

↻ Avoid the Big Five Presentation Mistakes ↻

Microscopic Fonts. You will be presenting to (depending upon your session) between fifty and three thousand people. A font size appropriate for a paperback book is not appropriate for overheads or slides in a huge lecture hall.

- If you are using overheads you should be able to put them on the floor and read them easily while standing up. If you can't, the fonts are too small.
- If you are using 35mm slides you should be able to read them at arm's length. If you can't the fonts are too small.
- If you are using a computer, you should be able to read the screen from ten feet (three metres) away. If you can't, the fonts are too small.

Cluttered Slides. Visuals work best when used to highlight your main points. They work poorly when they contain too much detail or are overly complex. Remember: when your audience is busy puzzling through your slides they are not listening to you and your wonderful ideas.

- Try desperately to avoid the temptation to fill your slides with 10pt code printouts.
- Instead, use 3 to 5 bullet items per slide with keywords and short sentences.
- Put these crystal ideas on landscape slides (portrait slides never quite fit on the projector and the audience is always crying "higher" or "lower". In addition, landscape layout encourages a concise, uncluttered visual presentation.

Unreadable Colours. Background graphics are great in marketing presentations but, unless you have a graphics designer working with you, they almost always look bad in technical presentations. Remember, the information is the useful part; the graphics is just sugar.

- Use high contrast in your visuals: light text on a dark background for slides and just dark text for overheads.
- Do not use red and green together, nor either of these colours with brown or grey - be kind to your colour blind audience.

No Practice. Please, please, please. Practice your presentation before you show up at OOPSLA. Nothing is more obvious to an audience than someone who hasn't even taken his or her slides out of the bag until 30 seconds before the talk. And nothing is more insulting ...

Wrong A/V Equipment. If you don't return this A/V request form to Nancy Wilson before August 15, 1997 you won't have the correct equipment for your presentation; you'll look very foolish trying to show 35mm slides using an overhead projector!