



# Whitepaper: PowerPoint-Karaoke

Presentation training meets improvisation game



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# Introduction

**Presentation and improvisation skills** are crucial in school, university, and professional life today—from schoolchildren and students to specialists and managers. At the same time, stage fright in front of an audience is one of the most common fears; according to estimates, around three-quarters of all people feel uncomfortable when speaking in public ([crossrivertherapy.com](http://crossrivertherapy.com)).

This is where **PowerPoint Karaoke** comes in: an innovative, playful format that promotes presentation skills, spontaneity, and creativity.

Although PowerPoint Karaoke has mainly been discussed in blog articles, game instructions, or experience reports, there has been no comprehensive white paper on the subject to date. This document aims to fill that gap. It offers a structured overview of the concept, benefits, possible applications, scientific findings, and open questions surrounding PowerPoint Karaoke.

The aim is to appeal to decision-makers (e.g., in companies or educational institutions), trainers, teachers, and interested parties alike by presenting well-founded information and practical insights for the DACH region as well as internationally.

# HISTORY & CONCEPT

PowerPoint-Karaoke is an improvisational game in which participants give a presentation using slides that are completely unknown to them (spiegel.de). The format combines the seriousness of lectures with the surprise and fun factor of a game: **each new slide becomes a challenge, requiring spontaneity and flexibility** (spiegel.de).

PowerPoint-Karaoke originated in the mid-2000s. In 2006, the Berlin-based artist and author group “Zentrale Intelligenz Agentur (ZIA)” developed the idea of taking PowerPoint presentations found on the internet out of their context and placing them in a new, social setting (spiegel.de). On January 31, 2006, the first PowerPoint Karaoke show took place at the Kulturbrauerei in Berlin (spiegel.de).

The success of this evening laid the foundation for the spread of the format: in the following years, tech conferences, BarCamps, coaches, and improvisational theater groups picked up on the idea as a popular program item **for events, presentation training, networking events, and game nights**. Presentation trainers now use it as a creative method in their presentation training courses (e.g., ralfleister.com). In 2023 and 2024, the first PowerPoint Karaoke World Championships were held in Amsterdam and New York City (en.wikipedia.org); (slideslam.co). There are also organizers for PPK show formats in Vienna and Zurich—a sign that the originally German format has now established itself worldwide. International contributions from Canada and New Zealand can also be found on LinkedIn.

# Methodology & Procedure

## How does PowerPoint-Karaoke work?

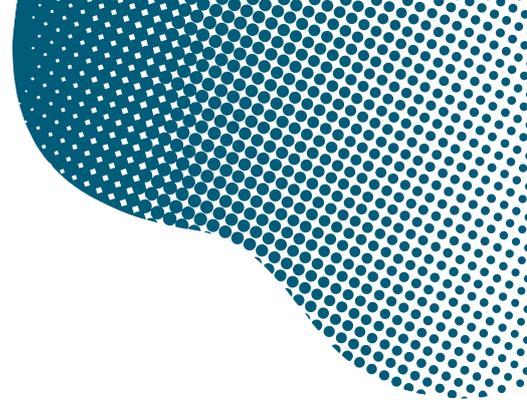
**The rules are simple:** One person stands in front of the audience and gives an impromptu presentation on a set of slides that they see for the first time at that moment (slidelizard.com).

### Important:

- The person pretends to be an expert on the topic.
- Skipping or previewing the slides is not allowed!

The slides can be selected in various ways. For example, **they can be chosen at random from a pool of existing presentations** (as is the case with the online portal KAPOPO) or compiled in advance by the organizers. The slides often come from real presentations on sometimes **obscure topics**, but sometimes slides that are deliberately meaningless or jumbled together are created to increase the comical effect of the situation. Occasionally, the presenter is given an overarching theme (e.g., by the audience), which he or she must try to weave into all the slides.

