

## 4-H Presentations Go High Tech *Effectively*

You have an idea for your 4-H presentation and have decided to use a computer presentation program to enhance your talk. That's great! Here are a few things to consider as you work on your presentation, but always remember the most important part of your talk is YOU.

### *Effective Elements or Common Distractions*

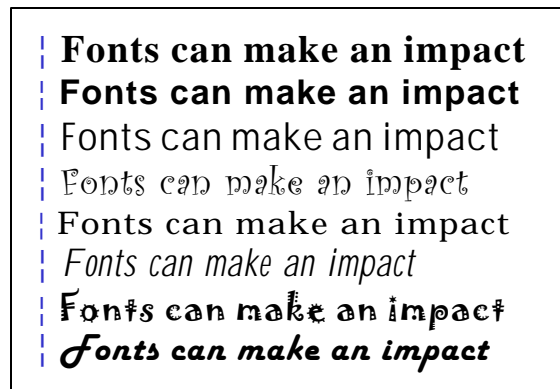
There are several key elements that can be a part of any computer presentation program. You will have lots of options for these elements. The way you use them can make the difference between an effective presentation and a distracting, hard to understand presentation. Just because you have lots of options at your fingertips, does not mean you have to use all of them in one presentation. Read on to find out how each of the following elements affects your presentation.

- Text
- Color
- Background
- Graphics
- Transitions & Animation
- Sounds

### *Text*

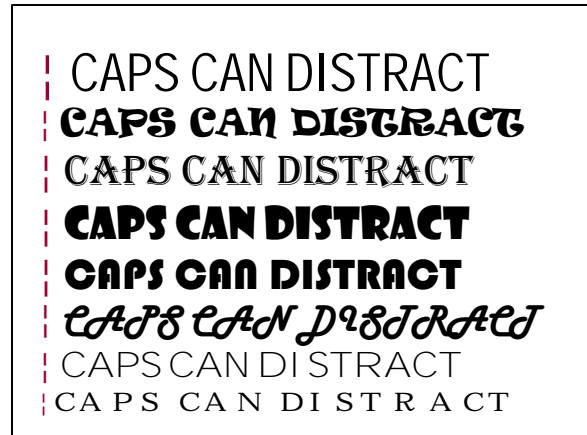
Any writing you put on the slides in your presentation is called "text." Using a computer opens up lots of options related to how much text you have, the color of the text, the fonts and sizes of text. Here are some tips to remember about the text in your presentation.

- **Use the 6 X 6 rule** – This rule states that you should have no more than six lines on a slide and there should not be more than six words in each line. Using this rule prevents you from putting too much information on the slide. A common mistake is typing in everything you want to say. This takes the attention off of YOU because the audience reads the information themselves and stops listening to you. And, since people read at a different speed than they listen, this can become very distracting.
- **Use easy to read fonts** – While there are lots of different fonts you could use, stick to basic fonts like "Arial" and "Times New Roman." Basic fonts are easier to read and can be found on most computers. This is important if you plan to copy your presentation onto a CD or disk and use it in another computer. If the second computer does not have the fonts you used in making your presentation, it will replace it with a font that is similar. This similar font might totally change the spacing of text on lines. Using basic, simple fonts can help prevent this from happening. See Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** *Sample Fonts* - The top three fonts are easiest to read.

- **Limit font types and sizes** - Try not to use more than two types and sizes of fonts in a presentation. For instance, one font might be used for the titles and another for the rest of the text in your slides. The sizes of the fonts in your presentation should be consistent throughout. That means all the titles on each slide should be the same font size and the body of the slide text should be the same size. The recommended minimum sizes for text are listed below.
  - Slide title text - 44 point
  - Body of slide text - 28 point
- **Avoid all caps** – Text in all capital letters is harder to read than text that has both upper and lower case letters. If you really need to use all caps, limit the use to titles or a few words you want to emphasize. See Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Words in all capital letters can be hard to read. Try reading the second one from the bottom.

### Color

Color can be a key element in your presentation. The color used can create a mood or feeling for your presentation. (See Figure 3.) Color attracts attention. That makes it great for highlighting things you want to emphasize. Using different colors is useful when you want to compare several different items. The colors allow the audience to easily see differences in the items.



**Figure 3:** Notice how the two different color combinations have very different effects. The one on the left seems to have more energy and the words almost jump off the page, while the colors on the right are more calming.

