

Creating Presentations

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RCCTA Resource Center for
CareerTech Advancement

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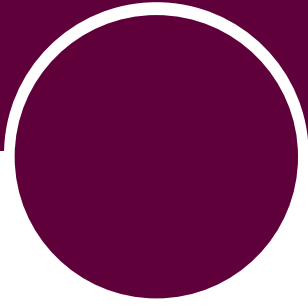
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Creating Presentations



OBJECTIVES

- Discuss the value of speaking skill development.
- Differentiate between formal and conversational speaking.
- Discuss factors affecting presentation topic selection.
- Determine how to develop a message.
- Distinguish between informative and persuasive presentations.
- Examine the use of an outline for presentation development.
- Examine the parts of a speech or presentation.
- Use basic researching methods, including internet research.
- Discuss the importance of citations and a bibliography.
- Analyze the use of visual aids to support a presentation.
- Discuss tips for preparing effective electronic visual aids.
- Determine when memorization of a presentation is needed.

KEY TERMS

bibliography	spoken citation
digital citation	statement of purpose
drafts	topic
informative	transitional expressions
introduction	written citation
outline	
persuasive	
signposts	

Creating a presentation is both a science and an art form. There are basic guidelines and formulas you can follow to create a foundation for success. One of the purposes of this guide is to equip you with these basic ingredients. They will help you avoid many of the common pitfalls and mistakes made by beginning presenters. These guidelines range from topic selection to presentation structure to content memorization. Creativity can flourish and actually improve by following certain formulas. Think about music—90% of your music collection is songs between two and a half and five and a half minutes in length. Most contain two to four verses and a repeating chorus. This song format is recognized and followed by nearly every musical group in the world. However, there are literally millions of different songs, each with a different lyric, rhythm, instrumental arrangement, and feel. Your task during the creation of your presentation is to create something interesting, entertaining, and informative while sticking closely to well-defined guidelines.

This task is accomplished in the world of creating and giving presentations through variety and personalization. It is actually a requirement to achieve a high level of effectiveness. Whether your audience expects to be entertained, informed, or inspired, they will demand fresh, interesting, and authentic content. The moment they start hearing or seeing something they have heard or seen before, you will lose their interest. If you use someone else's content without giving proper credit or provide false or misleading information, you will lose their trust.

Learning formulas is simple, even if applying them successfully might not be. Learning how to be artful and creative is neither simple to learn nor put into practice. You will probably struggle with creating really cool presentations, at least at first. This is one reason why so many people avoid giving presentations—they didn't take the time and effort to become proficient at them. You can be different, just don't give up. You will be called to give presentations throughout your entire life. Now is your chance to learn the basic science of effective presentations and start working on getting great at the creative side.



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Value of Speaking Skill Development

Public speaking has been identified as the number one fear among people in the United States. The list of reasons for this is long, and you have felt many of these reasons often—fear, nervousness, potential embarrassment, and being in the spotlight. This fear starts at a young age and prevents people from ever standing up in front and talking, let alone investing time developing their speaking ability. This is bad news for them but great news for you. This has created an opportunity for you to separate yourself from the pack in terms of job placement, scholarship interviews, career advancement, and leadership development. Think about your investment in developing your speaking abilities as an investment in yourself that will pay dividends for many years to come. Effective public speaking is a prized commodity because so many people either are not or believe they are not good at it. Mastering this curriculum is one of many golden tickets to a great future.

Chances are, you are hesitant about getting up in front and speaking. Chances also are that you actually dread the experience. This makes developing your speaking skills even more valuable and meaningful. When you finish this curriculum with not only the ability to deliver great presentations, but the desire to do it often and the ability to enjoy it, you will accomplish a task that literally millions of people will never attain. The sense of pride and achievement that goes along with developing the skill of speaking is priceless.

Formal Speaking vs. Conversational Speaking

It is estimated that the average person spends 30 percent of his or her waking hours talking. This communication, both formal and informal, requires organizing your thoughts logically, tailoring your message for your audience, communicating for maximum impact, and reacting to audience feedback. Speaking formally before an audience differs from speaking conversationally to your friend.