Typically, a **PowerPoint-Karaoke presentation comprises 6–10 slides and lasts between 4 and 8 minutes** (journals.psu.eduspiegel.de). The presentation ends either when all slides have been shown or after a specified time has elapsed. Depending on the occasion, more or less emphasis is placed on competitive elements: at fun events, the focus is often on shared humor, while formal competitions also include evaluation rounds (training-vr.de).



## What evaluation criteria could these be?

- Coherence and credibility of content,
- linguistic expression,
- body language and gestures,
- entertainment value

Sometimes the audience votes for the most convincing performance by applause or voting tool.

**PowerPoint-Karaoke is also technically low-threshold:** all you need is a projector or screen and a collection of slides. Online portals such as **KAPOPO** simplify the process by randomly selecting from a pool of prepared presentations via a browser-based system.

In addition, platforms such as KAPOPO **offer optional game modes**, e.g.:

- 
- spontaneous tasks interspersed throughout,
- quiz questions at the end, or
- randomly generated words that the presenters must integrate into their presentations.

These variations increase the level of difficulty and the fun factor.

PowerPoint-Karaoke can also be played online or in hybrid teams without any problems by sharing the slides via screen sharing. This is an aspect that has become particularly relevant in times of home office and remote work.

# Didactic benefits:

## Which soft skills are promoted?

PowerPoint-Karaoke is much more than just a party game. It has proven to be a surprisingly educational tool for training key communication and presentation skills.

Important soft skills and learning effects:

- Spontaneity & improvisation skills
- Rhetoric & expressiveness
- Self-confidence & composure
- Creativity & storytelling
- Dealing with stage fright & stress resistance
- Teamwork & feedback culture



**Spontaneity & improvisation skills:** Participants learn to process unexpected input at lightning speed and respond to it (journals.psu.edu; training-vr.de). They practice speaking off the cuff and dealing flexibly with unexpected situations—a skill that is also valuable in everyday working life, for example, when you have to fill in for a colleague who is ill. Repeated participation builds routine: the more often you do PowerPoint-Karaoke, the easier it becomes to adapt to unfamiliar situations (journals.psu.edu).

**Rhetoric & expressiveness:** Since the content is secondary in PowerPoint-Karaoke, the focus shifts to the manner of presentation (kapopo.de; journals.psu.edu). Participants learn to appear convincing even if they are not fully confident in the subject matter. They have to consciously use their body language, voice, and facial expressions to simulate competence (journals.psu.edu). This helps to develop rhetorical strengths and reveal any weaknesses—such as nervous gestures or a monotonous tone of voice—so that they can be specifically addressed (training-vr.de; journals.psu.edu). Many participants report that this has given them a clearer understanding of their own core skills: one participant, for example, discovered that she was able to speak freely about a completely unfamiliar topic (journals.psu.edu).



### **Creativity & storytelling:**

Filling an unknown slide with potentially meaningless content in a meaningful way requires creative thinking. PowerPoint-Karaoke promotes the ability to spontaneously weave a coherent or at least entertaining story from keywords, images, or diagrams. The rules allow for a great deal of interpretive freedom. There is no need to explain what is on the slide literally. On the contrary: original, unconventional connections and anecdotes are particularly memorable for the audience. This improvisational storytelling also trains the ability to reduce complex content to its essentials and convey it vividly—a core competency for good presentations.

### **Dealing with stage fright and stress resistance:**

PowerPoint-Karaoke simulates the real-life situation of giving a presentation, but in a safe environment. Participants experience what it's like to stand in front of people with a pounding heart and speak spontaneously. The key difference is that the atmosphere is relaxed and mistakes have no consequences (training-vr.de). This triggers the stress response, but it is perceived as less threatening. Repeated practice under such conditions can measurably help reduce stage fright. “The body learns to cope better with it in the future,” so that you remain calmer and more confident during real presentations later on (training-vr.de). The realization that not everything has to be 100% perfect reduces the fear of failure. PowerPoint-Karaoke teaches you to stay calm even under pressure. It's a kind of mental stress training.



