Goof's Good Advices to PowerPoint Presentations

The universe is a mighty big universe, and the only way we can come to understand even the smallest slice of it is through teamwork. Natural Science is a collaborative enterprise between scientists and specialists who work all over the globe. It is essential, therefore, that scientists can communicate to each other the results of their own research, dialogue with one another, share ideas and insights, and trade methods and procedures. One way they do this is through publication of formal papers in scientific journals. The other way is through science conferences. At these conferences, scientists present their work either in a public talk or by way of a poster. Conference participants are free to move from room to room to attend whatever talks interest them most, and to visit the poster sessions. Public talks and poster sessions provide scientists an opportunity to ask questions and discuss their fields in a free exchange that isn't possible with journal publications.

Microsoft PowerPoint has become the standard tool for giving public talks at science conferences. It is also an excellent tool for assembling the text and graphics that go into the construction of a poster. Good advices follow:

☺ First Know How to Navigate

Powerpoint has a handful of different "Views" for building and giving a presentation. Jump back and forth between them using the small icons in the lower left hand corner (or else by selecting them from the View menu). The three Views are:

★ Normal View – For building each individual slide …adding text, pictures, graphs, tables, animated graphics, and so on

★ Slide Sorter View – For inserting new slides, rearranging the overall sequence of slides, adding "transitions" between slides, or jumping to a particular slide

★ Slide Show View – For delivering your presentation to an audience. When you go to Slide Show, it begins on whichever slide was already highlighted.

When giving a presentation in Slide Show view, you advance step-by-step through your slides by clicking the mouse or by hitting any of these keys: the space bar, the right arrow (→), or the down arrow (↓). You can go backwards by hitting the left (←) or up arrows (↑). To get out of Slide Show view, hit the Escape key (Esc).

Practice Tasks …CHECK THESE OFF AS YOU GO!

❑ Find the "CBGS Powerpoint Practice" folder on your computer. Go in and double-click the "Sample Pres" file to launch PowerPoint and open the file. It will probably open in Normal view. Switch to Slide Sorter view, highlight the "Bulleted Text" slide, then jump back to Normal view.

❑ Go into Slide Show view. Hit Escape to get back out.

❑ In Slide Sorter view, click on the slide that says "Da End!" and drag it to the empty space behind the "Bulleted Text" slide, thereby rearranging the order of slides.

❑ Select slide #1, then go into Slide Show view. Now use the space bar, mouse, and/or arrow keys to step all the way through the presentation. Notice that not only slide transitions, but also animated elements are triggered by your keystrokes and/or mouse clicks. To go backwards, use the arrows.

☺ *Get Off to a Smart Start: the Slide Master*

Whenever you create a new presentation, begin straight off by setting up a "Master" layout with a pre-chosen background, font styles and colors, etc. You do this by going to the **View menu… Master… Slide Master**. Advices and options:

★ A general rule of thumb: when presenting in a darkened room (which you'll be in at VCU, but maybe not at VJAS), use light letters against a dark background. For a well-lit room, put dark letters against a light background.

★ Powerpoint offers a broad choice of pre-fabricated Master "Templates," but their layouts can sometimes confine your working space on the slide. And some of their backgrounds are too "busy" or "loud." Simpler is better, and often it's best just to create your own background and pick your own fonts.

★ Since you'll be using someone else's computer on the day of your presentation, and not all computers offer the same fonts, be sure to choose one of the more common fonts like Arial, Tahoma, Times New Roman, or Comic Sans. *Remember, readability is job one!!!*

★ Know that on any particular slide that you're building, you can override the background and/or fonts of the Master Layout. Also know that you can make changes to the Master Layout any time you want, and this will instantly update all your slides (except those where you've already overridden the Master background or fonts).

Practice Tasks …CHECK 'EM OFF!

❑ Under the *File* menu, select *New…* then choose *Blank Presentation* off to the right. Now under the View menu, select *Master… Slide Master*.

❑ Right click anywhere beside the master slide, then choose *Slide Design*. A long list of options appears. Click on any for a preview. You should probably go for one with light letters against a dark background.

