

# Power Point Presentations

## Creating the Best Slide Layout

The graphic design of a power point slide can be crucial to how educationally effective it is particularly if you are trying to appeal to the many different learning styles there are.

### Layout

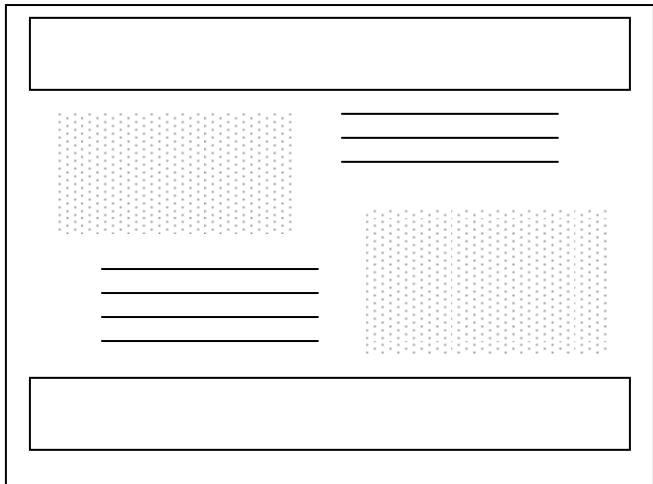
Once you are aware of your content, the next stage of your presentation will be the lay out. An effective layout can make complex information easier to understand.

When planning your layout keep in mind that, in the English-speaking world, we are culturally conditioned to read from top left to bottom right. This makes the top left corner the focal point or the place where the eye will initially look. Design decisions can be made to allow for this tendency by placing the dominant element in this position. Alternatively emphasis can be placed on other areas of the screen by implementing other design strategies. For example, the eye will generally travel from the largest screen element to the smallest. Careful consideration of colour can have the same effect; the eye being led from the strongest or darker colours first.

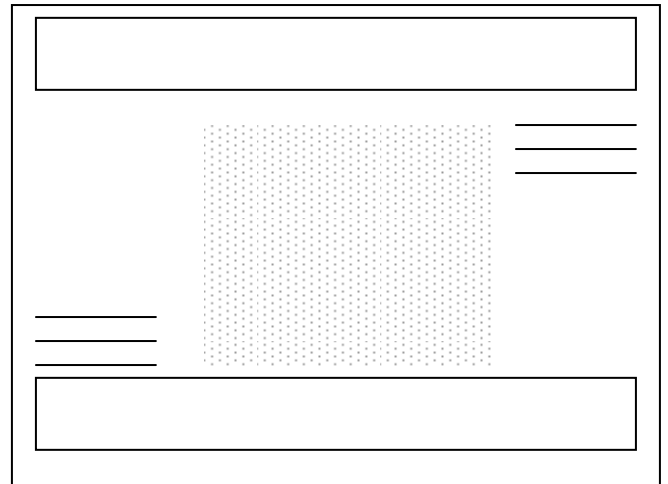
The layouts below are examples of well-balanced alternative ways of leading the eye to different parts of the screen. Whichever one is chosen will be determined by the types of individual screen elements which are involved, and their relative importance.

Remember - many computer hours can be saved by working out a rough sketch before hand. Paper cut outs can be used to represent text and graphics and move them around on paper to achieve the best results.

