PowerPoint, Reconsidered
Technology Across the Curriculum, Joni Tonn

Why should I reconsider?
- PowerPoint as a visual aid can effectively involve an audience.
- It can be used to keep the attention on you, the presenter, and appeal to emotions and multiple learning styles.

Why is this important?
Bullet points in PowerPoint are too heavily relied on, giving presentations a dense, two dimensional, sleep inducing feel. Further, the bounty of tools within PowerPoint can be overwhelming and difficult to learn. Our common misuse of PowerPoint, myself included, has earned the numerous jokes and comedic routines found on the Internet, (I recommend watching comedian Don McMillan’s “Life After Death by PowerPoint,” very funny). Our continued use, despite the numerous less than entertaining presentations we have viewed, demonstrates the tool is still necessary and here to stay. I propose a new perspective, to reconsider the positive potential in PowerPoint. By first recognizing our reliance, then our humorous dependence on certain features we can make small, yet impactful, changes.

How is this done?
By not relying on the software to give the presentation, but aid your presentation, you are given more control to speak with the audience. You are freed from reading slides! Create and use notes for a more conversational presentation; I find outlines are great for this. Next, consider who the audience is. What is their context viewing the images, and how fast can they process these? Also, consider purpose. Presentations used later for notes may be data rich, though using a handout can be a good alternative. If the presentation is not used later, consider a much simpler presentation. The key to PowerPoint is this: control where the audience focuses, either with your voice and/or purposeful use of PowerPoint tools and avoiding Rabbit Holes. Finally, have fun! Allow yourself to play and be creative; personality and energy will be well received in your PowerPoint and any presentation.

Rabbit Holes to Avoid

1. **Density** [too many colors, images, bullet points, ideas]
   - **Con:** Distracts viewers from where you want them to focus.
   - **Fix:** Rely on your notes to cue your discussion content. Integrate color, pictures, and animations only with purpose.

2. **Bullet Points**
   - **Con:** Makes relationships linear, all ideas seem equal.
   - **Fix:** A few are fine, hopefully using few words. Represent ideas using visual cues or fill the screen with an image.

3. **Color and Animation**
   - **Con:** Can distract audience providing no focus point/idea.
   - **Fix:** Use each purposefully. Animation is great to add elements at your pace and color can help direct attention.

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**TYPICAL SLIDE:** Slide that is dense and distracting: colors might be hard to look at. With lots of data all at once, it is difficult to know which part to look at when listening to the speaker, or easy to ignore the speaker.

**RECONSIDERED SLIDE:** Use images so information is easily consumable. Animation can be used to add each element on cue during the presentation and discussed at the speaker’s pace.

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**Rabbit Holes refer to tools within PowerPoint that can be fun to explore, but easily overused.**

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**Bloom’s Taxonomy**

1. Remembering
2. Understanding
3. Applying
4. Analyzing
5. Evaluating
6. Creating

These three slides demonstrate how to pare down data typical in a classroom by transferring more data off the slide. Finally, using an image in the final slide effectively shows relationships. (Special Thanks to Jessica White for the third slide.)

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