

Oral Presentations

Final oral presentations generally follow this order:

- (1) introduction,
- (2) agenda,
- (3) explanation of problem,
- (4) overview of solution,
- (5) features,
- (6) summary,
- (7) recommendations,
- (8) conclusion, and
- (9) Q & A.

Sometimes the problem is explained in the introduction and thus precedes the agenda. If the content of your presentation does not lend itself to this outline, talk to your instructors about alternative ways of organizing it. This same advice applies to all the examples in this chapter. **Do not use the sample slides and other examples as templates.** Instead, adapt them to your content, audience, and purpose.

Time yourselves to ensure that the presentation is no more than 30 minutes, with the last 10 devoted to questions and answers. Rehearse at least twice, once in front of your class and instructors, and, if possible, video your practice presentation so that you can review it later.

Preparing effective slides

Most Design teams use PowerPoint slides because they're a valuable tool in visual communication. As shown in the examples above, good slides help you explain your design, summarize research results, highlight benefits, and present evidence. They help audiences visualize your message, stay on track, and remember key points. Poor slides, however, distract the audience from your message. Therefore, our key advice is: **Don't just write slides and slide presentations. Design them with your audience in mind.**

Guidelines for making slides visually appealing

1. Design template. Pick a design template (background) that enhances the material you are presenting; avoid using a busy template that will distract readers from your graphics and text. PowerPoint offers an array of templates that convey different moods. You can find additional templates on the Web, and even design your own template. Whichever option you choose, make sure the text stands out clearly from the background. For this reason, avoid slides with color gradations that are likely to interfere with your font color. Also, make sure the background is appropriate for your design—don't use a template with a "law" theme for a product for a nursery school. Finally, don't use a background that is too "cute" for a business audience.

2. Font style. Choose fonts on your computer that are easy to read, such as Arial and Times New Roman. You can use two different fonts—one for headlines and one for body text—as long as one is a serif font (like Times) and the other is sans serif (like Arial).

3. Font size. Use a font size that is large enough to be read easily:

- Headlines should be 28 points or larger.
- Bullet-point fonts should range from the size of your headline down to 18 points (for third-level bullet points).
- Use fonts no smaller than 18 points, except for material in the slide footer.
- Use font sizes consistently in your slides.
- Be aware that fonts used in the text for figures and tables tend to be too small to read. Either reformat the text or eliminate it.

Guidelines on slide text

1. **Keep slide text to a minimum.** Use key words or brief phrases to highlight points you plan to explain. Remember that a bullet point shouldn't exceed two lines.
2. **Use the same grammatical form for all bullet points.** Phrase bullet points in a grammatically parallel style, i.e., sentences, verb phrases, or noun phrases.
3. **Use effective “builds” to emphasize key points.** On a “build” slide, the slide starts with the first bullet point, and others appear as you mention them. Avoid “fly-ins”—bullet points that fly into the slide from above, below, or the sides—because they distract from the content. If you are presenting from a figure, your build might include circles or arrows that highlight key areas of the figure as you discuss them. Or you might begin with an overview picture of the whole design and then follow with a series of slides in which each presents a close-up of a key feature.

Managing presentation technology

The technology you use to deliver your presentation should complement your message, not overwhelm it. Be prepared for problems, and prevent them by following these guidelines:

- To increase the likelihood that your presentation file will be compatible with the classroom computer,
 - (1) use standard fonts that will be available on the classroom computer for presentations. Avoid unusual fonts you may have downloaded to your computer.
 - (2) Avoid cutting and pasting pictures into your presentation. Instead, save picture files to your computer and use the “insert” function to insert them into your presentation.
- Use high-contrast colors and fonts for your presentation, and make sure they look good. Pastels or light shades that look good on your monitor are likely to look washed out when projected. Test them at your rehearsal.
- Test your slide presentation on the equipment you will be using. Anticipate hardware and software problems, and work with local tech support to solve them. If you have problems with computers in the design studio, consult the computer lab staff.
- Test all multimedia in advance. Not all video, audio, animation, and modeling applications that worked on your computer will work on the computer you'll be using at the presentation. To avoid this problem, copy large files to the computer's local hard disk instead of running them from a CD or networked drive. Test all demonstrations in advance to prevent delays or catastrophes during the presentation.

- Have backup copies of all files on hand. If you can download files over the network, great. But be prepared for problems: You don't want to have to sprint back to your dorm room because of a network outage or bad disk.
- Set the room lights at an appropriate level. The audience should be able to see you, the screen, the prototype, and handouts. Practice setting the lights so you can adjust them quickly and unobtrusively during the presentation.

Presenting in a professional way

All members of your team are expected to take a visible, active role in the final presentation and to present themselves professionally. Making a Professional group presentation requires more than effective delivery by each individual. Here is some advice for presenting professionally as a team:

- Dress professionally: a jacket and tie, or a tie and dress shirt for men; a nice outfit for women. All members of a team should be dressed at a similar level of formality.
- Introduce group members at the start of the presentation and list their names on your title slide.
- Assign each team member a role. Each team member should deliver part of the presentation. During the question and answer period, have all team members answer questions to emphasize that the design is a team effort. Decide beforehand who will answer questions on various topics.
- Make smooth "handoffs" from person to person during the presentation. For example: "That summarizes the problem and requirements. Now Jamal will explain how our design addresses those requirements."
- Stand and pay attention throughout the presentation, even when you're not speaking. Chatting, slouching, or looking off into space while your teammates are speaking is not professional!
- Give your client the prototype, a bound color copy of your proposal, and a disk with your PowerPoint presentation.