When using color it is important to understand the color itself is not as important as the relationship it has with other colors. For instance, a bright yellow with other bright primary colors will not stand out, but put it with dark browns, it will stand out. Here are some basics tips to remember when using color.

- **Keep it simple** – Use a basic set of colors for your presentation. Use one or two vivid colors and then the tints and shades (lighter and darker versions) of the colors to increase the number of colors in your presentation.
- **Look to nature for palette** – If you are having a hard time deciding on colors, look to nature. Think of a summer scene at a lake - the crisp blue-green of the lake meets the deep green pine trees under a cornflower-blue sky. These colors all work together in harmony and look good together.



**Figure 4:** Can you see the yellow letters on white?  
How about orange on green?

- **Remember to provide contrast** – Be sure there is contrast in the colors you are using. This could mean light colored text on a dark background or vice versa. Colors with little contrast will tend to blend together and be hard for the audience to read. Look at Figure 4 to see how colors interact with other colors. Also, remember that some of your audience may be color blind, so be careful how you use reds and greens. If you are using those two colors to compare items for instance in a graph, a color blind person may not be able to see the difference in the two colors.

### Backgrounds (Template)

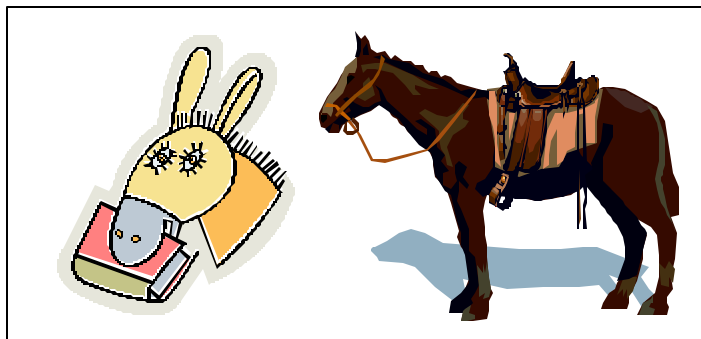
You usually will have the option of using a template or a background color scheme for your slides. Generally you can choose from many different template designs for your presentation. Most templates have some sort of design border while a background is a solid color. Another option is to design a border for your presentation. Here are some tips on choosing backgrounds or templates.

- **Select backgrounds to enhance presentation** – Find a background or template that will evoke the mood or feeling you want to have for your presentation. A presentation showing how to make a Thanksgiving turkey craft would look good with a background with fall colors and leaves.
- **Avoid clutter** – Many templates have some sort of border or image incorporated in the design. Consider this when choosing a template. If you are adding lots of pictures or illustrations to your presentation, the template design will distract from them. It may be better to choose a solid color background.
- **Be sure text contrasts with background** – If you choose a template or background color scheme, the text colors may already provide enough contrast. However, you may choose to make the title and text bold, change the size, or even choose a font that you think contrasts more with the template or background.

### Graphics

Graphics are the photos, illustrations, or clipart you add to your presentation. Graphics can be used to support your point or to add some humor to your presentation. When using graphics, remember the following:

- **Be consistent** – It is a good idea to stick with similar types of graphics. If you are using clipart, try not to combine a simple line drawing with a very intricate illustration. Notice how the horse on the left in Figure 5 is very simple and almost cartoon like while the picture on the right is much more detailed. These two graphics would not look good in the same presentation.



**Figure 5:** The styles of these two graphics are very different. The one on the left is very simple and the one on the right is very detailed.

- **Use graphics to make the message clearer** – Always ask yourself if adding the graphic will make the message clearer. If you are just adding a graphic just because you can, then skip the graphic. It really needs to support what you are trying to say.

## **Transitions & Animations**

Transitions are how each slide comes onto the screen. Animations are how the text and graphics come onto and leave the screen. There are lots of ways you can have slides coming onto the screen. Also, words and graphics can fly in from almost anywhere. In general, the best slide transition is one that the audience does not even know happened. Other tips for transitions and animations include the following.

- **Be consistent** – Use the same type of transitions throughout the presentation. Also, be consistent on how the text comes onto the slide.
- **Make them simple** – It is a good idea to use basic animations including the following:
  - Wipes
  - Fades
- **Make them natural** – An animation that feels natural will keep the audience listening to you rather than trying to figure out where the next set of words will come from. Natural animations are the following:
  - Drop from above
  - Appear from left
- **Use for emphasis** – If you really want to emphasize a point, this is when it is appropriate to add a fancy animation.

