How to Prepare Slides

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PowerPoint has occupied the public speaking area. I would like to share my thoughts and experiences in "How to prepare slides". Certainly the content in this article is not totally right and cannot cover all the cases forever. I hope it can help you in some aspects, and comments are always welcome.

1. What is Your Goal for Using Slides?

In the very beginning, we need to ask ourselves what is the goal for this slides. This will help us know which information is crucial and can be show in the slides.

- If we use slides to show ideas, the content in the slides should tightly focus on the new idea (the basic idea, your motivation, the reason why you think it is worth discussing etc.).
- If we use slides to discuss current project, you need to describe your current progress in a few words or figures, your results and problems.
- If the goal is to give an academic talk, you have to consider more aspects such as time limit, theme, audience etc.

In one words, keep the slides simple and in accordance with your goal.

2. Outline

Before you start making your slides, a general outline based on your goal will serve as a guideline and help you to record important information and crucial points. In general cases, I would list the outline as shown in the table below.

Idea Description	Project Discussion	Academic Talk
- Motivation - Idea (Goal) - Mathematical Formulation - Related Work (and reasons why it cannot solve the problem) - Challenges - Contributions	- Goal (of this discussion) - Current Progress - Results and Analysis - Your Discussion (problems you meet and solutions you propose)	- Title and Your Introduction - Motivation - Goal - Related Works - Challenges and Contributions - Framework - Solution - Results (Good or Failed) - Discussions and Summary (Future Work)

3. Visibility

Good visibility and layout in each slide helps you attract audiences / co-authors attention and transmit information.

3.1 Text

- Less Words: I think we should remember a "Less Words" rule. This is especially important when you give a talk (no matter idea description or academic talk). The role of slides is an auxiliary tool for presentation, thus YOU are the leader of the talk not the slides.
- Less Bold or Coloured Words: usually "Bold" or "Coloured" is used to highlight content in a paragraph or sentence. Too much highlight means no highlight.
- Alignment: different text size means its levels. For example, the title should have the largest size, the subtitle the second, and so on.
- I do not like using numbers before a title.

3.2 Image

- Resolution: do not use images in wrong resolution (unless you are researching on related problems). For example, if a 64*64 image shown in the 128*128 size, the image would be blurred.
- Layout: when you show multiple images, you'd better align them in a good way. Sometimes you need to scale some images, do remember keep the original length-to-width ratio.
- Special effects: keep it simple. The great way makes everything the most simple.

3.3 Colour

- Background Colour: it is better to use dark background with light letters when you give a talk. Because the bright background cause pupils to contract making it hard to notice dark objects on the background. **BUT**, in communication, it is better to use bright background with dark text, because it is easier for people to add comments (in most cases the colour of the text is black by default). I don't think background with complex pattern or
- Letter Colour: the letter colour should depend on the background colour. It is better to use contrast colour of the background, e.g. **BLACK** background with WHITE text and YELLOW can be as highlight colour.
- Colour in One Page: colours in one page should be harmonious. I think it is better to use less than 4 colours in one page.

3.4 Animation

Animation makes your slides vivid and attractive. But if you are not good at making animation in PowerPoint, it is better to use multiple slides to show the animation than a rough animation.

Also, if it is used for project discussion, video is better than animation in PPT. Because animation can only be shown under full screen mode.

3.5 Equation

Sometimes we directly use screenshot equation in slides, it works well if the slide has similar text and background colour with the screenshot. If not, it would be ugly. At this time, it is better to EDIT the equation again in the slides.

In conclusion, content in the slides is a reflection of what you think for a topic. The whole structure of it should be a complete system or a story. All the visibility aspects make slides more attractive and vivid. There are numerous good presentation slides in SIGGRAPH and SIGGRAPH Asia. Our learning materials are ubiquitous throughout the Internet. What's more, we have abundant practicing chances to improve our slides-making skills. Try to figure out what works for you, and do it.