Creating Effective Visuals

We all know PowerPoint slides are intended to augment and support a faculty member’s lecture in the classroom. However, a common pitfall is to design lecture slides as lecture notes rather than as a presentation.

**Educational Objectives:** To make visuals more aesthetically pleasing and conducive to students learning and retaining information.

**Tools:** PowerPoint, Excel Charts

**Prior Knowledge / Skills:** A working knowledge of PowerPoint

**Time Required:** 1 to 3 hours working with CITL

**Getting Started**

Here are a few tips to help you to enhance your class presentations and lectures (see Figure 1).

**Get your background right**

- Avoid large areas of vivid colors, as this can be perceived as unpleasant and overwhelming.
- Use white or low-saturation pastel colors for large regions and backgrounds.

**Use fonts that are easy to read.**

- Sans serif fonts like Arial, Helvetica, or Calibri tend to be easiest to read on screens (see Figure 2).
- Avoid decorative fonts or only use them for headers.

**Think about how you use your slides.**

- Are you reading, telling, or explaining? If you read your slides verbatim, you may lose the attention of your audience.
- Include only key points and use the 6x6 rule: no more than 6 words per line and 6 lines per slide.
Layout and Tables

- Change the layout of slides to make them appear more interesting. A bulleted list may not be the best layout for your content. Consider using tables (see Figure 2).

Tables, charts, and images: How and why?

- Use only enough text to clearly label the graphic or chart (see Figure 3).
- Use the same style of graphics throughout the presentation—keep colors and formatting consistent.
- Make the edges of important features more distinct so they will stand out.
- Make your visuals colorblind-safe—use luminance in addition to color to encode information.
- Use bright, saturated colors for small regions, as this will make it easier for the brain to perceive them.

Other things to consider

- Test your presentation once it is complete to make sure that all text, images, and graphics show up.
- Limit the number of transitions used to avoid distracting the audience.
- Use a wireless clicker (available at the NYU Computer Store) so you can move around while you speak.

Contact CITL with any questions about creating effective visuals to enhance your course