## **Sound**

Sounds tend to distract from YOU. Since you want the audience to be listening to what you are saying, it is better just to avoid using sounds.

## **Making it happen**

So now that you have some basic tips on using a computer presentation program, what do you do next? Here are the basic steps to follow.

1. Outline your presentation
  - a) Introduction
  - b) Body
  - c) Summary
2. Determine key points
3. Decide on “feel” of presentation
4. Develop background and color scheme
5. Make slides for key points
6. Add appropriate graphics
7. Add extras for emphasis

## **General Tips**

Here are some general tips to help you as you work on your presentation.

- **Keep it simple** – Remember that when it comes to presentations it is better to have less information on the slides than too much. This keeps the focus on you not the computer presentation.
- **Double check spelling** – Always reread all your slides even after you have done spell check on the presentation. Your incorrect spelling may actually be a real word that spell check will not catch. Having someone else read your presentation can help you find misspelled words.
- **Set-up ahead of time** – Take time to set up your presentation ahead of time. This allows you to check to see that all the equipment is working properly. If you have copied your presentation onto a CD or disk and are using it in someone else’s computer, be sure to open up and try your presentation. You want to make sure the version of the program you used works correctly in the other computer.

- **Position yourself correctly** – The best place for you to stand is to the side of the screen and facing the audience. This way the audience is focusing on you. This may mean moving the computer to where you are standing so you can reach it or using a remote to forward your slides.
- **End with blank slides** – Add an extra blank slide at the end of your presentation. This will help avoid hitting an extra key and actually going into the program rather than staying in the slide show. While newer versions of programs also have a blank screen at the end of the presentation, this is still a good idea to do.
- **Use "b" or "w" keys** – During a presentation if you need to stop for some reason, you can make the screen either black or white by hitting either the "b" or "w" key respectively. Hit the key again to go back to your presentation.
- **Know key slide numbers** – Write down the numbers of key slides. For instance, if your presentation is getting too long and you want to skip to the summary, you can just type in that slide number and hit the "Enter" key and you will go to that slide.
- **Use the arrow as a pointer** – If you will be pointing out things on the screen during your presentation, you can make the cursor arrow larger so it becomes a pointer for presentation.
- **Have a backup plan** – Finally, it is a good idea to have a backup plan in case something goes wrong. You never know when the equipment will not work or the room is not appropriate for a computer presentation. So have a plan in case you can not use your presentation.

## Summary

If you follow these basic tips, you can use all the elements of a computer presentation program to create a slide show that will enhance what you are saying and keep the focus on **YOU!**

## Resources

*Back to Basics: The Presentation Slide Show* by Ray DuGray, President/CEO and Maria Ngo, Director of Marketing, Interaction Communications Inc., [http://www.presentersuniversity.com/visuals\\_Basics.php](http://www.presentersuniversity.com/visuals_Basics.php)

*Choosing the Right Colors for Your Presentation* by Margo Halverson, Proximity Learning, [http://www.mmm.com/meetingnetwork/readingroom/meetingguide\\_right\\_color.html](http://www.mmm.com/meetingnetwork/readingroom/meetingguide_right_color.html)

*The Deadly Sins of Modern PowerPoint Usage* by Rick Altman, [http://www.presentersuniversity.com/visuals\\_Deadly\\_sins.php](http://www.presentersuniversity.com/visuals_Deadly_sins.php)

*4 Important Design Concepts* by Jeff Radel, [http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/Effective\\_visuals/VisStrt.html](http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/Effective_visuals/VisStrt.html)

*Presenting Effective Presentations with Visual Aids* by U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety & Health Administration, <http://www.osha.gov/doc/outreachtraining/htmlfiles/traintec.html>

*Top Ten Tips for PowerPoint Slide Shows* by Gail Zack Anderson, President of Applause, Inc, [http://www.presentersuniversity.com/visuals\\_visuals\\_top10.php](http://www.presentersuniversity.com/visuals_visuals_top10.php)

*Using PowerPoint* by Lucy Bradley-Springer, PhD, RN, ACRN, Director, Mountain Plains AETC, <http://www.aids-ed.org/aidsetc?page=et-15-pptips>

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