

## Teaching Tip

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Death By PowerPoint

*Teaching Tips is brought to you by Dan Madigan (The Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology). If you have a teaching tip to share or if you would like to comment on any of the teaching tips, please write to Dan Madigan at [dmadiga@bgsu.edu](mailto:dmadiga@bgsu.edu)*



As the cartoon (Dignon, 2001) suggests, PowerPoint presentations can be dangerous...in fact, deadly. If our students or we have to sit through another boring PowerPoint presentation...well, at the very least, anarchy could occur. I can't tell you the number of times I have come out of a presentation just barely awake after being pummeled by a visual presentation that was heavy on the words (50-100 to a slide) and light on the visuals and audio that make presentations spectacular. Certainly, presentation tools are meant to convey information in a visual/audio way. However, they should not be used as teleprompters. You don't have to settle for presentations that act as an anesthesia for the audience. Yes, it might take some prodding, coaching, and self-motivation, but we can definitely improve our presentations through presentation tools like PowerPoint, Keynote, and Adobe Acrobat so that the audience is excited, not bored, when they leave.

Cherie Kerr, [Death By PowerPoint](#) (2001), points out that a presentation is not unlike a performance on stage in that we need to use tools and strategies that take advantage of the

live audience environment. She also carefully points out that we do not need to be performers per se in order to use presentation tools to our advantage. In this day and age, technology tools such as PowerPoint have given even the non-performers an opportunity to score big in a presentation—if only they pay attention to some basic presentation skills. For example, Kerr suggests that when using audio/visual components

- Don't ever have the visual fighting the audio. Let the visual blend with your narration having it pop up at the right time or having it speak by itself for some brief seconds
- Pace yourself. Know you show well enough to know when to pause, when to talk when a slide is present...how many slide you will need to back up a narrative comment
- Match your remarks to your visuals
- If you are using audio or visual segments, make sure they are carefully orchestrated between other portions of your show.
- It's all about timing

In her book, Kerr also demonstrates ways that presenters can match text with visuals in ways that are far more effective than just showing text (lists, bullet points, long quotes, etc.) on a slide. There is much more in Kerr's short and concise book that you can peruse at the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology. Stop by and browse her book and other books or talk to Dan Madigan for some good ideas on how to make your presentation more effective for both you and your audience.

Next week's teaching tip will continue on the topic of presentations and the tools that make them both either effective or ineffective.

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*You accomplish the great task by a series of small acts --Tao Te Ching*

--Lao Tzu