

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.

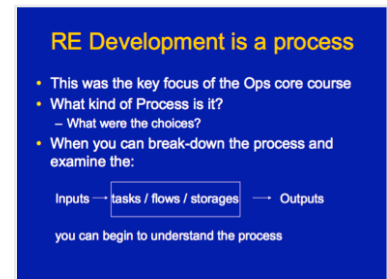
Use fonts that are easy to read.

- 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.

Before



After

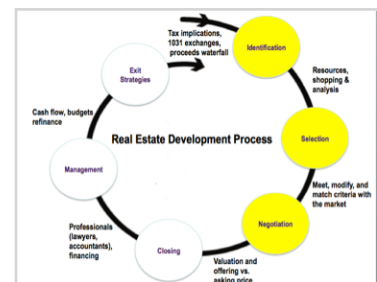


Figure 1. An example of a slide presentation that was enhanced following the tips described in this handout.



Figure 2. Recommended font choices

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

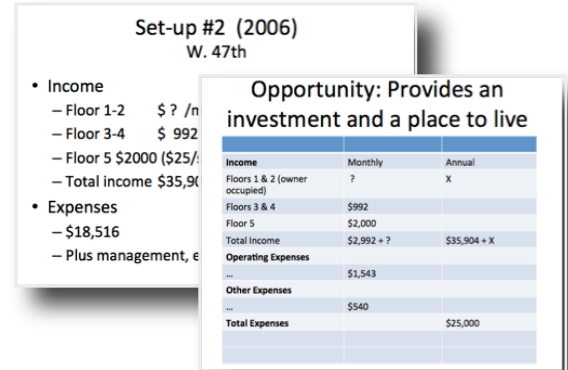


Figure 2. Use of a table over bulleted text



Figure 3. Use of a graph over bulleted text