

Presentation Guidelines

Saghir Bashir

This version was compiled on October 14, 2018

Great presentations raise your profile. Delivering engaging and rewarding presentations is all about preparation, preparation and preparation. Read on to learn how.

Presentation Skills | Preparation | Preparation | Preparation

Prepare, Practice & Deliver.

- Prepare great content with aesthetic appeal.
- Make the content flow like an **interesting** story. It will be easy for you to explain and easier for the audience to follow.
- Read, revise, cut, cut and cut.
- Film yourself practising. Watch it (yes, it's hard). Keep what is good and improve the rest. Repeat until it's all good.
- Captivate your audience by delivering with contagious passion and heartfelt motivation.
- Being nervous is normal as you really want to give a great presentation. Over-confidence could be worse.

Audience Courtesy.

- Understand who your audience will be.
- Prepare your presentation to finish on time or a bit before.
- Select visual aids that have an impact and effect.
- Remember your audience can read so you don't need to.
- Speak clearly and loud enough for those at the back.
- Make it engaging and interesting.

Slides.

- Keep the number of slides to what can be digested by your audience (e.g. a slide per minute is usually way too much).
- Use white spacing generously so the contents can be seen by the audience at the back.
- Design your slides to communicate your messages and not to artificially impress or show off.
- Mix the contents of your slides between text, images, tables, graphs and perhaps a mix of these.

Design & Style.

- Use a consistent theme (i.e. layout, fonts and colours).
- Inconsistency distracts the audience from the contents.
- **Pro hint:** work with a graphic designer.

Colours.

- Use a contrasting colour scheme to make information stand out and distinguishable for those at the back.
- Make sure the background does not clash with the colour scheme or is not an annoying distraction.
- Red and green colour blindness is common so use friendlier alternatives.
- It is hard to see light (e.g. yellow) and fluorescent colours.

Fonts & Font Sizes.

- Use sans serif fonts (e.g. Arial) as they are easier to read.
- Use a minimum font size of 24 points.
- You could use 44/40 points for headings, 36/32 points for main bullet points and 28/24 points for sub-bullet points.
- The answer to "Can you read this at the back?" is "**No!**". Use the right fonts and font sizes.
- These rules also apply to algebra, graphs and tables.

CAPITALS and Italics.

- Only use CAPITAL letters for EMPHASIS or acronyms as THEY ARE HARDER TO READ.
- Use *Italics* in "quotes" or to *highlight* (note that they can be hard to differentiate from normal text).
- Use capitals and italics consistently.

Bullet Points.

- Bullet points are easier to read than dense text.
- Keep bullet points to one line where possible.
- Minimise the number of bullet points per slide.
- Aim at a maximum of 8 lines of bullet point text in a slide.

Algebra.

- Avoid algebra and formulae if you can. They can be hard to follow and explain.
- Use words to explain the main concepts (e.g. '*Haemoglobin was modelled as a function of age and treatment*').
- Alternatively use words and Greek letters together instead of Xs and Ys. For example,

$$Haemoglobin = \alpha + \beta.age + \gamma.treatment$$

Graphs.

- Do NOT use three-dimensional graphs (i.e. bar/pie charts)!
- Design your graphs carefully (without distortions) to communicate your message quickly and clearly.
- Include zero on the vertical axis. If this is not feasible consider using a different axis (e.g. log scale axis).
- Keep colour coding consistent across graphs.
- Use high quality graphs with lines thick enough to be seen from the back.
- Use white spacing to enhance the visual appeal.
- Ask yourself whether a table would be better?

Tables.

- Plan and structure tables carefully to communicate your message quickly and clearly.
- Keep it simple.
- Be consistent with format and layout (e.g. do not invert rows and columns).
- Make numbers friendlier to read by rounding consistently (e.g. 8,600 for 8,579).
- Only use horizontal lines and white spacing to enhance the visual appeal.
- Ask yourself whether a graph would be better?

Images.

- Select images that help you tell your story.
- Select high resolution images.
- Make sure you have the right to use them and credit the source.

Well done.

- Now that you're prepared go and give it your best!