Speaking formally is more highly structured. It usually imposes a time limit on the speaker and does not allow interruptions, which requires the speaker to be organized and direct. He or she must anticipate and answer questions in the body of the speech.

Formal speaking requires more formal language. The vocabulary you use with your friends and family may not be appropriate for larger audiences. Listeners react negatively to speakers who use slang and bad grammar; they want to listen to an authority—someone they can trust. This trust is built, in part, by correct use of language.

It also requires effective delivery of the message. When you speak casually, you can repeat yourself,

react to you listener’s body language and respond accordingly, use informal body language, and project at your normal level. However, when you speak publicly, you must stand erect, use purposeful body language, project your voice, and choose your words carefully.

Unlike conversations, formal speeches are written for one of four general purposes and practiced before delivery. Speeches are to inform, persuade, entertain, or mark a special occasion. Each type must have a specific purpose, which is the one message you want to communicate. All the rest of the speech or presentation is to define, explain, and elaborate upon this one point that you want your audience to know.



Students speaking conversationally
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Topic Selection

In the movie *Titanic*, the enemy was not the iceberg above the water. What brought the ship down was the large glacier under the water. An effective presenter is just like an iceberg, which represents your actual presentation—the short amount of content you say. The glacier represents your knowledge of your presentation’s topic—the large amount of content you know. Especially in the world of competitive speaking where judges ask questions, what you know about your topic is vastly more important than what you say about your topic.

This is why you must pick a topic that you can study, study, study. Your topic doesn’t necessarily need to be something you already know something about, but it does need to be something into which you are willing to put hours of research time. There are more factors involved in topic presentation than just this one, but this sets the direction of your presentation’s success: Am I willing to become an expert on this topic? If so, there are other questions to ask yourself when preparing your message:

1. What does the audience expect to hear?
2. What are you prepared and/or qualified to present?
3. What are you passionate about?
4. What is appropriate for the occasion?
5. What will you have time to present?
6. What is unique, fresh and different?



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Informative or Persuasive

One of the biggest differences between interesting and boring presentations is the presenter's courage to take a position on an issue, clearly communicate what that position is, and then deliver an adequate pool of supporting evidence. Since this method is more closely suited for persuasive presentations, many highly entertaining and interesting presenters use this format.

Your message is going to be either **informative** or **persuasive** in nature. The goal of an informative presentation is to provide the audience with new information about a topic of common interest. The goal of a persuasive presentation is to influence the audience to either change or strengthen their belief about a topic of common interest. While each may contain elements of the other, the writing and presenting of each is very different.

Informative	Persuasive
Audience is simply expected to leave and remember what they learned.	Audience is expected to leave and take action on what they heard.
Contains more data in the form of facts and figures—an intellectual interaction.	Contains more stories and fewer facts and figures—an emotional interaction.
Reveals less information about the presenter and relies primarily on information about the topic.	A balance of presenter and topic information because the presenter is the most influential tool, not the content.
Tends to be less engaging due to the facts and figures presented.	Tends to be more engaging due to the emotional strength of trying to change someone's mind on an issue, situation or belief.

A **statement of purpose** is a one sentence synopsis of your presentation short enough to fit on the back of a business card. It is also known as the central idea. The statement of purpose summarizes your stance on an issue or reason for presenting.

Informative Statement of Purpose Examples

- My family's cow-calf operation is an innovative and profitable example of how hard work, family values, and cutting-edge technology make a winning team.
- The Skills USA Organization has provided a source of pride, community, self-development, and income for millions of young people.

Persuasive Statement of Purpose Examples

- I believe urban sprawl is counter-productive to the health and viability of many communities.
- The National FCCLA should require all students enrolled in Family and Consumer Sciences classes to be members of FCCLA.

