

## Tips for Preparing a Slide Presentation

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### Reflection

Slides are the most common visual aid used to support an oral presentation, and each organization is different when it comes to how your slides should look. Some even specify you use a particular template. Keep the following tips in mind as you build your slide deck.

### Design

- What is the purpose of your presentation?
- Who is your audience and what do they need to know?
- How will you grab the audience's attention?
- What are the main points of your presentation?
  - Use simple, everyday language appropriate for your audience.
  - Use contractions and keep sentences short; use personal pronouns, if appropriate.
  - Repeat key words and follow with specific examples if you get into abstract or complicated reasoning.
- What is the logical sequence of the story you plan to tell?
- What image or chart can help support your story? Enhance your presentation through creative use of multimedia examples to get a point across. But be careful not to overdo it.
- How will you close?
  - If you are seeking support or a recommendation, what is your ask?
  - Have you tied the conclusion to the introduction?

### Color

Color is a very important communication tool. Most organizations have standard slideshow requirements so check with your front office or protocol office to ensure you're using the correct presentation design.

- Use colors in a standard manner throughout your presentation
- Limit your choices to 4 or 5 colors
- Use light colors on a dark background and vice versa
- Use color to emphasize key elements (try to avoid red lettering)
- Use the same background color on all images
- Avoid red-green and blue-red color combinations to help those that are colorblind see your presentation. Be careful about green-yellow-red "stop-light" charts for the same reason--insert the letters G, Y, and R in the stop light balls if you use this approach for scoring.



- Use bright colors (yellow, orange, etc.) sparingly
- Maintain good contrast between important and background information
- Check your slide colors in the room or meeting app you will be briefing in; projectors do not always show the same level of contrast as your monitor

## **Text**

The first rule here is “less is more!” Less experienced briefers are often tempted to pack presentations with every detail they can think of for fear they might leave something out during the briefing. Slides should have minimal content and lots of “white space.” Slides aim at the visual portion of the brain and will only confuse the audience if they are jam-packed with data. The slides should not be self-explanatory. If they are, you have too much on them. That being said, there is also a good argument for including enough words to make thoughts clear.

Balancing the two is part of the “art” of creating a good presentation.

Remember, you should add value to the presentation and supplement the slides with your talk track contained in the Notes section of the slide.

- Keep it simple; use the “7 x 7 rule:”
  - No more than 7 words per line
  - No more than 7 lines per slide
  - Check your spelling, but don't rely on the spell check feature of your application exclusively.
- If you have more than one slide per main point, add “Continued” to subsequent slides
- Avoid hyphenation at the end of lines
- Use upper and lower case for these three reasons:
  1. Helps identify acronyms
  2. More comfortable for audience because this is how we read
  3. Makes your presentation look more professional
- Emphasize key words with boldface type, italics, underline, or colored text
- Left-justify your text, it's easier to read
- Use the same font size throughout the presentation:
  - Titles: 40 point
  - Subtitles: 30 point
  - Text: 20-26 point
- Always be ready to speak to one level of detail below a piece of information

## **Graphics**

Whether designed for a briefing or written report, no graphic should be so elaborate it becomes an end unto itself and obscures your intended message.

When used wisely, graphics can add to your presentation. Although text is important, audiences remember more when content is graphically presented. A

60-minute briefing can be pretty boring if it is all in text; however, interesting graphics do not guarantee an effective briefing.

- Only use artwork suitable for your presentation
- Use graphs to convey statistics; however, too many can be confusing
  - Use line graphs to show trends over time
  - Use bar graphs to compare values
  - Use pie charts to compare values against a whole
- Don't use tables if you can convey information verbally or in a graph – they appear “busy” on a slide
  - Limit to 4 rows and 7 columns
  - Use footnotes to remove distracting data from tables
  - If possible, round off numbers
- Don't put decimal points in numbers like 10 or 100
- Place your graphics off-center – use them to lead your audience to important text
- Be careful about the use of humor
  - Show that you take the topic seriously by avoiding the use of cartoons
- Be careful with animation:
  - Sound: Use sound effects sparingly and make sure they add impact
  - Slide transitions: If you decide to use transitions, use the same type throughout your briefing, and make sure they add, not distract from your presentation
  - Use video sparingly

***BOTTOM LINE: Make it Big, keep it Simple, make it Clear, and be Consistent!***