❑ Now that you've chosen a handsome Design Template, let's toss your choice in the trash and instead custom design a master background of your own. Hit the *Undo* icon (or Ctrl-z, or Edit… Undo) to get back to your original, unmodified master slide. Then right click beside the slide, select *Background…* …and under the dropdown arrow go to *More Colors…* After choosing a color (preferably a dark one), you can further modify it under *Fill Effects…* (also under the dropdown arrow). Play around with the "Gradient" options. The "Texture" tab has some nice alternatives, too. *OK. Apply*.

❑ Next choose a nice font to complement your new background. First highlight the Title area, then manipulate the font style, size, shadowing, color, etc. under *Format… Font…* Size 36 or 32 is usually plenty big for titles.

❑ Finally, highlight the bulleted text and repeat the font procedure. You should probably use the same font as your title. You can choose a different bullet under *Format… Bullets and Numbering…* For further options, hit *Customize…* You can find alternative bullets under Wingdings, Webdings, and Symbol.

❑ Once satisfied with your Master Layout, return to Normal View.

☺ *Next Step: A Tight Title Slide*

Give your presentation a good lead…

- ★ Title slide should include your research title, author(s), institution (CBGS), and conference date.

- ★ If you're unhappy with any font sizes and such, feel free to change them (it won't affect the Master layout). Also feel free to resize, center, or drag components of the slide, in order to give it a nice "balanced" look.

- ★ You may wish to include a photo, figure, or map on your title slide (see below).

Practice Tasks

- ❑ Right click on or near your first slide, select **Slide Layout...** and choose the Title Slide layout. Now click inside the title area and type "Powerpoint Practice." Then in the subtitle area insert your name, our school, and the date of our Symposium, all stacked atop one another.

- ❑ The title and subtitle are <u>Text Boxes</u>. If you click on the **outer border** of a text box, you can drag it somewhere else or resize it. For example, you may have to do this to make "Chesapeake Bay Governor's School" fit all on one line.

- ❑ Your name should be a smaller font than the title, and your school and date should be smaller fonts than your name. Make it so.

- ❑ Space and balance everything out.

☺ *Write "Headline" Style! Few Words. Sentence Fragments Okay.*

As you design and build your slides, keep in mind that your slides are there to <u>help</u> you explain things to your audience, NOT to repeat every word that will come out of your mouth during your talk.

- ★ Keep text spare! Use written words economically! Do NOT write lengthy sentences and paragraphs on your slides, as it's impossible for the audience to listen to you and read extended passages at the same time.

- ★ T'ain't no English paper, here! Sentence fragments and incomplete sentences are fine. Cast text as though they're <u>newspaper headlines</u>.

Practice Tasks   …CHECK 'EM OFF!

- ❑ Go to Slide Sorter view. Click to the right of Slide #1. Now under the **Insert** menu, choose **New Slide...** Click on your new slide, then return to Normal view. From the Slide Layout options, select the Bulleted List style ("Title & Text") (if Slide Layout options aren't visible, right click the slide…).

- ❑ Click in the title window, and type "Why I Dig CBGS"

- ❑ Now click in the bullets box and type "Ms. Brown's outfits. Spectacular!" Hit return and type "Mr. Addo's stories. Surreal!" Return. "Mr. Goff's insights. Super-genius!" …or whatever.

- ❑ You may be unhappy with how closely spaced your bulleted lines are. Uncramp them by highlighting all three lines, then go to the **Format** menu, **Line Spacing...** Increase the "Before paragraph" setting. OK.

- ❑ Are your fonts big enough? Too big? For bullets, 28's a good size. (This is something you can change here or on the Slide Master.)

☺ *A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words!*

Photos, figures, and graphics not only make your slides attractive and engaging, but can also foster a clearer understanding of your project – especially for the "visual learners" in the audience.

★ Good Advice: Before adding and working with photos and figures, activate both the <u>Drawing</u> and <u>Picture</u> Toolbars (found under the View menu). The Picture Toolbar allows you to trim ("crop") photos, brighten them, darken them, improve the contrast, etc. The Drawing Toolbar makes it easy to add shapes, arrows, text boxes, and such to your slides. It also enables you to align objects with one another, group several objects together into a single movable unit, and so on. Very helpful!

★ Give your pictures and figures borders that are consistent with your presentation's general color scheme.

★ CBGS has a scanner that you can use to import photos and textbook figures into your presentation.

