1. **Map out a visual story before you begin developing**. A visual story contains the general location (a company's office) and the elements in that location and how they will be used (the conference room whiteboard will be used to show text, the conference room screen will be used to show images, the manager's office is where the manager will talk to the "camera" and so on). I develop my "sets" in PowerPoint first to bring the world to life before I start developing.

2. **Fully commit to the world and environment you've established**, no matter what. For example, if you start in a room with a slide projecting on the screen, but for a few slides, you want more real estate than that backdrop provides. You want to switch to a full screen with only the slide and no background. You can do that, but you must create a transition so that the learner feels like they are still looking at that screen, but they are closer to it. I usually create an effect that looks like the "camera" moved closer to the slide – so close that you can no longer see the background (I usually do this through a series of fading transitions). Do not abandon the visual world you introduced at the beginning of the experience.

3. **Do not use characters as decoration**. Everything on the slide *must be there for a reason.* For example, do not show characters until you provide information about who they are, why they are here, and their role in the course. The learner tries to, often subconsciously, justify the presence of every slide element. Do not cause unnecessary work for the learner.

4. **Replace words with graphics** when practical. For example, use graphic models or diagrams instead of lists whenever possible. It doesn't have to be fancy – chevrons will do, but meaningful icons or images are better. Remember, use diagrams that portray the most accurate symbolism, i.e., only use a circular process if it's an ongoing cycle.

5. **Only use animation to control the eye** and the flow of information. When using animation for objects or characters, try to adhere to the basic rules of physics. For example, 1) people do not enter the room by rising out of the floor unless they are the undead and very weird, 2) text does not appear on an iPad by flying out of the air and landing on the screen. Use a fade or a wipe animation instead of a fly-in.

6. **Create realistic interaction**. For example, try to have learners interact with objects and one another like they do in real life.

1. **Consistency should not override creativity or inspiration**.

2. The fonts used on slides and slide notes should be used consistently throughout. All titles should be in the same font. All body text should be in the same font. A different and/or decorative font may be used as part of a design if needed, i.e., using a marker-like font on a whiteboard.

3. If one design element is shown on successive slides, align them so there is no "jumping" effect. For example, if the same process icon appears on three slides in a row, ensure it appears in the same position and is the same size on each slide. Using master slides for repeating text and images helps you avoid this issue.

4. Similar text elements should have the same font size throughout the course. For example, all titles should be the same font size, and all text in text boxes should be the same size. Colors should also be consistent. There are exceptions to this, but try to be as consistent as possible.

5. Work with a color palette instead of selecting colors individually. Either select one of the existing palettes or create your own (usually based on an existing one).

6. Ensure paragraph and sentence spacing is consistent.

7. Objects should have a similar format. For example, text boxes should look the same, and tables should have the same design throughout.

8. Bulleted and numbered phrases should have parallel construction.

9. Use minimal punctuation. For example, some clients prefer that you either punctuate or not punctuate bullet points, but all clients want consistency.

10. Animation usage and style should be consistent, especially for similar objects or formatted text.

1. No underlines ever. *Rules* beneath headers are allowed. Use bold, italics, color, font size, *OR* case to emphasize text.

2. Use centering **sparingly** and primarily for titles**.** Do not center paragraphs (over two lines of text).

3. Use all caps **sparingly** and primarily for titles**.** Do not use all caps for paragraphs.

4. Use bold with **intent** – remember, if *everything* is bold, then *nothing* is bold. The same rules apply to italics. Bonus: Do not bold, italicize, *and* underline all caps, ***EVER***. Two formatting options are enough.

5. Do not use clipart. Use only realistic photos. Do not use silhouettes or images of people that do not include faces. If using icons, select all the images from the same icon family (i.e. same style).

6. Do not use decorative fonts unless they add to the visual narrative of the course (i.e. using a handwriting font on an image of a whiteboard).

7. Alignment means something. If an object is out of alignment with the rest of the objects on the screen or page, it will draw viewers' attention, and they will assume that there is either a reason you made it stand out or that you made a mistake.

8. Use **bulleted lists** when the order *does not* matter. Use **numbered lists** when the order *does* matter or when numbers are being used for reference (like in this document). Essentially, do not use bulleted lists for instructions unless the learner can complete the task using the steps in any order.

9. Watch your contrast. Ensure that a screen's color or contents do not make its text challenging to read. I recommend avoiding gradient backgrounds for that reason.

10. Use the following *MS Word* features as intended: paragraph spacing, line spacing, headers and footers, page numbers, and table of contents. Extra credit for using *styles*.

11. Use the following *MS PowerPoint* features as intended: paragraph spacing, line spacing, headers and footers, master slides, and layouts. (Note: Make PowerPoint comply with your needs, not vice versa).

12. If you must have several bullet points in slides or documents, **do not go beyond level two**. Rewrite the text or redesign the document.

13. Use animation to guide the eye and/or control the flow of information. Do not use animation to make a slide "interesting."