#### **Common fears**

- be the center of attention
- fail professionally
- be ridiculed/laughed at
- blackout

### **Teamwork & feedback culture:**

When PowerPoint-Karaoke is played in groups—whether in the classroom, at work, or among friends—it almost always creates a special dynamic of cohesion. Listeners often jump in to pick up on a punchline, and everyone laughs, applauds, and encourages each other. The game promotes mutual support and encourages participation (training-vr.de). This can strengthen the group spirit, especially in internal company workshops or training sessions: you get to see your colleagues from an unfamiliar, humorous side, hierarchies fade into the background, and everyone learns from each other. Giving constructive feedback after the presentations—which often takes a humorous form at karaoke events, similar to a casting show jury (spiegel.de)—also trains the feedback culture in the group.

### **In summary:**

PowerPoint-Karaoke professionalizes in a playful way. It combines learning and fun, which is highly effective from a didactic point of view. The German philosopher Friedrich Schiller wrote: “Man is only truly human when he plays” – in this sense, the format offers a space in which people can try things out and surpass themselves (training-vr.de). Participants learn without being lectured, they leave their comfort zone without feeling exposed. This effect – learning through experience – clearly sets PowerPoint-Karaoke apart from traditional training methods.



# Areas of application and target groups

Originally coming from the entertainment and creative scene, PowerPoint-Karaoke now has a wide range of applications. It is used successfully in a variety of contexts, particularly in German-speaking countries (DACH) – from classrooms to boardrooms.

Here is an overview of important target groups and areas of application:

- Leisure & events
- School & education
- Universities & studies
- Companies & team development
- International space and languages
- Workshops, coaching, and rhetoric trainers

## WHITEPAPER: POWERPOINT-KARAOKE



### **Leisure & Events:**

PowerPoint-Karaoke is great fun for social gatherings. Groups of friends organize their own PowerPoint-Karaoke evenings at home or online as an alternative form of evening entertainment that is guaranteed to get everyone laughing. In larger cities (including internationally), public karaoke competitions are organized that anyone can take part in. This has given rise to a real subculture: from Meetup groups in Berlin to science slams and nerd events at conferences. The game even appears as part of the program at Christmas parties or weddings to lighten the mood. There is something for practically every age group. Thanks to its low threshold, anyone can take part; no special knowledge is required—just courage and humor.



### **School & Education:**

PowerPoint-Karaoke offers students and teachers an innovative way to promote presentation skills in the classroom ([kapopo.de](http://kapopo.de)). Instead of dry presentations, students can compete against each other as part of a rhetoric project, for example, and learn to speak freely in a playful way. The big advantage: the method not only boosts self-confidence in front of the class, but also brings the group closer together, as everyone laughs and cheers together. Some schools and universities in Germany use PowerPoint-Karaoke specifically – whether as a warm-up in seminars, in programs for gifted students (e.g., at Munich University of Applied Sciences ([hm.eduhm.edu](http://hm.eduhm.edu))), or in language courses. The concept can be particularly helpful in foreign language teaching: learners practice speaking spontaneously in the target language without worrying too much about perfection. This improves their language skills while they joke about abstruse slides. As a result, the format promotes confidence in speaking and self-confidence among young people and students alike.

### **Universities & Studies:**

The concept is also proving popular in higher education. Students benefit from PowerPoint-Karaoke to prepare for presentations during their studies or later in their professional lives. University groups organize PowerPoint-Karaoke evenings as team-building exercises for first-year students or as part of rhetoric seminars. One example is the University of Oldenburg, which regularly organizes PowerPoint karaoke sessions where students can demonstrate their improvisational skills ([uol.de](http://uol.de)). Such events create a more relaxed campus culture and facilitate interdisciplinary exchange—students get to know their fellow students and their areas of expertise in a humorous way.

