

WORDS ON SLIDES

If you use PowerPoint, a few principles and tips to keep in mind when using type on a slide:

1. Don't read the words. It's bad enough that people use PowerPoint as a sort of teleprompter. Much worse that you don't trust the audience enough to read what you wrote. If you want them to read the precise words, stand quietly until they do. If you want to paraphrase the words, that can work.
2. But even better, remember that slides are free. You can have as many as you like. That means that instead of three bullet points (with two sentences each) on a slide, you can make 6 slides. Or more. The energy you create by advancing from slide to slide will seduce most of the people in your audience to read along to keep up. Slides that people read are worth five times more than slides that you read to them.
3. Better still, don't use words. Or, at the most, one or two keywords, in huge type. The rest of the slide is a picture, which I'm told is worth 1,000 words. That way, the image burns itself into one part of the brain while your narrative is received by the other part. The keyword gives you an anchor, and now you're hitting in three places, not just one.
4. When in doubt, re-read rule 1. Don't read the slides.
5. Many organizations use decks as a fancy sort of memo, a leave-behind that provides proof that you actually said what you said. "Can you send me the deck?" A smart presenter will have two decks. One deck has plenty of text, but then those pages are hidden when the presentation is performed live.
6. Reconsider the memo. They're underrated when it comes to educating numbers of people in an efficient way. Follow up with a test if you're worried about compliance. Live meetings attended in sync are a luxury. Don't waste them.