Message Development

Deciding on your message is one of the first steps in developing a presentation. Your message is more specific than your topic area and an expansion of your statement of purpose. As you develop your message's ideas and structure, you need to build it around personal stories and real-life examples and then sprinkle it with facts and figures. This formula will help your presentation achieve "interestingness" and "memorability." Here are a few approaches to get you started as you develop your message.

Launching Pad Approach

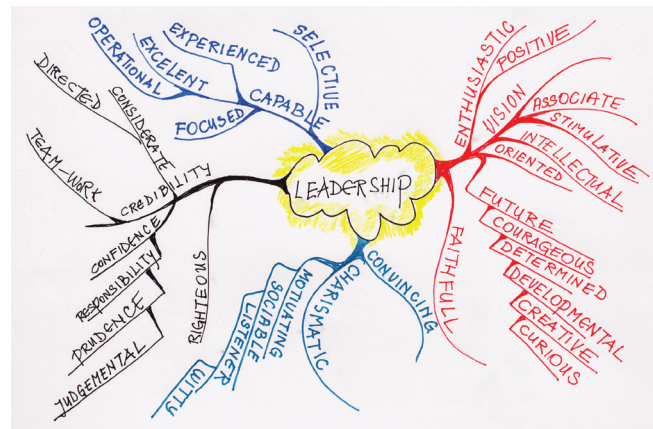
1. What do you want to say? Write this down in one sentence.
2. Who cares? List the various groups.
3. Why should they care? List at least three reasons.

Mind-Mapping Approach

1. Write down what you want to say in the middle of a piece of paper and draw a circle around it.
2. As fast as possible and without filtering or judging your thoughts, write down the first things that come to mind. Each new thought from an old thought gets a new circle with a line drawn to the old circle.
3. Continue this process until you have ran out of thoughts. It may involve going back and revisiting old circles a few times. You will think of new thoughts each time.
4. After you have completed your mind map, go back through your discoveries and start plotting out your potential outline.
5. A completed mind map looks like this:

Action-Oriented Approach

1. Decide what action you want your target focus to take.
2. Determine what it will take to make that action happen.
3. Figure out the major reasons why they aren't currently taking that action and/or why they potentially won't in the future.



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Parts of a Presentation

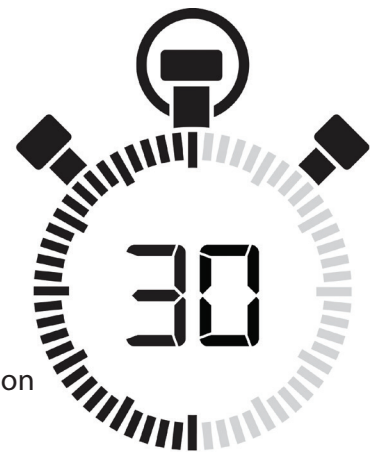
A presentation consists of three main parts. Depending upon your outline structure, you will have an introduction, which includes the statement of purpose, a body of main points, and a conclusion. Each of these has a specific purpose.

Introduction

The **introduction** of your presentation is by far the most important element. The first 30 seconds is your audience's chance to decide whether you and your topic are worth attention. Your introduction should be built around the concept of "interestingness." This means you need to get the audience's attention in a big way immediately. Attention spans are shorter today than ever before because of the nature of our busy culture. Effective communicators understand this and incorporate attention getting techniques into their first 30 seconds to break their audience's thought patterns and get them fully committed to the listening process. Your introduction should get them laughing, agreeing with you, or make them curious.

Some techniques for achieving these include:

- A part of a personal interview you conducted
- A humorous experience that happened to you
- A dramatic experience that happened to you
- A number of almost unbelievable facts and figures
- A portion of a news media report
- A non-famous quote from a famous person and your interpretation of it
- Posing an off-the-wall version of reality and asking "What if this was true?"



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Some things **not** to do in your introduction:

- Do something other than talk (no singing, no auctioneering, no animal sounds)
- Spend more than one minute on your introduction (in a six to eight minute speech)
- Not give a preview of what your speech topic and/or main points are

Body

The **body** of a presentation consists of all the main points. They should be chosen carefully, organized logically, and expressed precisely. This is the longest and most important part of your presentation. It is the part that supports your statement of purpose. The number of main points in the body of a presentation should be at least two and no more than five. You want your audience to remember these, so limit your points to the most important ones.

