

## Tech Tips for Presenters

The following Tech Tips are designed to enhance your presentation experience and reduce the stress of possible technical problems on-site. This list represents most of the common problems that we encounter with presenters and their equipment.

**Laptops:** If you are considering the purchase of a laptop for presentation use, be aware that all laptops are not created equal. There have been mirroring issues with some low-end laptops. Here's the problem: All laptops have a VGA (or external monitor) connector. The internal hardware that controls the functions of that connector may not be powerful enough to send the computer image to the laptop screen and to a projector at the same time. This means you will have to shut off the laptop screen to get an image on a projector. Most instructors find this an awkward way of teaching. Make sure the laptop can "Mirror" the image equally. Rule of thumb; don't buy the cheapest laptop a manufacturer makes, and don't rely on old outdated laptops. Spend a little more money, ask the right questions.

**RAM:** RAM is the space in a computer system where information is stored when a program is in use. The more RAM you have, the faster and more efficiently your programs will run. Both Windows and OS X require 256MB minimum to run. Adding RAM is the easiest way to speed up your system. RAM is cheap and easy to install. Both ramseeker.com or crucial.com have fairly easy interfaces to find the RAM that's right for your machine. Treat your computer to a 256MB or 512MB upgrade.

**Portable Storage solutions:** If you plan to move files from your office computer to a laptop that you borrow from AV or your department, make sure to burn a CD-R of your presentation as backup or better yet, buy a Flash Drive (also known as a thumb drive or pen drive). They are small, thumb sized USB drives that use the same flash memory that cameras & PDAs use. They come in sizes from 32MB to 2.2G. The benefit of these units is that they are USB and plug-and-play; that is, they require no software. Just plug into any USB port and the drive appears to the computer as an external drive. Do not purchase one that requires software. See <http://www.usbflashdrive.org/> for more information. Also, see <http://www.usbflashstore.com/usb.html>. USB 2.0 flashdrives are compatible with USB 1.1. If you are going to borrow a laptop, load your presentation in advance and make sure it runs.

## **Operating Systems:**

Windows users: When you connect to the internet, Windows checks to see if there are operating system updates available. You'll see a balloon appear in the lower right corner of your screen telling you there are updates available. Don't ignore it. Windows needs frequent updates to keep up with security issues. Click on the little icon under the balloon and update your operating system. It will prevent virus and worm vulnerabilities.

Mac users: You too. Just because Macs are not as vulnerable to viruses as PCs, doesn't mean you're off the hook. Apple is constantly improving and tweaking OS X. System Preferences: Software Update. Be sure if you are using a Mac, that you bring the VGA adaptor that came with your laptop; otherwise it cannot be connected to a projector.

## **PowerPoint:**

Best fonts for presentations: Helvetica, Arial or Verdana. These are sans-serif fonts that have more information for the projector to render.

Do not use anything smaller than 30 point for your text. You might be able to get away with using 20 point for smaller classrooms, but no one in the back of a large lecture hall will be able to see it. Keep in mind the size of the room and the number of students and adjust font size accordingly.

When you want to quickly open an existing PowerPoint presentation, just double click on the file you want to use and it will open Powerpoint. Many people start PowerPoint first, then use the "open" command and have to navigate through their computer to find the file.

Slide Show: to quickly start your slide show, click on the little screen icon in the lower left corner of the PowerPoint window.

When your presentation is interrupted by discussion, press the letter B key (or the period key) on your computer keyboard to put up a blank black slide. Or press W (or the comma key) for a blank white slide. Either way, your audience can now focus on you, instead of being distracted by your slide. Press the same key again to go back to where you were.

To Exit Slide Show: Press the "ESC" key.

**Toggle your Laptop:**

Most Laptops must be told to send the image out through the VGA cable. To do this we must 'Toggle' the Laptop, which means holding the FUNCTION key on your laptop and tapping the corresponding F key until the image is on both screens. Every laptop's toggle key varies, so here's how to find out which F key to hit. When we say F key we are referring to the row of keys at the very top of your keypad. They are F1, F2, F3, F4...through F12. Some of those keys may have little pictures, or symbols near their number. We are looking for a F key that says, "LCD", "Projector", "CRT", or it may have an image of a "Screen", "Projector", or "Boxes".