

Common PowerPoint Pitfalls and Some Practical Solutions

Pitfall: Too much text

Solution: Include only main points/separate information into several slides

Solution: Use the “appear” animation to hide slide material until you want to talk about it.

Solution: Provide a hand-out, instead, with “need-to-know” facts/dates/statistics etc.

Pitfall: Using the display slides as lecture notes

Solution: Have separate lecture notes printout /use the PPT “notes function/create a separate PPT and printout

Pitfall: Leaving text-heavy slides on-screen while talking about other topics

Solution: Use “W” (white screen) or “B” (black screen) or include a blank slide

Pitfall: Too many slides

Solution: Reduce the number of slides

Pitfall: Not spending enough time on individual slides/moving from one slide to the next too quickly

Solution: Pause for 20 seconds at the end of every slide

Pitfall: Moving from the final point of a slide immediately to the next slide

Solution: Provide a summary overview (or question) about the overall slide before moving on.

Pitfall: Asking a yes/no, black/white type question for which the answer is already included in the PowerPoint

Pitfall: Overly complicated charts/graphics

Solution: Simple graphics are generally more helpful.

Pitfall: Failure to explain individual elements of charts/graphics

Solution: Identify each of the vectors/axes/variables before drawing overall conclusions

Pitfall: Failure to connect images explicitly to lecture topics

Solution: Point to an image or reference it in speech at the moment when the image is relevant

Pitfall: Overuse of animation

Solution: Stick to “appear,” “disappear,” and “fade”

Pitfall: Lack of images

Solution: Include relevant images to maximize retention

Pitfall: Use of irrelevant/purely decorative images

Pitfall: Poor quality images

Solution: Make a point to include highest quality images possible.

Pitfall: Talking at the screen, instead of the class.

Solution: Refer to your laptop/in-class monitor instead.