Some Tips for Effective Slide Presentations

**Preparation**
- Prepare your presentation before you develop your slides. Think of your message as a story or a book with a beginning, middle, and end – so that it has an “arc”.
- Start with an intriguing question/challenge to immediately engage your audience.
- Have as few slides as possible. Be clear about the necessity for and purpose of each slide. Consider 3-5 min per slide, as a general rule of thumb.
- If you have to apologize for the content in any slide in the presentation, either fix it or don’t use it.
- Practice with your app – be sure you know how to easily navigate within the slide presentation: move forward, backward, etc.
- Make sure to shut off your screensaver/sleep function. Annoying, isn’t it, when that happens. Definitely interrupts the flow and concentration.
- Have a contingency plan: Copy your presentation onto a flash drive just in case. Be ready, however, to still present effectively if all technical capabilities fail.

**Slide Design**
- Select/create a good consistent design/template that’s appropriate and enhances the content and message of your presentation.
- Keep the background simple and consistent.
- Be careful to not be so fancy or filled with special effects that you inadvertently take attention away from your message.
- Keep the slide design simple: a headline/title; a couple of bullets (certainly no more than 5 lines or so); and a relevant, quality image.

**Text: Less is More**
- Use short, concise phrases, words. (These are the headlines, the high points. You are the one providing all the detail.)
- Avoid full sentences and, of course, paragraphs.
- If you must have a lot of text/points, consider clicking the points in one by one (“builds”). But use this technique judiciously.

**Fonts**
- Use *sans serif* fonts (without the curlicues) as much as possible. Ease of reading is paramount. If the fonts get too fancy and intriguing, they can take attention away from the message.
Limit the number of different types of fonts. Keep it simple. Two or three fonts.
Use fonts that are no less than 28 points. 40 and above is preferable. Though be careful not to get too huge, for that can be overwhelming as well.
Avoid using all caps.
Do a test run to see if the content is easily readable from the back of the room.

Color & Contrast
Although, most presentations have dark font on a light background, light font on a dark background is also acceptable. The main intent is to have the highest degree of contrast between the fonts/words and background in order to provide the highest degree of visual clarity possible. The choice may be a matter of your preference and depend on the content of your slides.
If you wish, you could use both the dark background/light fonts and light background/dark fonts to show changes in slide content/purpose. For example, the essence of the content with the dark background/light fonts and transitional slides with light background/dark fonts.
Font colors such as yellow are usually difficult for people to see/read.
Similarly, try not to use combinations of colors in charts or graphs that are difficult to distinguish from each other such as green, blue, and black – or -- orange, yellow, and red.
Again, project the slides beforehand to see if the colors and contrast actually work and appear as they do on your computer. Adjust as needed.

Graphics & Charts
Use these only if they illustrate a relevant point, not just for the sake of having them.
Keep them accurate and simple.
Be sure they are carefully labeled and name the essential elements so folks don’t have to try to guess what’s what.
Be sure that the content is large enough to be read from a distance. If it can’t be read from a distance, why have it?

Visuals
Visuals are important but use them only when they are relevant and have meaning.
Avoid clip art like crazy (hackneyed and often not truly relevant). There are sites that provide more original options.
Don’t use too many images or special effects; don’t go overboard.
Avoid distracting, cutesy animations, fly-ins, etc. just for the sake of having them.
**Videos**

- Be sure to download and test your video prior to the start of the workshop. Is it visible and understandable from a distance?
- Can the video be shown on the laptop you will be using? For example, some embedded videos require certain apps & not all laptops have those loaded on them.
- Will your video require speakers? Bring your own or check with the hosts to see if speakers can be provided.

**In Practice**

- Given attention spans (20 minutes?), think about techniques that might give people a “rest” and still move the content forward: a brief interactive practice; a challenging question, etc.
- Be dynamic. Be interested in your audience throughout. Ask questions. Ask for thoughts, opinions, responses to the content. What can people learn? Will they change their minds?
- Do not hand out take-away materials at the beginning of the session. People will tend to start reading/looking at them instead of listening to you. The exception might be if they are designed for people to take notes with them.
- If you are showing videos with sound, you might want to be mindful of the volume and/or noise in order not to disturb other sessions.

**Reading**

- Absolutely do not “read” your slides. This diminishes your impact, for the audience may wind up reading the slides instead of listening to you. Plus, it can be limiting and boring.
- Don’t “speak” to the slides --speak to your audience. Don’t turn your back to or attention away from the audience.