You can help your listeners know where you are in your presentation by using transition expressions and signposts. Words or phrases that link ideas are called **transitional expressions**. Because you use them often in conversational speaking, they will be easy to incorporate into your presentation. Your goal is to make ideas flow from one to the next. Words and phrases that help you do this at any point in a sentence include:

- accordingly
- in addition
- as a result
- besides
- consequently
- for example
- furthermore
- hence
- however
- moreover
- namely
- nevertheless
- on the contrary
- otherwise
- so
- that is
- then therefore
- thus yet

Words that show you are moving from one point to another are signposts. They are a specific kind of transitional expression that appears at the first of a sentence.

- First
- Last
- Most important
- On the other hand
- The final contributing cause
- To conclude



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Conclusion

Your conclusion, typically written last, should be no more than 10 percent of your presentation and should have two objectives. First off, it will signal the end. Surely you've listened to a presentation, and just when you thought the presenter was giving clues that he was about to finish, he spoke for another 10 minutes. You want to let your listeners know you are truly near the end of your speech. Secondly, reinforce the central idea. This is the last chance you have to reinforce your central idea

and make it memorable. To do this you should summarize by briefly restating the main points and concluding with a striking statement. Your striking statement could be a quote, dramatic statement, or reference to the introduction. It should be something that pulls your entire presentation together.

Repetition reinforces learning, which is why the introduction tells your audience what you're going to talk about, the body talks about it, and the conclusion reviews it.

Outline Structure

An outline is critical to the planning process for two major reasons: 1) it provides areas in which to place information; 2) it gives your presentation a structure the audience can easily follow.

After you have selected your topic and written your statement of purpose, it is time to start figuring out how you will support your statement of purpose. This support will include stories, facts, figures, quotes, personal opinion, etc. Depending on the size and scope of your topic area, this can get overwhelming. The process of organizing your support material is best facilitated through the development of an outline. This outline will contain the major sections of your speech. The standard outline format is:

1. Introduction
2. Statement of Purpose
3. Point One
4. Point Two
5. Point Three
6. Conclusion



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Non-Standard Formats

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Point One | 1. Statement of Purpose | 1. Introduction | 1. Introduction |
| 2. Statement of Purpose | 2. Introduction | 2. Statement of Purpose | 2. Statement of Purpose |
| 3. Introduction | 3. Point One | 3. Point One | 3. Point One |
| 4. Point Two | 4. Point Two | 4. Conclusion | 4. Point Two |
| 5. Point Three | 5. Point Three | | 5. Conclusion |
| 6. Conclusion | 6. Conclusion | | |

The major benefit of developing an outline is to create sub-topics for your research. Let's say your topic is clean water, and your statement of purpose is "America needs to clean up its act and fix its water pollution problems." Now you need to decide how you are going to support your stance. This starts by figuring out what your sub-topics are.

Sub-topics support your statement of purpose but are not necessarily main points, although a sub-topic could turn into one. At the start of your research, a sub-topic is simply a specific area that will help you index and filter the supporting information you find. For our example above, your sub-topics might be:

1. Businesses and industries need to stop dumping toxic chemicals into water systems.
2. Pesticides and herbicides need to be replaced by non-pollutant alternatives to avoid run-off into rivers and streams.
3. The current EPA policies do not penalize businesses, industries, and corporations for polluting water systems.

Once you have these sub-topics identified, you will know what information to look for and where to save it as you research.

Researching

Communicators are great at research. You need to widen your input and narrow your output when developing a presentation. This means you need to get as much information options as possible, but then only choose the most interesting, powerful, and persuasive elements to include in your presentation. Giving yourself time to research thoroughly is the best reason to start working on your presentation as early as possible.