★ To save a photo off the Internet, right click it and "Save Picture As…" Most folks won't mind your borrowing photos for *strictly educational purposes.*

★ Maps! It's always nice to include a map of your study site (if applicable), and you can easily create your own topo map at <u>www.digital-topo-maps.com</u>. Simply double-click on the U.S. map to zoom and center. Repeat, repeat… Once you've zoomed in on your study site, click either "Landscape" or "Portrait" underneath. The map will be converted to a printable topographic map. To save an electronic copy, simply right-click on the map and "Save Picture As…"

★ Movies! You can easily insert both Media Player (.avi files) and Quicktime (.mov files) movies into your presentation (in some cases, you may have to create a "hyperlink" …see below). *ALERT!!!* …when you insert a movie into your PowerPoint presentation, the movie does NOT become part of the file. Rather, PowerPoint simply stores the "address" where the video file is located on your computer. *This means that when you transfer your Powerpoint file to another computer, you will also have to transfer the movie file, and then <u>REINSERT</u> it into your Presentation!!!*

★ Hyperlinks: To create a "link" to a video, animation, or website, simply use one of the "Autoshapes" on the Drawing Toolbar to create a <u>button</u> on your slide. Then right click it… Hyperlink… and Browse to the object you wish to insert.

★ When borrowing a photo, movie, or diagram from the Internet, a textbook, etc., *ALWAYS CREDIT YOUR SOURCE!!!!!!!!!!!!!* (with a small caption).

Practice Tasks …CHECK 'EM OFF!

❑ Go to *View… Toolbars…* and turn on both the *Drawing* and *Picture* toolbars.

❑ Add the CBGS logo to your "Why I Dig CBGS" slide as follows: click the "Insert Picture" icon on the Drawing Toolbar (alternative: under the *Insert* menu, select *Picture… From File…*). Now browse your way to the "CBGS PowerPoint Practice" folder. Select the CBGS logo. Insert.

❑ Now drag the logo off to the right. Then resize your bulleted text box so that it no longer overlaps your new picture.

❑ To resize the picture itself, highlight it (click on it), then grab a <u>corner</u> and pull. Next, give it a border by right-clicking on it, selecting **Format Picture… Colors and Lines** tab… and then choosing a color, style, and weight.

❑ Here's a neat trick to help you arrange the objects on your slide: First, grab the lower border of your bulleted list and trim it (resize it) so that it just barely contains your text. Now simultaneously highlight <u>both</u> the list <u>and</u> the CBGS logo by holding down the shift key and clicking on one then the other. Finally, go to the **Draw** menu, **Align or Distribute… Middle**. Et voilà!

❑ Let's create and insert a map of the CBGS neighborhood. Get on the internet and go to <u>www.digital-topo-maps.com</u> (see instructions above). Create a topo of the greater Bowling Green area. Save it to the "CBGS PowerPoint Practice" folder. Now go back into PowerPoint, insert a new slide, choose the Title Only layout, and entitle it "Home Sweet Home." Now insert your map and give it a nice border.

❑ Often you will want to "crop" or "trim out" part of a picture. It's easy. First click on your map to highlight it. On the Picture Toolbar, now, find the **Crop** icon. Click it. Notice the change in your cursor. Now pass it over one of the 8 border tabs on your map. Grab and drag toward the interior. Release. Neat huh? Crop and resize your map as you see fit.

❑ Now let's give credit where it's due… Click the **Text Box** icon on your Drawing Toolbar (or select it from the Insert menu), then click and drag to open a rectangular text box on the slide. Type "Courtesy of www.digital-topo-maps.com" inside. Adjust the font, font color, and font size (12 or 14 is good), and drag the text box onto a corner of your map.

❑ Next, use the shapes and arrows on your Drawing Toolbar, plus another Text Box, to label "CBGS Bowling Green" on your map. Make it big, bright, and readable from afar! (It's tasks like this where **Draw… Align…** may come in handy.)

❑ One more splash of color: let's install a movie in your presentation. First, insert a new slide (Title Only layout), and call it "What I Aim to Do Right after Graduation." Then go to the **Insert** menu, **Movies and Sounds… Movie from File…** and browse your way to our practice folder, where you'll find the "getaway" file. OK. If asked, say that you want the movie to start when you click on it (not automatically). As with pictures, you can resize your movie frame, give it borders, etc. Now go into Slide Show view and give your video a test run (just click on it). (Note: if the video doesn't work, you may have to create a hyperlink instead; see instructions above.)

