Your first aim is to communicate and well-designed slides will help get your message across.

Make it clear

- Visuals should be concise, simple and relevant.
- Arrange your visuals in a logical sequence in line with your presentation structure.
- Each visual should convey a specific idea, point, or topic area. Use one message per slide.
- Limit the amount of text on each slide. Don't reproduce your entire presentation script, just main points and key words. Edit out words you don't need until each statement is as concise as possible.
- Check spelling and grammar.
- Limit the number of slides to 5 or 6 per 10 minutes.

Make it big

- Visuals should be readable from the back of the room.
- Use a large font (at least 24 points).
- Avoid overly elaborate typefaces. Choose a simple font, like Helvetica, Arial or Times.
- Don't use all capitals. Blocks of text are hard to read.
- Make sure captions on pictures or graphs can be clearly seen from the back of the room.

Keep it simple

Don't overdesign

- Your slides should be simple and clear. Eliminate unnecessary information and clutter.
- Make use of white space and don't cram too much on each slide. For each addition, ask yourself 'is this necessary; what does it add to the message?'
- Avoid busy backgrounds that make text hard to read.

Don't go overboard with technology

- Aim to communicate, not to win an Oscar for special effects.
- Use animations sparingly. Effects like flying or flashing text can distract your audience. What value do they really add to your talk or your topic?
- Only include elements like sound and video if they are the best way to convey particular information.
- The sound effects that accompany PowerPoint animations are best avoided altogether.

Be consistent

- Choose a general 'look' for your presentation and stick to it. Maintain a unity of key design elements from slide to slide.
- Don't get carried away with fonts, colours, styles etc. Use the same themes (colours, backgrounds, fonts etc) throughout your slideshow.
- Visual consistency can link your slides and help your presentation to flow.

Be visual

- The impact of visuals is greatly increased by colour IF it is used well.
- Ensure there is a clear contrast between text and background colour.
- Use a highlight colour to emphasis key words.
- Don't use too many colours on one slide.
- Use colours that harmonise rather than clash. Bright shades can look harsh when projected.
- If you're not sure how to put colours together, make use of the colour schemes available in PowerPoint.

Move beyond bullet points

- Take advantage of the medium and look for ways to convert data to visual information. Would a picture, graph or chart convey information more effectively than text?

Use graphics well

- Choose graphic material to support your presentation. Don't include graphics purely for decoration.
- Use 1-2 images per slide.
- Pictures should be clear and in focus.
- Tables or graphs should be simple and readable from the back of the room.
- Remember that what may look clear and focussed on your computer screen will probably be paler and less focussed when projected onto a large screen.

See next: Rehearse your presentation