**Simple Steps to a Great PowerPoint Presentation**

**1. Plan your presentation on paper first.**

Keep away from the computer. This is sometimes called going “analog”. Instead focus on your audience and what you want them to take away from the presentation. What do you want them to do? How do you want them to think differently? What do you want them to remember? This will become your Key Message.

Then structure the flow of your presentation around what your audience will want to know – some people recommend writing a script. I don’t recommend this. Here’s why:

* Unless you’re a skilled dialogue-writer you’ll find it difficult to write your script in conversational language. And conversational language is what works best in a presentation.
* Once you’ve written a script, you may find it hard to keep from reading it. Reading to your audience is an effective way to put them to sleep.
* You may think that you can memorize it – what that means is that you’ll end up “reading” from the script in your head. You’ll still sound artificial and stilted. And you’ll be focusing on remembering what comes next rather than focusing on getting your ideas across to your audience.

Presenting is about communicating ideas – not exact words and sentences. So instead of a script create a set of notes for yourself. Your notes don’t say what you want to say – they remind you of what you want to say. Then you can focus on connecting with your audience.

Once you’ve created the structure and flow of your presentation, you can start creating slides. There are many different creative ways of creating slides. I’ll take you through a quick and easy way to use.

**2. Put one statement on each slide**

Take each main point of your presentation and express it as a short and succinct statement. Put each statement on one slide.

That’s the only text you put on the slide. Remember, ‘No paragraphs’! I go further and say ‘No bullets’! Here’s why:

* Bullets are the speaker’s notes in disguise. Take them off the screen and put them in your hand or on the podium in front of you.
* Having bullets on your slide and talking at the same time harms the ability of your audience to take in your message.
* Bullet-points are outdated anyway. ☺

**3. Add a relevant visual to each slide**

Now look at how you can add a visual element to each slide which helps back-up the point of the slide. There are four main types of visual:

1. An image or photograph which directly represents or is a metaphor for what you’re talking about.
2. A diagram which helps your audience understand the concept you’re describing.
3. A graph which shows the meaning of your data.
4. A flowchart that demonstrates the process you’re explaining.

However, be careful irrelevant, distracting images, and clichéd clipart shouldn’t be used. Watch out also for clichéd images!

**4. Pay attention to design**

Avoid the temptation to “dress up” your pages with cheesy effects and focus instead on simple design basics. The key design principles are:

* Use a simple background – decorative templates add clutter.
* Use an easy and readable font such as Arial, Helvetica, or Times Roman.
* Use text which contrasts well with the background.
* If you’re using photos have them fill the whole screen and put your text on top of them. If necessary use a semi-transparent rectangle – a mask – behind the text to ensure that it is readable.
* There are lots of websites and YouTube videos on how to add elegance to your presentation – check them out!

Also, avoid dark backgrounds if you can to help with readability.

**5. Dance with your slides**

You know not to read from your slides. But don’t go the other extreme of ignoring your slides like a wallflower at a dance. Dance with them. They are your partner in the presentation – sometimes you lead, sometimes the slide will lead.