### **Company & team development:**

In a business context, PowerPoint-Karaoke is becoming increasingly popular, especially in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Personnel developers and HR managers value it as a team-building tool and for employee development workshops. At company events, a round of PowerPoint-Karaoke lightens the atmosphere, breaks down departmental barriers, and promotes team spirit through shared laughter. For professionals—from trainees to executives—it offers a safe space to practice presentation skills without putting a real project at stake. Managers in particular can hone their quick-wittedness and experience their employees in new roles, which breaks down hierarchical barriers. Some companies also use PowerPoint-Karaoke in assessment centers or training courses for prospective managers to observe stress resistance and communication skills.

### **International space and languages:**

Beyond the DACH region, PowerPoint-Karaoke is now known in many countries. There is an international competition called “Slide Slam – World Championship of PowerPoint Karaoke.”

Through such events and online platforms (e.g., the English-language version of KAPOPO), the community is networking worldwide. The areas of application remain similar: from education to entertainment. For globally active companies, the format could also be interesting in the future as an intercultural training method, as it works across languages and cultures. After all, humor and improvisation promote team building everywhere.

### **Workshops, coaching sessions, and public speaking coaches:**

For rhetoric and presentation trainers as well as business and personal coaches, PowerPoint-Karaoke is a versatile methodological tool that breaks up traditional training formats while generating measurable learning transfer. In practice-oriented workshops, the game is often used as a warm-up to get participants immediately involved, or as an energizer in the afternoon when concentration levels start to drop. Trainers such as Hamburg-based coach **Ralf Leister** report that the exercise receives “consistently positive” feedback and triggers “great progress” in spontaneity and confidence among participants – which is why it is now firmly established in his presentation training courses (Ralf Leister).



Platforms such as KAPOPO provide additional support to trainers with curated presentations, randomization functions, and online features. In the podcast “Lebendige Rhetorik” (Lively Rhetoric) by rhetoric trainer Oliver Walter, KAPOPO founder Tom Sievert emphasizes that PowerPoint-Karaoke is ideal for pitch coaching, assessment center exercises, and virtual seminars: spontaneous speech, improvisation, and humor can be trained equally well in face-to-face and remote settings (Oliver Walter).

**In short:** for professional coaches, PowerPoint-Karaoke is a low-threshold but highly effective building block that enriches any training program. From icebreaker rounds to practical exercises or final tests. Like a transfer catalyst, it can put the techniques learned in seminars (voice, pauses, gestures, posture, etc.) to the test and consolidate them in a dynamic environment – in line with the **motto:** practice in play, master in real life.

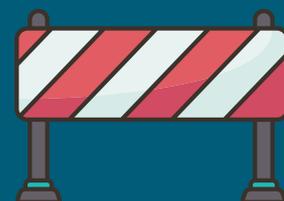


# Challenges and limitations

As much potential as PowerPoint-Karaoke offers, there are also challenges in its implementation and certain limitations of the concept that should be taken into account:

**Initial inhibition threshold:** Not everyone is immediately enthusiastic about the idea of standing up “blind” in front of an audience. Introverts or very insecure people in particular may feel a high inhibition threshold at first. It is crucial to make the setting as low-threshold as possible: voluntary participation (no one should be forced), a trusting group atmosphere, and small groups for beginners are recommended. It has also proven successful to start with volunteers and, if necessary, allow tandems—i.e., two people presenting together, which can give shy participants a sense of security. With each successful presentation, the shyness decreases, especially if the audience is fair and supportive.

Experience shows that after one or two rounds, even those who were hesitant at first usually dare to take the microphone when they see that no one is being laughed at, but rather that everyone is laughing together and having fun.



**Unfavorable group dynamics:** The mood rises and falls with the group culture. If the audience reacts disrespectfully or bored, the experience can be frustrating for speakers. Similarly, large differences in performance (e.g., very experienced speakers vs. absolute beginners) can lead to imbalances. For example, if the same experienced colleague always wins and others feel “embarrassed.” Therefore, the moderator should take care to value everyone appropriately and, if necessary, focus more on the shared experience than on competition.