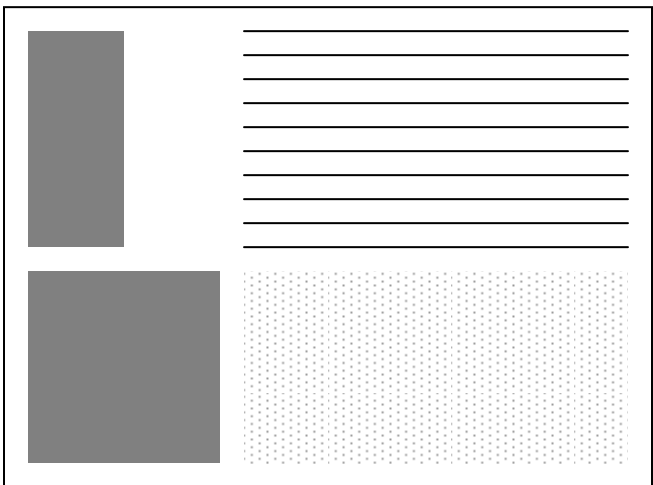
# Layouts



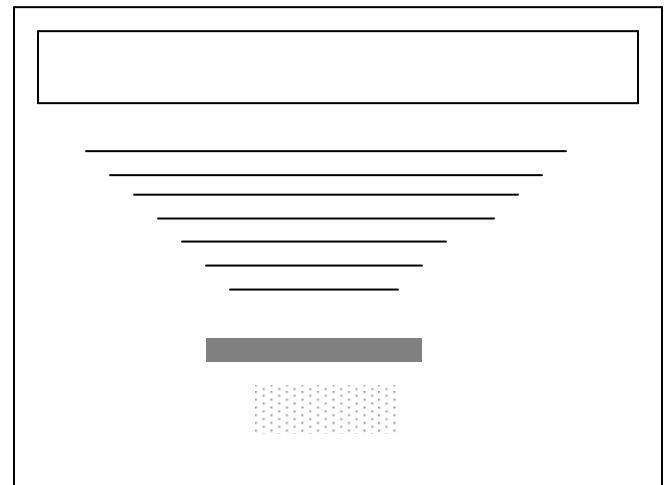
**The S layout pattern**



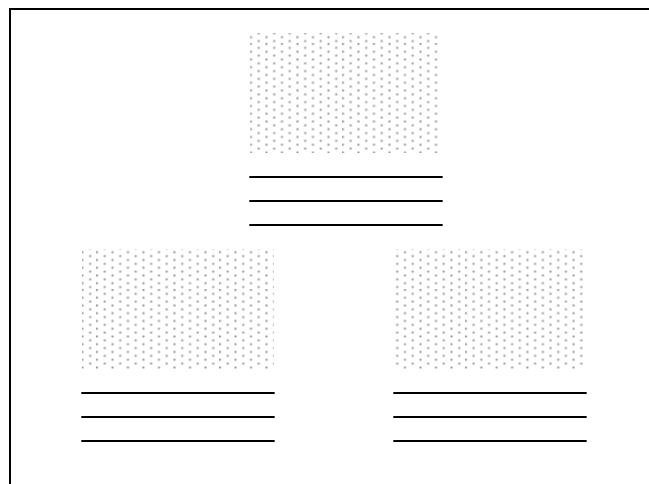
**Z layout pattern**



**L layout pattern**



**V layout pattern**

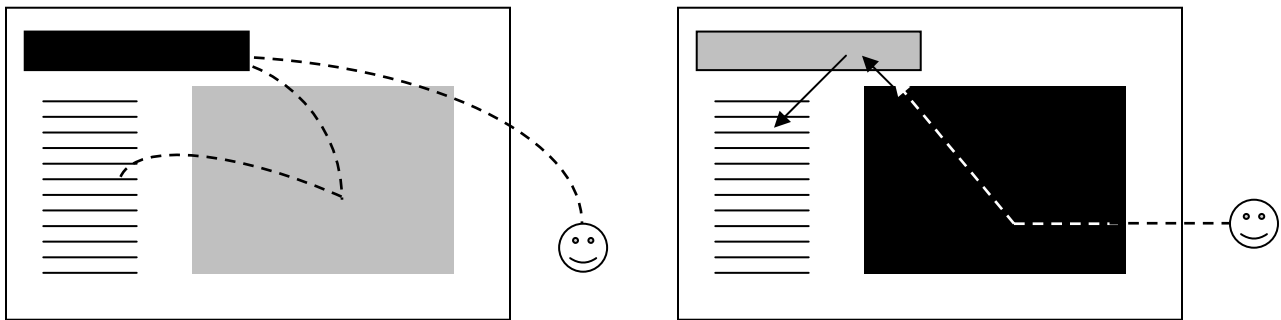


**A Layout pattern**

## Direction

The direction of a layout is very important in determining the effectiveness of the slide. Elements must be balanced so that the eye of the user is drawn first to the most important element, and then to the next logical element, etc.

The examples below show how the eye is directed around a slide. The first example the eye is drawn firstly to the darker title area because of its prominence, then to the graphics because of its size, and then to the content information on the left. In the second example, with the same layout but with different balance the eye is drawn first to the dark graphic, then to the title block and finally to the text information.



## Format

If you decide on a specific slide format, be consistent and use the same format throughout. However there are times when a change of format can be effective as in when simulation is required, or an animation is used to illustrate a point. Be creative and imaginative but beware that too much variation can cause confusion.

## Graphics

Interpretive drawings, diagrams and animations are all different types of graphics. It is essential to select graphics which work as part of the visual communication process and not just as an addition because they look good. Choose images that relate to the subject matter. Avoid trying to fit readily available clipart into the design. Although clipart can be extremely useful it is not always applicable to the task at hand. Different sets of clipart are each likely to have a different graphic style which can cause difficulties with consistency of the slide presentation.

## Other elements of design

Line, shape, texture, balance, space, colour and text all play an equally important part in creating a visual message. It is important to use these elements in context with the subject matter.

### Line

The term line can simply mean a drawn line, or a series of slide elements which have the shape of a line. However simplistic, the line is important in terms of the way in which a slide is looked at. Bad use of line will lead the eye off the screen, while good use of line will subtly guide the eye around the slide.

### Shape

Shapes like colours have an aesthetic relationship to one another and therefore have to work together. By shapes we mean the elements that make up the page. For example, a block of text may represent a square, rectangle or triangle. This is the same for titles, logos and pictures. Keep the basic shapes, Square, rectangle and triangle in mind when placing your elements together.