Step one is to create a three-ringed research book that contains all the research documents you locate. You should save everything you find including:

- Internet bookmarks
- Copies of magazine articles
- Copies of newspaper articles
- Typed notes of personal interviews
- Typed notes of your creative content
- Handwritten notes

Googling Tips

- The more words you use in your search, the more specific the results; for example, instead of diseases, type lung cancer United States.
- If you are searching for a specific phrase or set of words, place quotation marks around the words; for example, type "Clean Water Act".
- When you want your search results to not include results with a certain word, after your search phrase put the word you want to exclude with a hyphen before it; for example, type in water pollution — EPA
- If you want to search for content in a specific web site, use this format: "2008 farm bill" site: www.usda.gov.
- To get a quick definition of a word: define:pneumonia.
- If you want to search university-level materials, use scholar.google.com.
- For even more specific Google searches, use the Advanced Search function on the Google home page.

As You Research

You should utilize a variety of sources when researching. The Internet, interviews, books, magazines, and newspapers provide a good variety of information. You should always write down exactly where you heard, read, or saw the information. If it makes it into your presentation, you will want to either site the source and/or complete a bibliography. Find as much information in story form as possible. These stories will add great appeal to your presentation.

You should only include information that will fit into one of your sub-topics. In today's world of information access, it is easy to get off track. Stay narrow in focus, but wide in quantity. Keep everything you find in your research notebook. Go ahead and print web pages or write down their URLs. Don't just use bookmarks on a single computer.

The most impressive entry on a bibliography is a personal interview with a recognized expert in your presentation's topic area. Make a list of questions before you schedule the interview. Take comprehensive notes during the interview and filter through the comments after the interview. Highlight the ones you think are worth including in your presentation. Send a thank you letter after your interview.

Examine the vast story database at www.loe.org. This is the Internet home of the weekly environmental radio show, Living On Earth. Many of their stories have both a "green" perspective and an environmental perspective to them. This site is highly valuable because the information is already in story form, the content is searchable, and you can either listen (via downloadable MP3s) or read (via downloadable transcripts) their content.

www.Wikipedia.com is a great spot to do topical research. However, remember to always double check any facts or figures you discover there. It also might help to reference the secondary fact-check site instead of Wikipedia. It does have a reputation of being a site laced with misinformation and non-expert fact generation.

Conduct a search for state, regional, and national associations related to your topic. For example, if your topic is equine management, search for horse association, and you will find links to each breed association site.



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Bibliography Development

Trust is a critical element of presentations. A speaker in front of an audience is similar to two people just chatting in a conversation in that each party is investing time, attention, and energy into the interaction. This investment needs to be rewarded by each party acting in a trustworthy and respectful manner. Speakers are called to have honest opinions, accurate facts, and a genuine nature. If a presenter loses the trust of their audience, it is very difficult to recover. Thus, your research and the accuracy of your facts, statistics, and statements are critical to the overall effectiveness of your presentation.

Giving credit where credit is due adds strength to the trust transaction between you and the audience. The methods for giving credit are spoken, digital, and written. **Spoken citations** are simply telling the audience where you found your information. A **digital citation** includes citing sources in PowerPoints, e-mails, and videos. **Written citations** provide accurate footnotes or bibliographical references.

Spoken Citations

There are three types of source citing you will find yourself needing to do while speaking.