In companies, it is advisable to mix hierarchies (bosses are allowed to improvise sometimes!) and form teams randomly so that cliques do not disrupt teamwork. Overall, PowerPoint-Karaoke is most successful in an open, humorous team culture. It can promote such a culture, but initially requires at least a leap of faith.

**Content quality vs. fun:** One potential criticism is that PowerPoint-Karaoke is just fun and doesn't offer any “real” learning content. In fact, you don't learn much about the slide topics from the absurd presentations. The learning effect lies in the method itself (improvisation, presentation skills) and not in the subject matter. For use in educational settings, this means that PowerPoint-Karaoke should be used as a supplement, not as a substitute for subject-specific presentations. A teacher, for example, could use the game to practice general presentation skills, but should of course continue to require subject-specific presentations in parallel.

**Technical and organizational preparation:** Basically, the effort involved is minimal. However, you do need a good supply of slides. The person leading the game should have a sufficient number of varied but feasible presentations ready. If the slides are too chaotic or in a language that no one understands, frustration could arise. The ideal solution is a mix of moderately difficult and some really tricky decks, which are distributed by drawing lots. Freely available slide sets can be found online (e.g., on Slideshare or special portals). KAPOPO also offers a convenient solution with its growing pool.

**Technology is also important:** do the projector, smartboard, and internet work? For events with a larger audience, it is advisable to clearly communicate the rules in advance (time limit, evaluation criteria, voluntary participation). This way, everyone knows what to expect and misunderstandings are avoided.

**Intercultural differences:** Cultural aspects should be taken into account when working with international groups or transferring the format to other countries. Humor and presentation style can vary from culture to culture. What is considered funny and lighthearted in German-speaking countries may be seen as too bold or disrespectful elsewhere. And vice versa. In this case, it helps to briefly explain the concept and moderate sensitively. However, experience to date – for example at international conferences – shows that PowerPoint-Karaoke works surprisingly well universally, precisely because it is based on human improvisational talent rather than specific knowledge. Nevertheless, if the audience is unfamiliar with the principle, it should be introduced with simple examples.

# Scientific reference

Although PowerPoint-Karaoke has been very successful in practice and has received enthusiastic feedback, comprehensive scientific analysis is still in its infancy. There is initial empirical evidence that the format does indeed have positive training effects. For example, a small study from the US described how PowerPoint-Karaoke was used with young scientists to reduce their performance anxiety ([journals.psu.edu](http://journals.psu.edu)). The authors report that participants found the improvisation game very useful in reducing their fear of speaking and helping them to appear more confident ([journals.psu.edu](http://journals.psu.edu)). The safe space was particularly praised: without the pressure of presenting their own research, the junior researchers were able to recognize the presentation skills they already possessed and identify “bad habits” that they wanted to avoid in the future ([journals.psu.edu](http://journals.psu.edu)). The feedback was so positive that the program incorporated the format into its training program ([journals.psu.edu](http://journals.psu.edu)).

In addition, general research findings from education and psychology support the core principles of PowerPoint Karaoke. Studies on improvisational theater training, for example, show that regular improvisation can significantly reduce social anxiety ([news.nmu.edu](http://news.nmu.edu)).



Learning by doing in a playful context promotes tolerance for uncertainty, which is a crucial factor, especially when it comes to fear of public speaking (news.nmu.edu). There is also evidence that improvisation exercises increase creative thinking and divergent thinking skills. This means that people become better at solving unfamiliar problems with unusual ideas (researchgate.net). These findings can be easily applied to PowerPoint karaoke, which is basically an applied improvisation exercise in a presentation context.

Nevertheless, many questions have not yet been sufficiently researched. A white paper can put forward hypotheses that require further investigation. Some key questions and hypotheses for future studies or evaluations include:

- **Effect on soft skills:** Which soft skills are most promoted by PowerPoint-Karaoke and how sustainable is this effect?

