

Crash Course in Running Slides

By Chris Huff

“We need you to run slides” are words that haunt most sound guys. All audio, all the time! But not this time. Sooner or later, we have to work outside of our comfort zone. Therefore, here’s the crash course for the next time you hear those fateful words.

There are three areas where you have to take action: before the service, during the service, and after the service.

Before the Service

1. Learn the software before you ever get a call to run slides.

Most presentation software has videos and tutorials for learning the product. You can also learn from one of the people who normally do this at your church. An hour or two is all you need to get down the fundamentals of the software. You’ll want to know how to add slides or other media within the software, how to edit slides, how to import video, and how to display the slides.

2. In the case of prepared slides: Check the spelling.

Check the spelling. Check the spelling. Check the order of song slides with the worship leader. This includes verifying the right songs in the right order but also the right order of the verses and choruses.

3. In the case of slide creation/addition left up to you: Arrange lyric blocks in logical order.

This means list the chorus every time it’s sung. Don’t jump around trying to click on the right song block. As long as you arrange all lyric slides in logical order, you can simply move through all the slides by hitting the spacebar.

Use standard fonts

If the slides are usually in Arial, then use Arial.

Use standard font sizes

All slides should use the same font. They need to be large enough that they are easily readable but small enough so you can get the right amount of words on each line. Target about 4 lines of lyrics per slide. Each line should only line-break if necessary and on an obvious point.

4. Save changes to songs/schedule often.

5. Check the overall order of the slides with the pastor.

Perhaps he decides to move a song to the beginning or eliminate one altogether or add in a sermon slide.

6. In the case of any video or audio media, play it through the house so levels can be set.

During the Service

1. Know the timing.

Humans read ahead when they sing along. Therefore, when the congregation is singing the first word of the last line on the slide, go ahead and move to the next slide.

2. Default to black.

As long as the slides are set to be viewed one after the other, as compared to jumping around from verse back to chorus within the presentation software, you don't need to worry about getting lost in a pile of lyrics. However, if you do have to jump around and find yourself lost, set the screen to black until you find the correct slide. Otherwise, people will see the wrong slide or see the slides changing on the screen until you find the right one.

3. Listen.

Part of running slides is showing slides when the pastor prompts for them. Don't let yourself get caught up checking Twitter, Facebook, or e-mailing. When the pastor calls for a slide, be ready to show it. Nothing like the pastor calling your name a few times to get your attention.

After the Service

1. Turn off the computer if necessary.

Your church might use the computer for copying audio files or other post-production work, so act accordingly.

2. Turn off the projector.

Don't make the mistake of turning off the projector once it's no longer needed during the service. For example, the worship band plays the last song and the pastor starts praying to close out the service. Projectors will run their internal fan at a higher speed before shutting down completely. It's part of the shutdown cycle. Therefore, in a small sanctuary, you get that loud fan noise during prayer.

3. As my grandmother always said, "Leave it cleaner than when you arrived."

Throw away your notes, extra bulletins, etc.

"We need you to run slides."

Don't let these words strike fear in your heart! I'm not saying you have to embrace them...just be ready for them.