

Introducing English Studies
Chapter 7: Screencast Transcript

Slide 1 [Title slide]

Hello. I am Tamara O’Callaghan, co-author of the textbook *Introducing English Studies*. In this screencast, I will discuss “how to design PowerPoint slides” that are visually effective. English majors are expected to have excellent communication skills. In addition to writing well, you need to understand how visual rhetoric can enhance oral presentations both at college and in the workplace.

Slide 2 [Text]

Topics in this presentation include:

1. Keep Slide Design Simple
2. 1-6-6 Rule
3. Font Style, Size, and Weight
4. Image Resolution and Pixelation
5. Color Choices and Combination
6. ADA Compliance

Slide 3 [Text]

The overall design of your PowerPoint slides needs to be relatively simple. Do not create complicated or busy slides crammed with images and text as they will only confuse the viewer. Limit the amount of text on each slide to your talking points, preferably as a bulleted list. In other words, do not fill the slide with text that you will then read aloud to your audience. Your audience wants to hear what you have to say rather than listen to your recitation of words that they can easily read themselves.

It is important to include images on some of your slides for visual interest, but you should keep them to a minimum. The images you select should always be meaningful and enhance the point you are making in the presentation. Do not cram your slides with text and images; instead, include plenty of negative space on each slide. Best design practices encourage a balance between text, image, and what is often called “white” space.

Finally, limit – if not avoid entirely – animation on your slides. PowerPoint is a powerful tool with lots of dynamic features. However, that does not mean you should use them. Simpler is often better when it comes to presentation slides.

Slide 4 [Text]

Best design practices recommend a 1-6-6 rule for slides as follows

- Each slide should only present one idea
- Each slide should have no more than six bullets in a list

- Each bullet should have no more than six words of text

And, finally, remember to keep the grammatical structure of each bulleted list parallel. If the first bullet begins with a verb, then all other bullets in the list must begin with a verb. If it begins with a noun, then all bullets must begin with a noun. Your viewer will better comprehend and retain the information presented on your slides if they can recognize, even unconsciously, the grammatical pattern of the text.

Slide 5 [Text]

Recommended fonts for PowerPoint slides include the following styles:

- Helvetica
- Garamond
- Futura
- Gill Sans MT
- Rockwell

The name of each font on this particular slide is written in the font style of that name. For the majority of viewers, these fonts are very clear and project well on a screen. In fact, we are using Rockwell for this screencast and all the other screencasts that accompany the textbook.

Slide 6 [Text]

Font size and weight are important considerations for PowerPoint slides. Any font less than 24 point size is too small to be easily seen when projected. The text of your bulleted list on the slide should be 28 to 32 point size, whereas slide titles should be 36 to 44 point size.

It is never a good idea to use multiple font styles on slides. Consistency of font style creates a cohesive visual presentation and does not distract the audience. Instead of combining font styles, consider using the occasional bold font, perhaps even for the entire slide so that the text projects clearly. An italic font often adds subtle visual interest and draws the eye subconsciously to highlighted text. As English majors, you typically use italics only for the titles of books, films, and other textual artifacts. Those rules do not necessarily apply to presentation slides where visual rhetoric, rather than style guide edicts, is the priority.

Slide 7 [Text and Image of Pixelation]

You should always use the highest quality images on your slides. The preferred resolution for all images is 300 dpi (dots per inch). Anything less will result in pixelation when the image is enlarged, resulting in distortion as the pixels of the image will be seen. In addition, consider adding a thin black border around an image in order to make it “pop” against the background of the slide.

All images that you include on your PowerPoint slides should be from the public domain and without copyright restrictions. If you are not sure if an image you have found meets this

requirement, check with your instructor. Always include the source for the image because, just like in-text citations for secondary sources quoted or paraphrased in your essays, attributing the source for images is the ethical thing to do!

Slide 8 [Text and Image of Color Wheel for Computers]

It is possible that you learned about the standard primary colors – red, blue, yellow – in grade school. However, those are not the primary colors for computer screens. Like all electronic systems and devices, computers use an RGB – or red, green, blue – color model. That means the complementary colors for such systems and devices are different.

On the right of this slide, you have the RGB color wheel for computer screens to help you determine appropriate color combinations for your slides.

Slide 9 [Two Images of Color Combinations]

When designing presentation slides, you must select a consistent background color for your slides and font color for your text that project well so that the font is easily read. If the contrast ratio between the background and font colors is too low, the slide will not be readable. The image on the left of this slide illustrates good contrast between background and text.

However, the image on the right demonstrates what can happen if you use a bold and highly saturated color scheme for your slides. The blue-red and red-green combinations create a visual “vibration,” an occurrence wherein the edges of two directly adjacent colors appear to merge, blur, and glow, giving the illusion of motion. This effect can be highly distracting and even disturbing for the viewer and should be avoided.

Slide 10 [Text]

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in the U.S. ADA compliance requires that all electronic and information technology be accessible to people with disabilities. Consequently, your PowerPoint slides should be as accessible as possible to individuals with low vision or color blindness. What does that mean in terms of designing your slides? Well, you need to be sure that, as was explained on the previous slide, the contrast between background and text is sufficient that the text is easily read,

You also need to consider the needs of a colorblind viewer. The most typical form of colorblindness is an inability to see red-green. However, someone who is truly colorblind may only see in shades of gray. That is why this screencast and all the other screencasts for the textbook are using a grayscale slide template.

There a number of great resources online, such as the WebAIM Color Contrast Checker and Coblis Color Blindness Simulator, that help you determine if your PowerPoint slides are ADA compliant. These resources can be found on the textbook website under the tab for Chapter 7.

Like effective writing, effective visual design will enhance your rhetorical and communication skills both in classroom and in the workplace.