

Guide to Well-Designed Presentations

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Formatting Presentations

If your presentation looks good, and is easy to format and re-format, you're halfway to a great document.

Keep the Bullets Short and the Font Legible

Remember the “1/25th rule”, which states that the smallest font shall be no smaller than 1/25th the height of the screen. Far too many presentations are unreadable.

Impress doesn't have the Powerpoint feature that lets you automatically compress a bunch of text onto a slide by reducing the font. I think that's a good thing, since your text really shouldn't be in a smaller font than the default sizes in the Impress templates.

One way you can keep the font legible is to reduce the amount of text in each bullet. You're not presenting all the information in the slide—the bullets are points you will talk to. The content is in you, not the bullets, so feel free to type topics, not sentences.

Use Master Pages for Formatting

One of the best things you can do for yourself is to set up presentations with the content and the formatting as separate as possible. Do this by using master pages as much as possible. When you need to change the formatting, you can simply change the master page, rather than the manual formatting in each slide. See *Creating and Modifying Master Pages (Backgrounds)* on page 455.

Your Audience Wants Information, Not Fade in From Left

Effects are fun. But unless they add value to the presentation, you don't need them. Which is not to say that your presentation shouldn't be entertaining: just use effective effects. Create great content, with lots of illustrations rather than a series of plain bullet points, engaging metaphors, and try not to burrow too far down into technical detail if it's not important to give people what they came for.

That said, it's not a bad idea to keep an appendix of “back pocket” slides that are relevant to detail or questions that people may ask.

For an excellent guide to creating presentations that aren't all bullets and slide transitions, see Kathy Sierra's blog entry here:

http://headrush.typepad.com/creating_passionate_users/2005/06/kill_your_prese.html

Use Custom Presentations for Multiple Audiences

Let's say you need to give three different presentations on the quarterly results to three different audiences, with some slides that are the same and some different. Do *custom presentations* with multiple versions of some slides, rather than entirely different documents, so that you can reuse the shared slides, and keep everything together. This will save you a lot of work, and preserve accuracy in your presentation. See *Creating a Custom Presentation* on page 451.

Note – Remember to check your custom presentations, hidden slides, and speaker notes if you are distributing the presentation electronically.