☺ *The Heart of a Science Talk: Graphs & Tables*

Needless to say, you'll want to include graphs and/or tables of your data…

★ Although you can build graphs in PowerPoint itself, the best way to put them into your presentation is to import your originals from Excel. However, you will probably find that certain things get resized and look different upon import into PowerPoint. Consequently, you may have to go back to Excel and manipulate certain elements of your graph to make it look better in PowerPoint. *Remember! Don't stress and strain your audience's eyes!*

★ Tables, too, can either be imported from Excel or created in PowerPoint itself. If importing, you'll probably want to give the cells the desired format (borders, background color, font, etc.) <u>in Excel</u> BEFORE you import. In PowerPoint itself, be sure to activate the *Tables & Borders* toolbar (under View menu) for easy manipulation of your table. Give your tables some color!

Practice Tasks …CHECK 'EM OFF!

❑ Insert a new slide (Title Only style), and call it "Epidemic"

❑ Launch Excel and find the "epidemic" file in our practice folder. Open it and find the graph. Click somewhere in the white periphery so that the entire thing is highlighted. Now hit the **Copy** icon (or ctrl-C, or go to **Edit… Copy**). Jump back to PowerPoint and **Paste** in the graph. Resize it. Right-click it, proceed to **Format Object…** and give the graph a light but nonwhite background (white's too bright on the audience's eyes).

❑ Insert yet another new slide and entitle it "Sleep Trends." Now hop back to Excel, find the sleep table, highlight the relevant cells, and go to the **Format** menu, **Cells…** to give the table the look you'll want it to have in PowerPoint. Then **Copy** and **Paste** into PowerPoint. Resize. If unhappy with fonts, colors, or borders, you can call up the **Tables & Borders** toolbar from the View menu, and modify.

☺ *Final Touches: Animations, Transitions, and Cleaning House*

Once your slides are all built, it's a good idea to go back and add a few cosmetic touches here and there…

★ Run the Spell checker on your presentation (under **Tools** menu).

★ Go to the Slide Sorter and rearrange the sequence of slides if necessary. Also, this is where you can put slide-to-slide "Transitions."

★ Revisit all the individual slides in Normal view and make sure everything is evenly spaced, properly aligned or centered, and "balanced out." If desired, you can animate the entrance of bulleted text and objects on your slides, and even add sound effects. *(But for a science talk, use sound sparingly, if at all!)*

★ *SUBSTANCE FIRST …**not too many distractions!!!***

Practice Tasks …CHECK 'EM OFF!

❑ Go to **Tools** menu and run the spell checker.

❑ Go to Slide Sorter view and drag Slide #3 to slip it in between Slides #1 and #2. Next, hold down the shift key and click slides 2-6. Now go up to the **Slide Show** menu, **Slide Transitions…** Options appear to the right. Experiment with various types of transition and their speed.

❑ Next, go into your "Why I Dig CBGS" slide (Normal view). Click on the bulleted text box. Now go to **Slide Show** menu, **Custom Animation…** Options appear to the right. Highlight all the text behind the <u>first</u> bullet (only). Now hit the Add Effect button, and then select a method of "Entrance." Repeat for the <u>second</u> and <u>third</u> bullets. Now go to Slide Show view and test it.

❑ Now let's jazz up your "Home Sweet Home" slide with some nifty animations. First you'll need to "group" your map and the "Courtesy of <u>www.digital-topo-maps.com</u>" textbox together. While holding down the shift key, click on your map and then on the little textbox. Then go to **Draw… Group**. You've now bound them all together and can drag them as a single unit anywhere you want on the slide. Try it and see!

❑ Second, give your map a smart animated Entrance, like Zoom or Dissolve. Try it out.

❑ Finally, **Group** together the arrow and "CBGS Bowling Green" sign. Give this group an animated Entrance of your choice. Finally, on the list of animated objects off to the right, visit the dropdown box underneath your second animated object (the label & arrow). Adjust the **Timing** so that this item will come in automatically after a second or so. If you want, you can add a sound effect, too. Run it once in Slide Show view. How's it look?

When your presentation is complete, call Mr. Goof and run through it for an easy A!