

The Seven Deadly Sins of PowerPoint

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- Sin 1. **BUSY layout.** Avoid cluttered layouts. Use simple, aesthetically pleasing layouts. Use pictures for relevance, not decoration. Ensure that the graphics do not crowd the text.
- Sin 2. **TINY text.** A common error is to use too much text and make it too small. Presenters will often use this to read from the slide. Include only key words, with a maximum of six words per line and six lines per slide, excluding the heading. This will ensure that the audience will focus on you, rather than just reading the slide for themselves. The text should be large enough to be clearly read from the back of the room.
- Sin 3. **JAZZY background.** The background should be simple, and contrast with, but not distract from the text. Use a consistent background or template throughout the presentation. Be careful with 'glowing' colours on a dark background, particularly in a long presentation. Also be aware that dark backgrounds will appear washed out in natural light.
- Sin 4. **GAUDY colours.** Use a simple colour scheme and use it consistently. A different colour may be used occasionally to emphasize a point.
- Sin 5. **TACKY fonts.** Choose simple, clearly readable fonts, and use them consistently throughout. Sans serif fonts, such as Verdana, are designed for best readability on screen, and convey authority. A serif font, such as Times New Roman, may have a warmer feel. Fancy fonts look unprofessional. Use capitals sparingly, as they are difficult to read.
- Sin 6. **WACKY effects.** Animations and special effects should be used sparingly and only for a specific purpose. They are distracting and annoying if overused. Use fast, simple transitions, and stop the animation when the point is made.
- Sin 7. **FUZZY data.** Charts and graphs can be a great way to present data. Keep them simple and easily readable and label them clearly with units of measure. You might consider using a handout for complex data. Always acknowledge the source of the data if it is not your own.

A few tips:

- Check your spelling and grammar carefully.
- Know how to use the equipment before you begin.
- Be prepared for technical failures. It is a good idea to have your files on multiple media, such as USB drive and CD. Consider taking some overhead transparencies for your key slides, in case the data projector fails. Be prepared to speak without the PowerPoint if necessary.
- If you are using a laser pointer, use it purposefully and keep it steady.

Remember the KISS principle: Keep it simple, saint!