

## **Presentation skills - some tips**

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<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/business/bsadmin/staff/s3/jamr.htm>

*Don't break the rules until you have demonstrated your mastery of them.*

### **OHP technique**

Do not display slides with a large amount of text or a long bullet-list and then proceed to talk over it. People (not unnaturally!) try to read whatever you have put on a slide. The end result is that the audience will get confused - caught between trying to read the slide and listen to whatever you are saying at the same time.

If you have a large amount of information to impart, it is usually more effective to use a handout than a slide.

Use progressive disclosure of a slide's content (by covering up parts of it with a piece of paper for example) in order to direct the audience's attention to the information you want them to concentrate on.

If you are using a sheet of paper to cover up parts of slides, don't use one with holes along the edge - it looks naff.

Use a pen on the slide or a pointer or your hand to control and direct the audience's attention.

Switch the projector off when it is not in use. Do not leave it running with a slide that you have finished referring to, or worse, a blank screen. Remember, the screen can easily become the 'Great White Distracter'

Try to remain aware of where you are standing. Can everybody see the slide?

## **The Use of OHPs and image projectors**

### **Images**

The choice of appropriate fonts can be tricky. In a formal business setting, unless you know the audience intimately, it is probably best to go for a font that is not too personal, informal or quirky. This kind of font is not suitable for example, because the audience may think that you are not taking them seriously and being too flippant.

AVOID FONTS LIKE THE THIS ONE ALSO THAT ARE DOWNRIGHT WEIRD. IT IS NOT USUALLY A GOOD IDEA TO IMPRESS PEOPLE WITH THE IDEA THAT YOU ARE MAD AND MAY WELL BE A SERIAL STALKER IN YOUR SPARE TIME!

**It is unwise to use a font smaller than 24 point. If you do,** the audience at the back of the room may have have trouble reading it.

Do a rough, hard-copy draft on paper first - slides are difficult and expensive to change

Before producing your final slide, do a hard-copy on a piece of paper, drop it on the floor in front of you, and if you have any difficulty at all reading it while standing up, then (assuming that you are neither under the influence of particularly peculiar drugs, nor short-sighted and missing your contact lenses) you can bet your audience will have trouble also.

Use colours, but no more than two or three per slide. NB Red = 'danger' or signifies the presence of problems in our culture, so use it very sparingly.

KISS - 'Keep it simple stupid'. Don't use too many words on a slide.

### ***Cartoons and clip-art***

This is largely a matter of personal taste, but assuming that you want to make a good

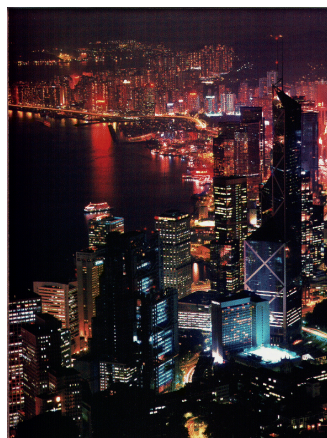
impression and offend as few of your audience as possible, it is not usually a good idea to use cartoons or clip-art to illustrate your presentations. Many people find



images like these two deeply irritating.



However, images can be a very powerful tool in presentations, consequently whenever appropriate and possible you should scan in a photograph of real people and objects instead.



### ***Graphic slide-show projectors.***

Check in advance if the equipment is sufficiently high-powered to allow you to deliver your presentation with all of the room lights up full. Many older digital projectors produce a rather pale image and require you to lower the room lights. The problem with this strategy is that low room lights send many people into a drowsy state. You end up gaining a professional appearance at the expense of a quietly snoring audience. You will need to make a judgement about what is most important to you.

### ***Body language***

Face your audience

Talk to your audience

Make as much direct eye contact with different members of your audience as you can

Smile occasionally - where appropriate!

Be mobile, occasionally. Don't just stand there like a statue, or a rabbit in the headlights.

Move around (a bit). Move your arms (a bit). Use your hands to help you to express concepts (a bit). This is tricky and you will need someone to assess your behaviour and advise you if you are too mobile or too rigid. (see the assessment procedures at the end of this document).

### ***Group presentations***

Know what all the other members of your group are called, and what they will be doing.

At the beginning introduce each member of the group and explain what they are going to be doing. This is usually best accompanied by an explanatory 'overview' slide.

If you are not talking, look like you are listening and interested in what the other members of your group are saying.

If you are not talking,. Get as far out of the audience's line of sight (without leaving the presentation area) as possible. You are just a distraction.