

UVSC Distance Education

Live Interactive PowerPoint Standards and Guidelines

PowerPoint in the Live Interactive Classroom

In the LI classroom the instructor often uses a computer to display material to students, in this case PowerPoint presentations. Because off-site students view the class through a television there are a couple factors we need to consider in designing PowerPoints.

Resolution

Resolution refers to the number of pixels or dots that appears on screen. Standard computer resolution is generally 800x600 or 1024x768. NTSC TV resolution is approximately 560x240—significantly lower than computer screen resolution. To accommodate this the video signal compresses any computer image that comes through the pipe, lowering the quality of the display students receive. Additionally, colors may be shifted from the computer to the TV.

Size

The video image students receive through a television is “clipped”, meaning that some area around the edges of the PowerPoint will not be visible once the image appears on the recipients’ TV screen. PowerPoint presentations that fill the entire slide with text or images will lose some information when broadcast through the LI system.

To ensure that PowerPoint presentations are readable and effective in the Live Interactive setting, Distance Education Development offers the following standards (required) and guidelines (recommended):

Standards

- **Use large fonts: min. 24pt**
This standard ensures that (1) the compressed image of the PowerPoint’s text is not too pixilated, and (2) that recipients with small TV screens can read all the text easily.
- **Use high-contrast color schemes**
This standard ensures that any color shifts that may accompany an LI broadcast do not affect the readability of PowerPoint presentations. Also, high-contrast color schemes are simply “good design” for PowerPoint presentations.
- **Use ½” margins on all slides**
This standard ensures that no information is clipped on the television display. The Distance Education LI PowerPoint template, available on the WebCT Users Group and upon request, marks the proper margins.

Guidelines

- **Use multiple versions of graphics: full-size and close-ups**

This guideline allows you to refer to specific information on maps, paintings, etc. without fear that the compressed images on the TV screen are too low-quality to be effective.

- **Save a spot on all slides for the picture-in-picture “safe zones”**

The Live Interactive technicians have the ability to place a live picture of you, the instructor, in one of the four corners of your PowerPoint slides, allowing students to see you while you lecture through a presentation. The LI PowerPoint template indicates the proper size and placement of the picture-in-picture “safe zones”.
- **Don't use too many fonts**

One or two fonts is best. For screen presentation, use sans-serif fonts. Serif fonts are acceptable for headings, but for body text sans-serif is more easily readable. Use font size to show information hierarchy.
- **Avoid excessive bold or italic text**

Bold and Italic text, when applied to a large amount of information, can be difficult to read. Italic text can be especially problematic when compressed for a television display.
- **Keep slides simple.**

Quality PowerPoint presentations display only the most essential information, and allow the presenter to elaborate on points. Break long quotes into sections, use key phrases rather than complete sentences, and eliminate unessential words. Limit bulleted items to 3 or 4 per slide, and try to keep the content of each slide at 25 words or less. Also, I suggest you use PowerPoint's Custom Animations to isolate pieces of information and emphasize points.
- **Use different color schemes for different lessons, topics, courses, etc.**

By using different color schemes within a single presentation, you can visually mark that the content or subject is changing. Also, a variety of color schemes based on a single “look” will both unify and vary your presentations, helping to keep students familiar and engaged. Use the Slide Master to create a look for your presentation, and create and save your own templates for use in the future.
- **Use the Distance Education Live Interactive PowerPoint template**

The template is available in 4 incarnations, one for each corner (picture-in-picture safe zones). The template is a set of 2-3 master slides, one title slide and one or two content slides. Each master slide has a background image indicating the margins and the picture-in-picture safe zone. The two different content slides have text-boxes arranged differently to accommodate the picture-in-picture safe zone. When you have finished bringing your content into the slide, you simply select all slides and choose to Omit the background graphics from master to remove the margins and safe zone.