

Ten Tips for Effective Instructor Presentations

*Contributed by Kimberly Vincent-Layton
Instructional Technologist, Humboldt State University*

We have all been faced, at one time or another, with the struggle of creating a fascinating, engaging, interactive presentation. How does one create a presentation that not only engages their students, but also provides the necessary concepts? Not only are there a variety of presentation tools out there, but also a wide variety of techniques and tips.

10 Tips:

1. **Create goals.** What do you want your students to learn?
2. **Reduce content.** Make it simple. Too much content in a presentation can do the opposite of what you want your students to take away. There is so much to remember; they remember almost nothing. By reducing content, we give students time for thinking and therefore providing those 'takeaways.'¹
3. **Make it clear.** This provides students with some direction so they know where they are headed. Emphasize the two to three major concepts at the beginning and conclusion so your students will know what you deem important and what is expected of them.
4. **Don't let the technology be the presentation.** You want the students to focus on you and the concepts you are discussing, not your presentation tool.
5. **Observe the 10/20/30 Rule of PowerPoint.** Venture capitalist, Guy Kawasaki says a presentation should have 10 slides, last no more than 20 minutes, and contain no font less than 30 points.² *However, research shows even shorter presentations (approximately 12 minutes or less) are more effective for maintaining attention. Try building in activities for each concept before you hit that 12-minute mark. This will break up the "presentation" and give time for critical thinking.*
6. **Use visual aids** that are simple, easy to understand, and support the concepts you are trying to convey without too much clutter or animation. Visuals help students to learn more readily and retain more information. Using graphs and charts for statistics or data can often help drive home a point more clearly.

¹ Nelson, C.E. (2001) what is the Most Difficult Step We Must Take to Become Better Teachers? National Teaching & Learning Forum, 10(4), 10-11. <http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/postings/327.html>

² Guy Kawasaki's Blog: http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2005/12/the_102030_rule.html#axzz0RIOffGG9

7. **Add variety and interaction.** Remember, your class will have students with a variety of learning styles. If you only teach to one style you will lose everyone else. This means adding visual, audio, and kinesthetic formats where appropriate. When students engage actively with material, they generally understand it better and remember it longer.³ Begin lectures with questions/problems for the students to consider. Invite students to participate. Using a tool such as Classroom Response Systems, i.e.: Clickers, can be valuable in active learning. Research has shown that clickers increase attendance, increase participation, and increase student enjoyment (Bruff 2009).⁴
8. **Resist the urge to read your slides.** If you read every word, you will definitely lose your students' attention. Limit one idea per slide.
9. **Move around the room and make eye contact.** A presentation remote gives you the flexibility of advancing your slides from anywhere in the room. Making eye contact is important in maintaining the attention of your students.
10. **Plan for a disaster.** Consider what could go wrong. Maybe the network is down or the computer won't be working. Always have a back up.

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³ **Twenty Ways to Make Lectures More Participatory from the** Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University. <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/html/icb.topic58474/TFTlectures.html>

⁴ Bruff, D. (2009). *Teaching with Classroom Response Systems: Creating Active Learning Environments*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.