

# Presentation Skills: Slide Deck and Tech

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Today's lesson will explore the basics of preparing your presentation, from crafting your slides to setting up your technology.

By the end of this session, you'll have a clearer understanding of how to structure your content, design your slides, and make sure your tech setup is flawless.

Our aim is to equip you with the tools you need to feel confident and capable in front of any audience.

So, grab a drink, settle in, and let's go over the essentials of presentation preparation.

## Preparing Your Slides and Deck

First things first – your slides are there to support you, not overshadow you.

According to Chris Andersen, curator of TED – perhaps the most well-known presentation series in the world – the most effective presentations keep the slides simple and focused [1]. This means using minimal text, avoiding clutter, and making sure your key points are clear and concise.

Start by outlining the main points you want to cover.

Think of your slides as the backbone of your presentation – they should guide your audience through your narrative but not overwhelm them with too much detail.

A good rule of thumb is to aim for one main idea per slide. If you find yourself cramming in too much information, it's time to break it down into more slides.

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Now, let's talk visuals.

Visuals are a powerful tool in presentations – they can illustrate your points, make data more digestible, and keep your audience engaged.

But be careful not to overdo it. The experts at SlideWorks say that a presentation with too many flashy images or animations can be distracting [2].

Instead, opt for clean, high-quality images that complement your message. Charts, graphs, and infographics should be used wisely – make sure they are easy to read and directly relevant to what you're saying.

## **Structure and Flow**

Next, let's consider the structure of your presentation.

According to Lisa V Sellers at Forbes, a well-structured presentation is key to keeping your audience's attention [3]. The classic three-part structure – introduction, body, and conclusion – is a reliable format that works for most presentations.

Begin with a strong introduction that piques your audience's interest. This could be a compelling statistic, a thought-provoking question, or a brief story that relates to your topic.

Your introduction should also clearly state the purpose of your presentation and what your audience can expect to learn.

The body of your presentation is where you dig into the details.

Break down your content into logical sections or points, each with its own slide or series of slides.

Use transition phrases to smoothly guide your audience from one point to the next, keeping the flow natural and coherent.

Finally, your conclusion should summarise the key points and reinforce the main message of your presentation.

This is your last chance to make an impact, so make sure it's clear, concise, and memorable. You might also include a call to action, depending on the nature of your presentation.

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## **Setting Up Your Tech**

Now, let's move on to the technical side of things – because even the best presentation can fall flat if the tech fails you.

Nancy Duarte at the MIT Sloan Review highlights the importance of testing your technology before your presentation [4]. This includes your laptop, projector, microphone, and any other equipment you'll be using.

Start by ensuring that your slides are compatible with the presentation software at the venue. If you're presenting remotely, double-check that your slides display correctly on the virtual meeting platform.

It's also smart to have a backup plan – maybe that's a PDF version of your slides or an alternative device – just in case something goes wrong.

When it comes to the actual setup, pay attention to your environment.

Ensure the screen is visible to everyone in the room and that the font size on your slides is large enough to be read from the back.

Avoid small text and overly complex fonts – clarity is key.

Similarly, if you're presenting online, make sure your camera is set up at eye level, the lighting is good, and there's no distracting background behind you.

It's also important to test your microphone.

If you're presenting in a large room, make sure the sound system works properly and that you're comfortable using a microphone.

If you're presenting virtually, use a good-quality headset or microphone to ensure your voice is clear and free from background noise.

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Finally, practise, practise, practise.

Then, when you're done, practise some more.

Run through your entire presentation multiple times, preferably in the actual space where you'll be presenting.

This will not only help you get comfortable with the content but also ensure that all the tech elements work seamlessly together.

As you prepare for your next presentation, take a few moments to revisit the tips we've discussed today.

Start by outlining your content and keeping your slides clean and straightforward. Then, structure your presentation in a way that flows naturally and keeps your audience engaged. Finally, do a thorough tech check to ensure everything runs smoothly.

And here's your takeaway from all this:

Preparation is key.

The more time and effort you invest in preparing your presentation, the more confident you'll feel, and the better the outcome will be.

Keep practising and refining your presentation skills. You've got this!

[1] *How to Give a Killer Presentation*, Chris Anderson, HBR (2013)

<https://hbr.org/2013/06/how-to-give-a-killer-presentation>

[2] *How McKinsey Consultants Make Presentations*, Slideworks

<https://slideworks.io/resources/how-mckinsey-consultants-make-presentations>

[3] *The Art of Presenting*, Lisa V Sellers, Forbes (2022)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2022/12/30/the-art-of-presenting/>

[4] *How to Create Slides That Suit Your Superiors: 11 Tips*, Nancy Duarte, MIT Sloan Review (2024)

<https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/how-to-create-slides-that-suit-your-superiors-11-tips/>