The hypothesis is that spontaneity, expressiveness, improvisational skills, and stress resistance benefit in particular. Possibly more so than in traditional presentation exercises, as participants are forced to act spontaneously and creatively. This assumption should be substantiated by comparative measurements (e.g., before-and-after assessments by participants or observations in control groups).

- **Areas of application & target groups:** For which target groups is PowerPoint-Karaoke particularly suitable, and are there differences in its effectiveness?

For example: Do school and university students benefit from the format in the same way as experienced professionals or managers? It is conceivable that inexperienced speakers benefit the most (keyword: “biggest leap”), while very experienced speakers primarily sharpen their creativity. The question of in which contexts (school, university, business, leisure) PowerPoint-Karaoke achieves which effects should also be examined. Initial reports show success in all these areas, but systematic studies are lacking.

- **Didactic and methodological benefits:** How exactly does PowerPoint-Karaoke contribute to the development of presentation skills?

An interesting hypothesis: The playful approach makes the training more memorable and increases participants' motivation more than conventional exercises. In addition, the surprise factor could help participants learn to cope with stage fright by experiencing and overcoming it in short bursts. Psychological parameters (heart rate, subjective feeling of stress) could be measured during the game to objectify the learning effect.

- **Challenges and limitations:** What difficulties arise during implementation and how can they be overcome? (e.g., dealing with initial shyness, optimal group size, compiling the slides).

**Also:** Are there people for whom this method is not suitable? For example, extreme cases of anxiety that may require more gentle training? The white paper has shown that a relaxed atmosphere and voluntary participation are key to success. But how could the format be made even more inclusive? There is room here for educational concepts, e.g., gradual introduction through solo practice (e.g., in VR training environments such as EasySpeech or VReedback) followed by group play.

**Scientific basis:** So far, there are hardly any quantitative studies on the effectiveness of PowerPoint-Karaoke. One goal could be to close this gap, for example through surveys, performance assessments before/after training, or even long-term observations (does someone who regularly plays PowerPoint karaoke retain greater confidence in their presentation skills in the long term?). It would also be exciting to conduct neurophysiological studies to determine whether this improvisation training causes measurable changes in creativity tests or anxiety responses.

The hypothesis that “PowerPoint-Karaoke promotes soft skills more effectively than traditional exercises” awaits evidence-based confirmation.

# Conclusion & Outlook:

This white paper has shown that PowerPoint-Karaoke is much more than just an entertaining pastime. It combines the advantages of gamification and presentation training and positions itself as a serious method for developing communication skills. Both in the DACH region and internationally. Practical examples from schools, universities, and companies illustrate its wide range of applications. At the same time, the absence of previous white papers and comprehensive studies underscores the pioneering nature of this document.

PowerPoint-Karaoke offers the opportunity to take the fear out of presentations and experience presenting for what it can be: a creative game in which you learn something about yourself. The coming years will show whether and how this format will continue to gain popularity. Further developments such as official championships, cross-border exchange formats, or the integration of AI tools (e.g., to automatically generate slides) are conceivable. However, the core remains unchanged: people grow beyond themselves when they are challenged in a playful way – whether at school, at work, or in their free time.

*“In light of this, the stage is set for a unique form of performance: PowerPoint-Karaoke. This distinctive approach has been shown to foster creativity, spontaneity, and communication skills in a manner that is both engaging and effective.”*

Team KAPOPO

# Further links/sources

- <https://kapopo.de> / <https://kapopo.com>
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# Contact

## Sources

The information presented in this white paper is based on an evaluation of available literature, experience reports, and online resources. All citations are provided in the text with references. This document does not claim to be exhaustive, but it provides as comprehensive and up-to-date an overview as possible (as of November 2025) and can serve as a basis for further research and the practical use of PowerPoint-Karaoke.

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