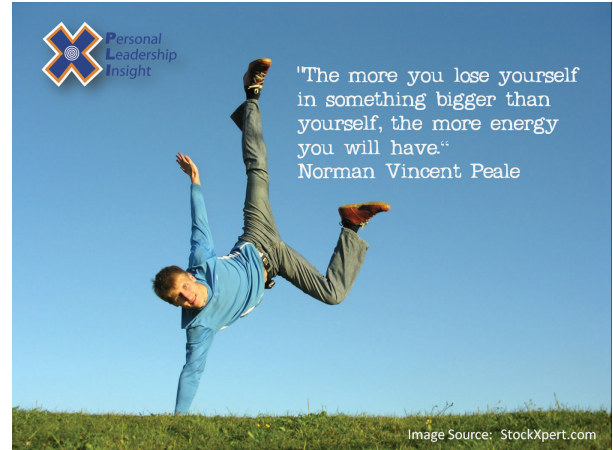
1. Repeating word for word a statement from someone else. Your strategy here is to simply give the name and possibly a short description of the person.
2. Telling a fact or statistic from an organization, periodical, book, Internet site, etc. This gets a little tricky because even though you have the source location, you might not have the actual author of the text. If you have the location and the author, tell both. If you only have the location (Time magazine, the UPA web site, etc.), give that.
3. Telling a story, doing a demonstration, showing a video, or including any other type of content that you saw, heard, or read somewhere else. This refers to any longer content piece that you did not create from scratch. You need to get permission from the original creator first and then give them full credit during your presentation.

Digital Citations

Citing sources in digital presentations is a two-fold approach. Just like the spoken word, you need to give credit for any content that you did not entirely create. Here are two examples of digital citations in Power Point screen shots:

On-The-Spot Citation

There are two on-the-spot citations in this screen capture. The first is the sourcing of the quote to Norman Vincent Peale. Anytime you word-for-word quote an author or speaker, put quotations around the quote and include their name directly after the quote. The second one is the Image Source citation at the bottom of the screen. This image was purchased online at www.stockxpert.com with full rights to redisplay. In this case, it is not necessary to include their site URL on the image, but it is a professional courtesy. If you did not purchase the image and instead received permission from a photographer to use an image, it would be necessary to include the photographer's name or company as the Image Source.



Review Citation

This is a review credit slide at the end of a Power Point presentation. Each of the letters corresponds with a lettered notation earlier in the slide show. This slide's image is also sourced directly to the photographer.



Written Citations

The most common form of written citation is a bibliography. The primary purpose of a bibliography is to provide a tracking mechanism for sourced content in a written document. In the competitive speaking world, a bibliography gives the judges an additional source for questions and reflects each speaker's depth of research. Your bibliography should look full not for its own sake, but as a by-product of your large amount of research. A few basic guidelines to follow: a bibliography should contain no less than six entries, have no less than three different types of sources, and include at least one personal interview with an expert in your topic area (the most impressive bibliography entry type.) The American Psychological Association (APA) style is the recognized standard for the Prepared Public Speaking CDE. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu> provides instructive information on writing an APA-style bibliography.

Periodical (e.g., a journal, newspaper, or magazine)

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year).
"Title of article." *Title of periodical*, volume number, date, pages.

Nonperiodical (e.g., book, report, brochure, or audiovisual media)

Author, A. A. (Year of Publication). Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle. Location: Publisher

International Periodical

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Date of publication). Title of article. Title of Journal, volume number (issue number if available). Retrieved month, day, year, from <http://web address>.

Nonperiodical Internet (e.g., a Web page or report)

Author, A. A. (Date of publication). Title of article. Retrieved month, day, year, from <http://web address>.

Government Publication

National Institute of Mental Health. (1990). Clinical training in serious mental illness (DHHS Publication No. ADM 90-1679). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office

Brochure

Research and Training Center on Independent Living. (1993). Guidelines for reporting and writing about people with disabilities (4th ed.) [Brochure]. Lawrence, KS: Author.

Book or article with no author or editor named

Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary (10th ed.). (1993). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.



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Visual Aids

Being able to communicate information with visual devices, such as charts and graphs, is a valuable skill. Agricultural communicators, in particular, must turn massive amounts of data into understandable, useful graphical elements—trends in livestock production, production inputs for grain crops, and pasture values across the nation.

Creating an effective visual includes identifying information that lends itself to a visual format, choosing the graphical form that communicates the information most clearly, selecting the software to create the visual, and using the software to turn the data into the graphic. A presenter who successfully combines these steps, along with a little creativity, will provide a much more appealing presentation.

