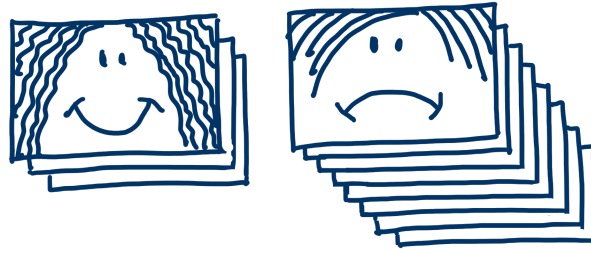## MAKING POWERPOINTS WITH PUNCH

Have you ever dozed off during a PowerPoint presentation, or completely disengaged because it was badly designed, hard to follow or overwhelmed by too many complex details? Even worse, have you ever seen members of your own audience dozing off or disengaging during your presentation?

Here's how to avoid delivering death by PowerPoint:

What's the purpose of your PowerPoint/slide deck?
Is it for a presentation, a handout, or both? Detailed slides may work as readable handouts but may need heavy modification to effectively accompany a talk. Consider two sets of slides.

Don't load slides with too many words. We talk at roughly three words per second. So don't put 60 words on a slide when you're only going to talk to it for several seconds. You'll kill your key points in the blur of words. The slide is not supposed to feature everything you want to say. No more than three bullet points per slide, and no text smaller than 24-point or 30-point font.

Is your presentation for an in-person talk or a webinar? If it's in-person, the audience will be looking at you, your slides and whatever else is of interest around the room. During a webinar they are only looking at the slides, with possibly a tiny 'you' talking in the corner of the screen. So you usually need more slides in a webinar to keep up the momentum.

It's a visual medium so make it visually compelling. Look for surprising and engaging images. Avoid unnecessary, generic or meaningless images, and pictures that don't support the spoken words.

Stay in style. Be consistent with fonts, colours and formatting throughout. Loads of cut-and-pasted content can look horribly messy and unprofessional. If a conference organiser asks you to use the conference PowerPoint template, this may leave little room for your content on each slide. Even then, maintain your consistency of style and either use more slides or cut back your content.

Don't use very detailed charts or overly complex diagrams. Distil the key points on the slides and save the details for the handout. If you have to say 'I know you can't read this', then why are you putting up the slide?

Simplify numbers and percentages as much as possible. Figures should punch, not be ponderous.

Use visual effects sparingly. Overuse of effects such as cool transitions between slides can be distracting and look like you are opting for novelty over authority.

Always have a backup if you have an embedded video or will link to online content. This is the gremlins' favourite playground. So have the video file available separately on the computer along with screenshots of the online content.

Take a PDF of your presentation as well as the PowerPoint file. Sometimes technology does not want to play in one format but may be fine in another. One of life's many mysteries.

When requested, do send advance PowerPoint presentations. Handing over a portable drive five minutes before your talk is very stressful for event organisers. It's also wise to request time to road test the presentation before you speak.

For more tips on great presentations, visit https://abdc.edu.au/abdc-communications/tips-to-improve-communication/