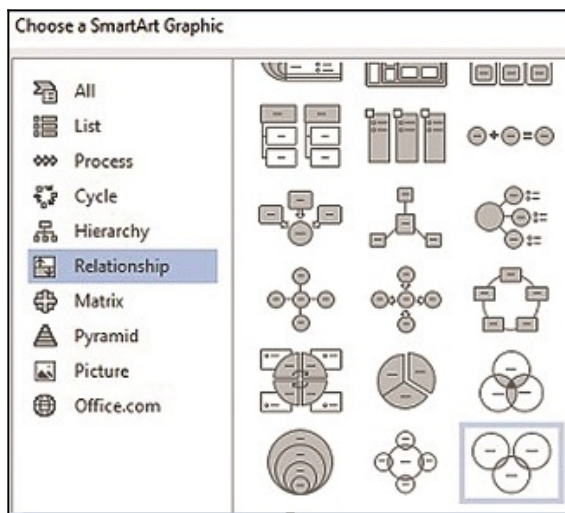


Stop the bullets in PowerPoint presentations!

How often have you been listening to someone's presentation when you realize that the slides were there to aid the speaker with staying on track, not necessarily to engage the audience? If audience engagement isn't the point of your presentation, don't use them. Just refer to your notes as you speak, and direct the audience to the excellent printed takeaway resource you've prepared. Most "deaths by PowerPoint" are perpetrated by bullets, slide after slide of endless bullets.

So, what can be done? As you assemble your presentation, it is likely that the first draft of your outline and slides will also serve as speaker notes. Even if you intend to use the Notes section of your PowerPoint file, save this first draft to pull notes from. Then, with another copy, start looking at each slide, not as a speaker or a trainer, but as an audience member. Now, what can you do instead of bullets?



SmartArt

SmartArt has been a part of Office since Office 2007, yet many people haven't taken advantage of it. As you look at the information you'll be presenting, imagine that you are seeing this information for the first time. What will help you understand the relationship between each piece of information presented? Is it a relationship? Check out the Relationship Category of SmartArt (Insert tab, Illustrations group, SmartArt button). Consider Gears or simple three component relationships. If it is more like four or five, consider a Venn, Stacked Venn Interconnected Rings. Do you have just a list of items? Look under the List category for diagrams that allow you to add pictures for each bullet.

One idea per slide

While outlining your presentation, you may end up with a list of bullets, but if you are going to fly them in with animation in order to discuss one item at a time, why not have one slide per bullet with a summary slide to show the complete list? Just because you show each point on its own slide doesn't mean it has to make it to the handouts. Just include the list in the handout for reference and notes. Keep your screen as an aid to help the audience stay focused on the single item you are discussing. For example, if you are talking about employee benefits, put Vacation Time on a slide, with perhaps some vacation-like graphics and Healthcare Savings on another with picture representations of a selection of things it can be used for.

Detail in the handout

Consider the handout as a bonus takeaway, a value-added resource to help audience participants understand your presentation and use the information later. Complex charts, for example, do not belong in the handout. Bulleted text might be perfectly fine, even though you are presenting that information differently on the screen. For example, if you are presenting a set of steps as a Block Process Smart Art diagram, a simple list with check boxes might be more appropriate in the handout. Use the File Save and Send (2010) or Export (2013), and choose Create Handouts to have more flexibility with how and what is included in the handout by editing in Word.