

Using PowerPoint for Demonstrations

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Woodturners presenting demonstrations over the past few years, both at group and WAWA events, have used their laptops and various programs to illustrate aspects of their demonstration.

A big advantage of this means of presentation is the ability to illustrate aspects with diagrams and photographs. The disadvantage is to believe you can cram them full of text to describe what you are doing.

If you go on the Web you will get lots of advice from “experts” on the rules of using PowerPoint presentations but these are almost all from professional speakers talking about presentations to business people or teachers presenting to children or fellow teachers.

My suggestions that follow are the experience gained, not from university presentations, but from more than ten years of talking to mature age learners, such as we have here at Melville. I gained lots of feedback from those with hearing difficulties, poor eyesight and just a little slow in catching on.

Let’s start with the text size. The people at the back cannot read anything less than

type size **28** and **36** is sometimes useful. This means you can’t fit many words into your slide and that’s a good thing, More about that later.

Text style is also important. Keep it simple such as this (Calibri body), or Helvetica. Avoid fancy text such as *Handwriting* or *Chancery* as these are not easy to read in a slide context, nor is Times Roman.

Restrict your text in each slide – the rule is “6 by 6”. Try to limit yourself to six words per line and six lines of text per slide. More than that and you are in danger of losing the audience.

If you are going to give a definition of the item you are turning there are probably more than six words needed. That means you put ONLY that definition on this slide. Don’t put qualifiers on this slide, go to the next.

Don’t present all six lines at once!

While you are expanding on the first line – not just reading it out – they are reading the other lines and not getting the full message.

Use the ability to animate by presenting one line at a time, either with a remote or clicking on “return”. Depending on the importance of the first line to the next you can also consider using the ability to delete that line on the click to the next line.

Stay with black print on simple plain slide backgrounds. Some colours just don't work for many people with eyesight problems, including those with colour blindness. And, a picture is worth a thousand words! Just make sure they are relevant and of good quality. Crop out irrelevant backgrounds.

Now for animations. Used sparingly they can focus the audience on the point you want to make. For example, bring a line of text slowly in from the bottom of the slide can emphasise the importance of the point you are making giving them plenty of time to read and absorb your message. Bringing a racing car zipping in from the side can lighten the presentation when it is appropriate to your topic. A bit of humour is always appreciated.

