

DESIGNING YOUR PRESENTATION

By Carolyn H. Brown

Before you start physically creating your *PowerPoint (PP)* file, you should have already completed your Outline and Handout. If you have not done so, stop and do this preliminary step now.

NAME YOUR PRESENTATION

You should have already created the title of your presentation. However, it is a good time to double check it. Make sure the title for your presentation identifies what you will be speaking about, i. e.; *Writing Fiction Versus Non-Fiction*; or *How to Publish Your Book*. If your presentation needs a subtitle, add it to the title page.

If the title you chose is different than the title of your outline and handout files, change those file titles to match the *PowerPoint* title. I have often found that the title I started with is not what I used in the end.

DESIGNING YOUR PRESENTATION

Before starting to design your presentation you should be familiar with the *PowerPoint* program. Take time to try out the various options you plan to use. If you have not used the program before, open a sample *PP* template and try the options to make sure you can personally do what you want within the program. Keep playing with it until you are ready, or put that option you are having trouble with on the back burner for later.

SETTING UP A *POWERPOINT* FILE

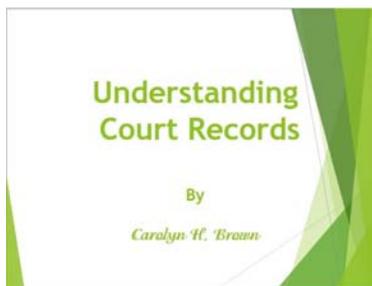
Chose a *PowerPoint* template from those shown under the *Design* tab, or create your own plain background. You may wish to locate a *PP* template online which better fits your needs.

There are two ways to locate *PP* template's online: 1) In *PowerPoint 2013 or 2015* when the entry screen opens it displays the MOST RECENT files used on your computer on the left. On the right of the screen there are many *PP* templates to chose from. Across the top of the screen on the right is a list of different uses. To see the different options available under each tab, click on the tab at the top of the page. When you do this, a new selection is displayed along with the CATEGORY listing for more templates; or 2) GOOGLE "*PowerPoint* templates free" for more options.

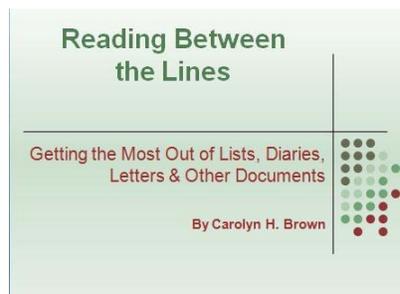
If you find a *PP* template you want to try, then open and save or copy it to your computer before you start your presentation. Whatever you choose, make sure that the design won't be distracting for the viewers.

Don't use a design where the background interferers with the amount of information you can put on each slide. Don't choose a background which has very bright colors, as they can overwhelm the text. You can even create your own slide design once you learn to use the program.

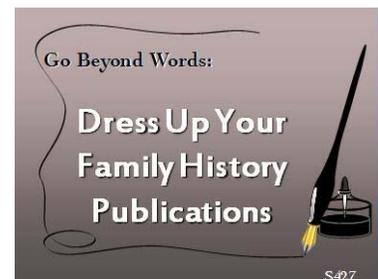
For example:



Sample of a built-in design



Sample of a pre-designed slide from the Internet



Sample of a personally designed slide.

COLOR SCHEME

You can see from the above examples that the text may be any color you choose. The color should always be dark enough to be seen from a distance. Depending on the text color, you may choose to highlight all text.

If the slide background is a light color, the text color should be a darker color which blends with the background. If the slide background is dark, then light text, or a darker text with white shadow, may be in order.

The first slide and the last slide in your presentation may use a text color different from the color used in the other slides, however all other slides should not use more than two colors. That is, one color for the slide title and another for the slide text. However, when adding website URLs, after removing the hyperlink, they may be in the blue of the URL link or another color which blends with the slide background.

REMOVE HYPERLINKS

Remove the hyperlink designation from all URLs and add color to the link text. Use a color or hue for the URL which is not being used for anything else in the presentation.

FONT FORMAT

On all slides except the title and closing slides, always use the same font style, size and color for the slide title and/or the text. The fonts may be different, but not so different that they don't work well together. See the sample for the personally designed slide on the previous page.

The font of choice for all text on the second slide and all further slides is san serif, such as Arial, as it is easier to read from a distance. Using a fancy font may be distracting and hard to read. You want the presentation to be crisp and clear.

USING BULLETS

Though many people do, nothing says you "have to" use bullets in a presentation to separate your thoughts. A simple line space accomplishes the same effect.

When using bullets, keep them small. Large and fancy bullets distract from the presentation. Use the same bullets throughout the presentation. The exception for bullet style is when using numbers to specify the order of the instructions.

TEXT ON SLIDES

Keep the screen simple. Too much text indicates that you don't know your subject well enough to use simple bullet items. Don't read text from the screen unless it applies to a quote from another document, or as a leader to more information. Know your slides show well enough that a few words can start your train of thought.

EXPLANATORY TEXT

When using explanatory text under an item, always indent the text one tab space and use one size smaller text font. Keep the explanatory text as simple as possible. Too much text on the screen is distracting to the class. Keep that information for the handout.

USING PHOTOGRAPHS & GRAPHICS

Throughout your presentation you will want to use some graphics. It really helps to add character to the presentation. Just words can get very boring for the audience. You can use photographs, copies of documents, or other graphics you find to liven up your presentation.

The graphics must apply to the text on the screen and be used sparingly. Don't use a graphic on every screen, only where the graphic itself adds to the text. Over use of graphics is a bad as not using any at all.

If you take graphics from the internet that maybe proprietary, cite the source at the bottom of the screen where it is inserted into *PowerPoint*. If you have a card creation program like *Print Master*, those graphics can be used without citation as they are considered open-source.

USING TRANSITIONS

Transitions identify the way each screen will appear during the presentation. Transitions can enhance a presentation, however using multiple transitions may detract as well.

USING ANIMATION

PowerPoint has several ways for information to be displayed on the screen using animation. Take advantage of this option. However, don't over do it.

Often slides have multiple bullet items which when displayed all at once and may show a very cluttered screen. The use of animation allows you to only show what you want to talk about.

When using animation for a bullet item which has sub-text, and there are other bullets on the slide, bring the sub-text in with the bullet. If there is sub-text to a single bullet, then the sub-text may be displayed individually.

Some speakers use animation to display the first bullet item with the slide title. They then display each sub-text item one at a time.

When including graphics in a slide use animation to bring it in with the appropriate text.

CHANGING A TEMPLATE

There are times when you may wish to change the master slide in a template. One of the major reasons is to add a graphic or to display the slide number.

SAVE YOUR PRESENTATION

Save your presentation to the folder you created for the *Outline* and *Handout*. I found as I am working I need to save my file about every 15 minutes to half hour. That way I know I won't lose anything if something happens to my computer or power. Better safe than sorry.

I also save the file to a backup file when I am finished. Then, if I later want to change the file, I have the original as backup.

REVIEW YOUR PRESENTATION

You will need to review your presentation several times to make sure it looks, and flows, as you want. Have someone else look at it as well. They will see things you missed.

When you are finished with the *PowerPoint*, compare it with the handout. If you change anything affecting the handout, make sure you change it to match the presentation.

NUMBER OF SLIDES

Many speakers include too many slides in their presentation to complete them in the time allotted. As a rule-of-thumb, a one hour presentation should have about 25 slides, depending on the amount of information being covered. When you review the presentation for timing, delete slides so you complete your presentation in approximately 50 minutes to allow time for questions and answers.

Carolyn H. Brown

GenieCarol@gmail.com