### Texture

Where there is not text or pictures the slide will have a smooth texture. However a block of text while squinting your eyes will have a rough texture. If too many rough textures are used it can be very confusing for the viewer. A slide with no texture on the other hand, can be harsh on the eyes. The most appealing appearance is obtained by using texture in moderation.

### Balance

Even after careful consideration has been given to the types of graphics, colours, line, text etc layouts can still not look right. Often this is because the balance is not right. Using your cut outs, move the elements around on a piece of paper which is the same size ratio as your slides.

### Space

When we see an object, we should really take the time to look at it. As well as the space in which the object occupies (the positive space), make a mental note of the negative space, which is the leftover area around the object. Negative space is just as important as the positive space and taking a different view of the object will hopefully give you a better perspective of it.

### Colour

The quick death of many layouts is the overuse of colour. Think carefully about colour schemes and they can be used to great effect. Consider how does the colour relate to the topic? What psychological effects do these colours have? Do the colours work together or are they competing against each other.

Colours can be used as cueing devices as audiences can become familiar with certain elements being in one colour which will make moving through a project easier. It is important to maintain colour consistency throughout a project.

The tables below may assist with your next presentation. Please note that the tables are guides only and should only be considered a tool to help keep you on track.

*Appropriate use of colour*

<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>SUGGESTED COLOURS</b>	<b>COLOURS TO AVOID</b>
Dark blue	Yellow, pale orange, white, light blue	Bright oranges and reds, black
Dark green	Soft pink, white	Bright oranges and reds, black
Pale yellow	Medium to dark blue, medium to dark violet, black	White, warm colours, light shades of most colours
Pale green	Black, dark green	Red, yellow, white, light shades of most colours
White	Black, medium to dark shades of most colours	Light shades of most colours, especially yellow

*Emotions associated with various colours*

<b>COLOUR</b>	<b>ASSOCIATION</b>
Pink	Intimacy, softness, femininity
Red	Love, choleric, strength, virility
Purple	Melancholia, madness
Violet	Mystics, meditative, jealously, secrets
Lilac	Nostalgia, dreams, fantasies
Green	Hope, calmness, freshness, youth
Yellow	Sanguine, humour, extrovert
Orange	Dynamism, strength, stimulation
Black	Death, despair, sophistication (shiny black) rebelliousness
White	Purity, life, innocence
Grey	Indecision, fear, indifference, calm
Brown	Compactness, honesty, nature
Blue	Depth, maturity, spirituality, infinity

## Text

Reading text from a presentation screen can be difficult. To get the best from our text we can separate it into two categories: body text and title text. Body text referring to information text as opposed to titles or sub titles. Body text font should be small and easy to read, 32pt is ideal and no smaller than 24pt. Generally serif fonts are easier to read than sans serif fonts. Serif fonts are those, such as Times New Roman and Garamond, which have small strokes on the ascenders and descenders while sans serif fonts such as Agency and Ariel, do not have these strokes.

Keep the number of fonts on any screen to a maximum limit of two fonts. If a greater variety is required try enhancing the style of an existing font by changing colour or with the use of **bolding, italics or UPPER CASE** font styles. Again care should be taken not to overuse highlighting effects and large amounts of body text should be written normally with minimal enhancing effects.

When designing you layout think of the nature of your subject matter and what images it conjures in your mind. Below are some examples of appropriate use of font types:

*Appropriate use of type*

**Child Care Centre**

*Painter and Decorator*

*Informal Formal*

**Book Shop**

*Heavy and light typeface*

Century Gothic

Times

Arial Black

**Garamond Bold**

Choose a balanced, well proportioned type. Consider whether you should use a light or heavy typeface for the purpose you have in mind. Light typefaces are suitable for body text, while heavy typefaces are best suited to titles. Heavy typefaces used in body text are likely to be disturbing to the eyes and may distract attention from other important screen elements.

Make sure your text is easy to read. Too many long sentences can be distracting as the eye has further to travel. Check to see if your text is too close to any of the other elements on the page.

Text should be used sparingly. Limit each slide to one idea with no more than 20-30 words with a maximum of 7-10 words per line. Keep text simple and clear and avoid any unnecessary acronyms. The space between the lines of text (leading) should only be two to four point sizes larger than the actual size of the font. For example, 14 point type should have a leading size of 16-18 point. Leading which is too large will make the text difficult to read. As far as titles are concerned, strong and simple fonts work

best. If you are using titles over several screens ensure that they are placed in exactly the same position on each screen.

There are several factors which you should consider when selecting a typeface which is appropriate to your design. When you have selected the typeface, consider how you should place it on your slide. It should have a generous margin around it, because the overall appearance of a block of text is very textured.

Source:

Phillips, R. (1997), *The Developer's Handbook to Interactive Multimedia: A practical guide for educational applications*, Great Britain, Biddles Ltd Guildford and King's Lynn, 78-88.