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Teaching Tip
Presentation Tools

Teaching Tips is written 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

In the last Teaching Tip, I noted that PowerPoint is just one of the many presentation tools available on the market today. Other presentation tools include Keynote (Mac), Adobe Acrobat, and the popular and free Open Office Suite package that includes IMPRESS as its presentation program <<http://www.openoffice.org/index.html>>. Let's not forget software not sold as presentation tools, such as iPhoto (Mac) and Picasa (Windows), but are image manipulation programs that serve quite nicely to support visual and audio forms of expression. Perhaps the most important thing to remember about any discussion involving presentation tools is that they are best used to convey information in a pleasing way through various forms of expression, and not be used as Teleprompters to regurgitate information that students could have learned through readings or other ways.

Dynamic presentations support slide content that enhances the meaning of an idea or concept rather than acting as an anesthesia for the audience. For example, an image or a slideshow of digital images can be used to convey ideas in creative ways that support the different ways humans learn through audio and visual stimuli and storytelling. A diagram, graph, chart, or images are some types of media commonly used to convey ideas through presentation software. Digital stories created through presentation software are powerful ways for both teachers and students to present complicated ideas visually and with supporting audio that might include interviews, music, sound effects and narration. These "stories" can complement lectures and other ways to learn course content and also serve as types of assessment for learning outcomes.

There are other ways in which such software can be used to assess students learning, such as, after presenting concepts and ideas via a slide show a slide can be inserted that asks students to do an assessment activity either individually or in groups. This kind of activity supports an interactive constructivist learning environment where students are encouraged to challenge one another's answers and to support critical inquiry.

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