the number of words on a slide. There are many words that are unnecessary to convey the message. Take out those unnecessary words. For example, change the following on your slide, "There are many words that are unnecessary to convey the message. Take out those unnecessary words." Instead, put this wording on the slide, "Take out unnecessary words."
- 5. Say it 3 times.**
For a major concept or point (sometimes called a subunit); first, state the point or lesson or important concept. Then explain it, providing details. The recap the concept and reiterate the major points in a summary statement. The three part explanation: stating what you are going to cover, then covering it, then summarizing what you just covered, helps increase the learning. Do this for an entire slide show or even a major concept or point within a slide show.
- 6. Highlight some key copy in red.**
For emphasis and greater attention to a few words, put those words in red ink; usually boldface. They will get more attention.
- 7. Use more color background.**
Use more color backgrounds for both words and images. Use green background color for nurturing statements. Use blue for stability, as it is universally liked. Use yellow as a background color when you intentionally want to create a little uneasiness.
- 8. Find or create meaning in an image.**
Think visually by finding or creating meaning with an image. An image does not have to replace or replicate sentences. Images can suggest, can be part of a message, or can be an example or illustration. When a few words are added, either within the image or in proximity to it, the image can convey a message in combination with the words. You can also take a neutral image and turn it into a meaningful image with a few words.
- 9. Embed 1 video per 20 minutes.**
If relevant to either the audience or the subject matter, use YouTube videos to complement what you are saying, reinforce what you are saying, or say or illustrate something better than what you can say. Embed not more than one YouTube video for every 20 minutes of presentation or class time. In general, the video should be five minutes or less for best attention and retention.
- 10. Use visuals to distract.**
Every 15-20 minutes, the brain fills up and needs some diversion before being able to continue to learn and absorb knowledge. Jokes, stories, quick exercises, and physical movement of students are some ways to create that one to two minute mental break. But, your slides can also be a way of accomplishing that. A cartoon, a photograph, or image that has nothing to do with the subject matter and one to two minute YouTube videos are all ways your slide show can provide needed periodic distraction or mental breaks.

When choosing a cartoon, image, or video, look for stimulating ones that are not about your course subject; but instead, have a totally different theme or message. The object is to stimulate and distract your learners so they can replenish and re-energize for the next 15-20 minutes of presentation.
- 11. Use music or sound clips to underline a message.**
Some learning is emotional. When the emotions of a student are involved, the meaning is reinforced. Music and sound clips provide emotional reinforcement of a message. You can use up to 29 seconds of any song or sound clip without requesting permission or violating copyright. Occasionally, embed a little music or a sound clip for those slides where the message is or can be reinforced with a little emotion.
- 12. Guest narration can explain some things more forcefully.**
In some instances, a sound clip from an authority, celebrity, or 'radio voice' can explain things better or just reinforce what you are saying. Outside voices can be more forceful, carry more authority, or the delivery can have more flair or the outside voice can be more succinct. Use variety in presentation works.
- 13. Tell one story per class.**
People remember stories. Stories personalize information and often provide real world context. Stories also provide easy visuals and images to accompany them. Stories are so effective in learning that they now have their own name, story-fication.
- 14. Add something current.**
All learners, especially those under age 40, learn more when there is some topicality or news angle included. Look for relevant and recent news and trends that relate to your subject and/or audience. Other sources of adding something that is current and relevant include celebrity comments, television shows, and new books or articles.
- 15. Change 1-3 slides each class.**
Change, add, delete, or improve just 1 to 3 slides each time you teach a class. The process of reviewing the slides and making a simple and easy change keeps the slide show on target, relevant, and the best it can be. The process of changing 1 to 3 slides keeps your teaching skills on the cutting edge and keeps you more engaged. Modifying and improving just 1 to 3 slides means that neither the slide show nor you will become dull and your students will appreciate that.