

# Teaching with PechaKucha Presentations

## What is a PechaKucha?

This is the Japanese word for conversation or “chit chat.” Created by two architects in Tokyo who were tired of dreadful PowerPoint presentations, PechaKucha is designed to force speakers to prepare shorter, more creative, and more polished PowerPoint presentation. More importantly, designing a PechaKucha presentation motivates speakers to think about their subjects in very different ways.

## What are the characteristics of PechaKucha?

- A presentation is created using PowerPoint (or any other presentation software).
- Presenters are only allowed 20 slides and those slides must automatically advance every 20 seconds (thus the “20x20” label).
- Consequently, presentations should never be longer than 6 minutes 40 seconds.
- Because of this format, the PowerPoint slideshow must depend on visuals, rather than text-heavy slides. This is one of the best characteristics since speakers often abuse text in slideshows.
- Presentations are expected to have structure, including an introduction and conclusion and an internal structure (clear main points, transitions) that will guide the audience through the slide show. In other words, the words and the visual aid should complement each other rather than just mirroring each other. Shouldn't that always be the definition of visual aid?
- Presentations are expected to be polished, professional, and engaging. Because of the time constraints, the auto-advancing slides, and the format, speakers should spend more time planning and practicing their presentations.
- Audiences are more likely to be engaged. It's sad, but true—we don't have a very long attention span. Consequently, speakers need experience presenting their ideas in a short period of time and in a more creative, engaging way. Because of the short presentation, the audience should have plenty of time to ask questions and make comments about the presentation.

## How can we use PechaKucha in the classroom?

- You might choose to use this exact format if you think students can present material in this way. Students might respond very well to a more creative type of presentation.
- You might also want to try a variety of this format:
  - Slightly increase the time for each slide and allow longer presentations.
  - Allow for occasional “text” slides, but advise students to keep these to a minimum.
  - Encourage students to orally cite sources when necessary and provide audience handouts with full citations, if necessary.
  - If you have content areas that must be addressed in each presentation, advise

students to include those. It is best to leave the content up to the presenter, however.

- o Task students with taking their own photographs for the presentation if observation can be a part of the assignment.

Of course, there might be times when this format may not be the best choice for your class. You have to begin by thinking about the purpose of the presentation. If the purpose is to get students to mimic a typical professional presentation in your field, you would not want to choose PK. If, however, the idea is to create interest in their topics among the audience and/or to get students thinking critically about topics, this might be particularly effective. This format is centered on the idea of audience analysis and, therefore, asks for speakers to think about the most critical components of the topic, the best way to visually represent the ideas, and the most interactive way to present the material (verbally and nonverbally).

## Advice for successfully using PechaKucha in the classroom

- Provide examples. For good online examples, see the official PechaKucha web site at: <http://www.pecha-kucha.org/>. Many of these examples are more artistic than those that you might desire in the classroom, but you'll also get the students to start thinking about presentations in a very different way. Of course, the best way to give them a model is to present a PechaKucha on your own.
- Advise students on some of the best places to find digital photographs for their subject.
- Send presenters to the Speaking Center. The staff is familiar with this format and can give advice on structure, language, editing, visual aid improvements, and delivery.  
Emphasize the importance of practicing with the equipment. The Speaking Center provides practice rooms where presenters can use PowerPoint.

## Examples

**Science:** <http://www.pecha-kucha.org/presentations/200>

**Art:** <http://www.pecha-kucha.org/presentations/199>

**Business (sales):** <http://www.pecha-kucha.org/presentations/53>

**Philosophy (personal journey):** <http://www.pecha-kucha.org/presentations/41>

**Social Studies (urban planning):** <http://www.pecha-kucha.org/presentations/88>

**Environmentalism:** <http://www.pecha-kucha.org/presentations/169>

**Activism:** <http://www.pecha-kucha.org/presentations/195>

**The University of Southern Mississippi  
Speaking Center  
[www.usm.edu/speakingcenter](http://www.usm.edu/speakingcenter)**