Many topics involve numbers—ratios, numerical comparison, percentages, prices, rates, and such. Other issues involve descriptions of equipment or instructions on how to accomplish tasks. In many of these cases, a combination of visuals and words can be the most effective method of communicating. Quality charts, illustrations, and other graphical tools provide visual information that readers can quickly comprehend.

When a visual is being considered, the speaker should first think about the information that needs to be communicated. The look of the visual will come later. A presenter should ask questions. “What is the most important point to make?” “What data is really necessary to make that point?”

Technology makes it somewhat easy to incorporate visuals and text, but including graphics in print and electronic media means communicators must develop the skills to do so well. These skills include understanding how to present information graphically and how to use the technology to create visuals. The best visuals are simple. They deliver essential information to help listeners understand data. Just as writers eliminate unnecessary words from their writing, presenters should eliminate unnecessary elements from their graphics.

The visual impact of a chart is important. A chart background that is white, a pale color, or even black works well. Photographic backgrounds that are too cluttered often interfere with visibility; the background should be just that—a background.



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Additional Guidelines for Designing Charts

- The numeric scale must accurately represent the data.
- A headline, or label, conveys the central idea of the chart.
- Axis labels are short, but explanatory.
- If needed, a legend is included to identify the symbols used.
- Attribution is given for the source of the information.
- The caption, if used, is placed immediately below the chart to show that the two go together.

Color is a tool for making chart information clear, such as differentiating between two lines on a line chart. Color is information, not decoration.

Choosing just one font for a chart is a good rule. A simple sans serif, used in varying weights and sizes, is best. Before choosing font sizes, however, an ag communicator should consider the finished size of the chart. Will it be enlarged for an exhibit at a trade show? Will it be reduced and placed in a printed brochure? Type sizes should be chosen accordingly.

Ag communicators may also choose to use other graphical devices, such as photographs, drawings, or diagrams. Each of these tools has its advantages.

Photographs are used when realism is the goal. A photograph may show an item in its natural setting or in a studio. A series of photos can show the steps in a process. Drawings show detail and perspective, but the illustrator controls the level of detail and the perspective the reader sees. In addition, a drawing may be necessary when a photograph does not exist, such as to show the cause of a grain elevator explosion.

Diagrams convey information with symbols, which allows the illustrator to simplify an object or process. The illustrator may omit parts or steps that are unimportant to a particular discussion.

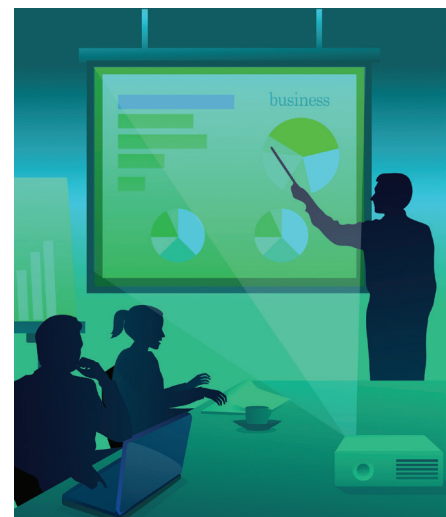
Electronic Tool Tips

PowerPoint (PC) or Keynote (Mac) are great tools when used properly. They add tremendous visual value to a presenter's message by being visually stimulating, communicating only the most important points, and making complicated ideas more digestible. When used poorly, PowerPoint is a distracting crutch that actually diminishes the audience's retention of your ideas and concepts. Poor PowerPoint is information heavy and wordy.

TIP: Type "Really Bad PowerPoint Seth Godin" into Google to access a free PDF with more tips on improving your use of electronic presentation tools.

