

Creating great presentations transcript

Hi. Today I'm going to be talking about how to craft the perfect presentation for when you need to communicate ideas to an audience in an effective and professional way. We've all sat through awful presentations where we haven't been able to follow along because we can't see the slides properly or because the content is so dense we've started falling asleep. I don't want that to be your experience when presenting so hopefully the tips I give you in this video will help make sure that never happens!

I will talk about slide design but before we get to that, let's just take a step back. What are you going to talk about? Is doing a set of slides the best way to communicate that particular message or subject? It's always worth reflecting on this before creating a whole bunch of slides when your time might be better spent writing a really neat report or briefing note, or even creating a video like this one to discuss your information. But, if slides are really the way to go, at least you have had a good think about it.

Next up is who are you speaking to? It may sound obvious but depending on your audience, you may well have to adjust how you present your information. Too complicated and you will lose audience members who are not experts in your area and too simplistic and you will lose that expert audience who came to expand their specialist knowledge. If in doubt, I find that avoiding too much jargon will keep both types of audience happy and if you really want to use some specialist terms, make sure you build in some time to provide quick definitions so no-one gets lost. This can also be a helpful strategy if you are presenting to an international audience as terminology can vary hugely as can language ability.

Now you know what you're going to talk about and who you're going to be talking to, so you can start planning out your presentation. Keep your key message in your mind as you are doing this. What do you want your audience to take away from your talk? Whatever it is, you're obviously talking about something important so you should remember that throughout.

Before you even open up any presentation software, write out a structure for how you want your presentation to work. Remember that it should have a flow, have a structure so a beginning, middle, and an end and keep that key message throughout. If you want to get creative, try storyboarding your presentation. Try googling 'storyboard' and you'll get loads of free pre-drawn storyboard templates to help you structure your presentation. If you want to have even more flexibility, get a stack of post-it notes, write out the points you want to make on each one and then stick them to your desk to work out the structure of your presentation. Because they're post-it notes, you can move them around easily if you find certain points should come earlier or later in your presentation. It's handy! I use this method a lot for planning out presentations, but also for reports and other bits of writing that I have to do.

Now you've got a plan of how things are going to flow in your presentation, you can start putting everything together. There are lots of presentation tools out there and here is just a quick list of some that I think are really fun to use and there's some links in the description, but today, I'm going to stick with the humble PowerPoint presentation.

Start by applying that structure that you planned out to your slides even if that just means chucking some holder text in there until you can flesh it out a bit more. Remember, don't fall into the death by PowerPoint trap. Keep your slides minimal and impactful. Here are some stunning examples of bad slides that I created earlier.

I mentioned earlier that you have to think about the audience that you are presenting too. You should also consider that this audience has a lot of individual brains that you might have just overloaded with all of that information and bizarre colour combinations. In your average audience, most people will be affected by the Pictorial Superiority Effect which essentially means that vision almost always dominates when it comes to receiving information and because of this, large parts of the brain are devoted to visual processing. I said 'most people' here because there may well be individuals within an audience who process information differently because we are all unique in the way we engage with the world.

Because of vision being so important, as well as accessibility of a presentation, you should remember that the presentation is actually all about you. You are the person that people will be focusing on and what you say is what they will be paying attention to. You don't want them to be distracted from you and your message by distracting slides whether that's jarring graphics or a wall of text that they're struggling to read while also listening to you at the same time. Working memory can only handle so much and really well designed slides can help lighten the load.

So, what do well designed slides look like? Well, here are some examples of ones that are a bit different. You may have noticed that text is minimal, there aren't any bullet points and images are a big part of all of the slides. Taking time to design simple yet impactful slides can really add emphasis to the words that you are saying live to your audience and enrich a presentation. Using photography and images that are not clip art will communicate credibility and authenticity. Clip art will communicate amateurism. And don't forget to use images that are high quality and don't just use something you found on Google. We cover legal use of images in our video on finding good images for presentations, as well as in our video on Creative Commons so check those out for more information.

There was only so much we could cover in this short video, so be sure to come to one of our many training sessions about presentation skills. For more information, go to the Betty & Gordon Moore Library website to see our training availability...or just email us to request a session with one of the team!

Until next time, happy presenting!