

Using PowerPoint To Present Technical Content



Problem: As one teaches, there are times when available instructional media/technology fail to support student needs. This may occur when:

- Existing materials are old and outdated.
- Materials are not available to illustrate local cultures or surroundings.
- Commercial materials are not available in a specialized discipline.
- Content includes a new concept or correlation of data that is not yet available in a desired form.
- Available materials do not match objectives or learner characteristics.

Solution: To overcome these problems, teachers must often design and produce their own media. Producing your instructional media helps visualize your presentation and ensures that it supports identified objectives and is well integrated into the instructional process. It also increases the likelihood that the media will match student needs, abilities, and learning styles. One solution to the problem of producing instructional media to match student / curricular needs can be found in the use of PowerPoint.

PowerPoint is currently one of the best selling presentation graphics packages in the world. This user friendly program can be used to support the development of learning environments to enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, and performance skills in students. PowerPoint enables the presenter to create professional-looking presentations/visuals through the use of text handling, outlining, drawing, graphing, and clip art manipulation. These visuals can be used as a data projection slide show, handouts, 35 mm slide presentation, video segment, or effective overheads (Microsoft, 2002).

Using PowerPoint: Presenting content and supporting learning can be done efficiently and effectively with PowerPoint. When designing transparencies or data projections be sure to consider the A, B, C's of good design. Remember, it is important to use good lesson design principles when planning instruction. Also, take into consideration the room or learning environment where the media will be used. Check the room's lighting, seating arrangements, screen placement, and other variables that may affect the use of your media.

PowerPoint, to be effective, must be used correctly -- be sure to actively involve students in the presentation and periodically check for understanding and adjust instruction accordingly.

PowerPoint Advantages:

- Helps organize content to be presented,
- Supports learning by providing visual clues and examples or models,
- Can support many different forms of media (e.g., slides, data projection, etc.),
- Handout pages provide excellent documentation of presentation content;

PowerPoint Disadvantages:

- If not used appropriately it can reduce active learning,
- Users often over-use the bells and whistles of PowerPoint – that do not support learning;
- Takes a certain amount of time and skill to develop initial materials.

Bibliography:

Microsoft (2002). Microsoft PowerPoint. Microsoft Corporation.

Shackelford, R. (2003). Projected media recommendations. Ball State University [On-line].

Available: <http://www.bsu.edu/web/rlshackelfor/itedu/projectedmediarecommendations.htm>