Dos for Electronic Presentations

- **Imagery Based:** The pictures should be crisp, clear, and interesting on some level. They should also tell a story without any text. The pictures should take up the full screen. There should be little to no text on each slide. Slide shows should be used to add imagery support to your message, not textual support. The purpose of putting text on a slide is for the audience to read. If too much text exists, the audience will invest their attention in reading the text instead of listening to you.
- **Simple, Large Text:** The words should be common, the lines should be brief, the font should be simple (and the same throughout), and the font size should be between 24 and 64. When you put together your show, keep in mind the size of the presentation room, the relative age of your audience, and how close or far away your audience will be seated to the screen. Also, use dark backgrounds and light text (or vice-versa) and never use red or yellow text.
- **Appropriate Colors:** Even though the slide show may be in PowerPoint or Keynote, the images can be put together in Adobe Photoshop or a comparable image-editing software. This will allow you to get the color of the text to match colors in the picture. For those images that don't fit the full 10 by 7.5 inch screen, you can match the slide background with a primary color in the image.
- **Simple Slides and Simple Pictures:** A simple slide will have a central focus and then the rest of the picture is either the sky or just a solid background. This makes it easier for the eye to focus on the main subject. Busy picture equals confused viewer. A common mistake of many slide shows is trying to cram too much information into one screen. You have probably seen a slide show that contains slides with



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multiple pictures on them scaled down to fit on one slide. This is an ineffective approach to retain audience attention and to communicate a clear message.

Don'ts for Electronic Presentations

- **Don't use bullet points:** If you find yourself using bullet points, it probably means you are putting too much text on a slide.
- **Don't use clip art:** In the age of online image searches and photo purchasing sites clip art is seen as unprofessional. Additionally, images on a slide should be either full-bleed or closely integrated into the text and other slide elements. The use of clip art makes most slides too busy and reflects poor design.
- **Don't use fancy slide transitions:** Like clip art, slide transitions is another software feature that is unnecessary and can actually distract from the message instead of add to it. If you do use a slide transition, use the simple Fade option.
- **Don't read the slide content:** Again, the purpose of the slides is to add imagery support to your content, not textual support. Each slide should only have a few words on them and they should be words you aren't planning on saying.



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Memorization

You will remember any written text if you follow this formula. It works because of repetition, input varieties, and word anchors. Memorizing a speech or content for a presentation is professional and will help the speaker focus on other elements such as hand gestures and eye contact.

Persistent Preparation Prevents Poor Performance

Your content should be as complete as possible a minimum of 21 days before your presentation. Complete doesn't mean that you won't make adjustments in the final three weeks, but this formula only truly works if you don't make major adjustments mid-stream. The three week time period allows the material to make its way deeper into your memory.

Read it, Write it, Speak it, Hear it

Write your content out word for word at least once. You can type it for organization, editing, and saving purposes, but actually write it out for memorization purposes. Next, read your content, word for word, out loud a minimum of 20 times start to finish. This step really works on your brain, strengthening the synapses created when you wrote it out. When you read a sheet of paper, your brain takes a picture of that entire page and stores it in its entirety, even though you have to read it one word at a time.

Chunk it Down

Put your content into paragraphs. Number your paragraphs. Begin memorizing them one at a time. Do not go on to the next paragraph until the one before it is totally memorized and you can say it on command. Write out each paragraph on an index card and keep the one you are currently memorizing (and only that one) with you at all times. This step disciplines your brain to think about that piece of content as one piece of information. Therefore, if your content contains 10 paragraphs, your brain essentially only needs to recall 10 unique elements during your presentation.



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Unit Summary

Developing great presentations is far from easy. The best presentations have a clear purpose, targeted focus, and well-defined structure. They have interesting, fresh, and well-researched content and are presented by a passionate and well-prepared speaker. The purpose of this unit was to help you understand how to achieve these goals. The underlying element influencing all of these is your work ethic. If you follow the tips and strategies in this unit, your presentations will improve with every additional hour you invest researching, writing, interviewing, studying memorizing, and practicing.

Every presentation first needs a topic. You should pick a topic area you are willing to spend hours researching. After a topic is selected, you should develop your message. You must have something to say that you believe in, are passionate about, and are an expert on. The goal for your message is interestingness!

Utilizing tools such as an outline will help you fight and control the information overload associated with presentation research. Your introduction, main points, and conclusion should be full of stories, new information, and check points to help your audience follow your presentation.



