

# The Pickit Guide to Impactful Presentations



Pickit





Impactful presentations made easy

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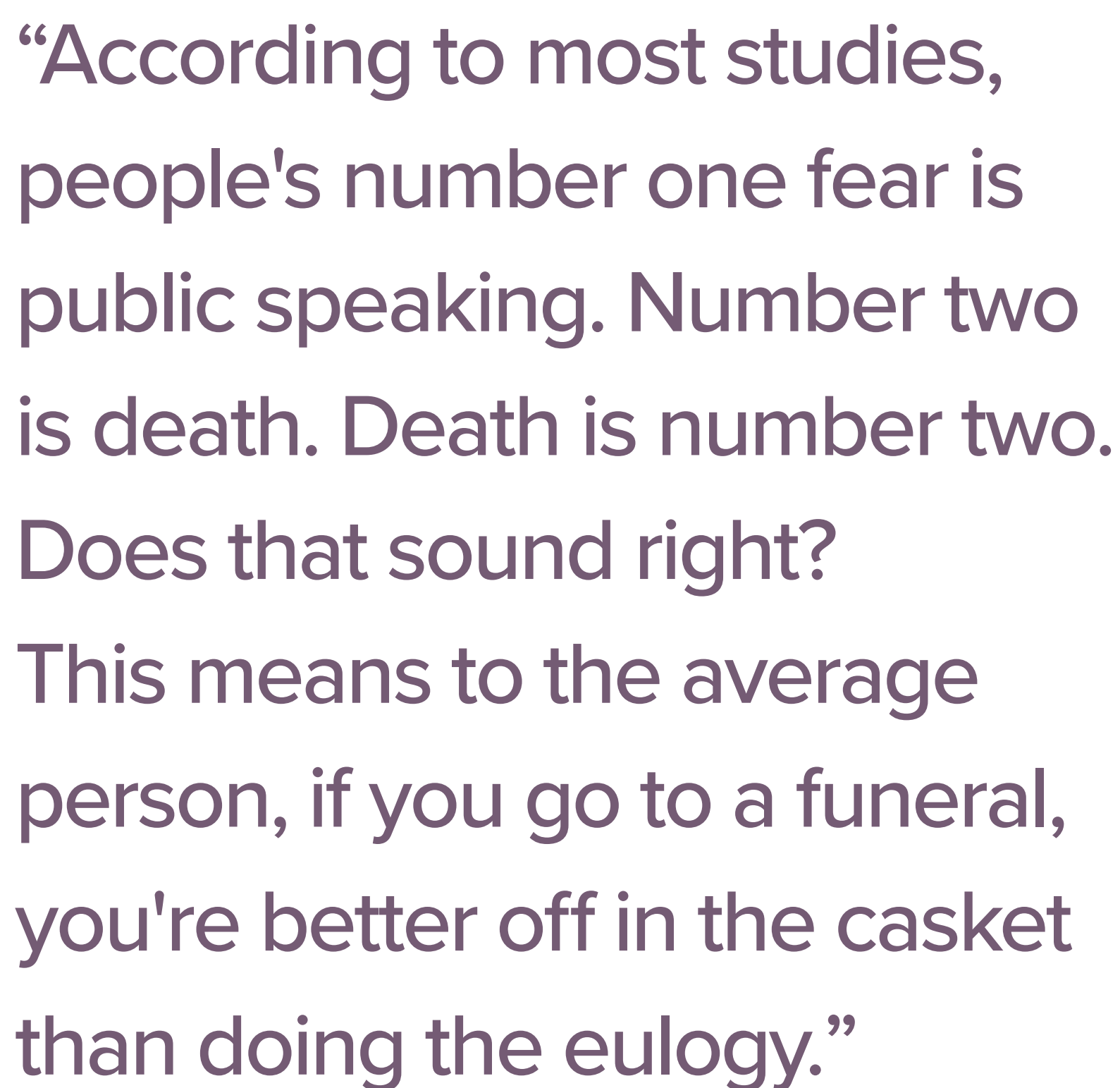
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# Introduction







“According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.”



– Jerry Seinfeld





# Presentation Panic!

**Creating a quality PowerPoint deck can be a huge headache.**

There are so many things that can go wrong; from the struggle to source images that are licensed and look good, to trouble getting transitions and animations to work. Or the task of trying to track down the latest company stats, update graphs and reports, and get the fonts and colors right.

We've all been there, right? Creating an important report the night before a big meeting or making last minute changes to a pitch deck minutes before taking the stage at an event. The result: we start our talk frustrated and stressed, instead of focused and at our best.

**Sound familiar? Then this guide is for you.**

We can't promise to make you a star speaker; but with a few simple tips, tricks and hacks, we can save you lots of time, stress, and embarrassment next time you're doing a talk.





# Ingredients for Impact

This guide wasn't designed for TED Talks and mainstage keynotes as much as for everyday presentations on an ordinary day at the office. Designed for people who want to pitch better, share ideas more clearly, and to make the most of their work.

If you just want a quick cheat sheet with some easy ways to level up your presentation game today, take a look at our 20 quick hacks for presentation impact in the following section. We cover some simple rules, dos and don'ts to get you started.

**Every presentation has 3 key components:**

- Messaging
- Design
- Delivery

**Read these and you'll be on your way to mic-dropping at work!**



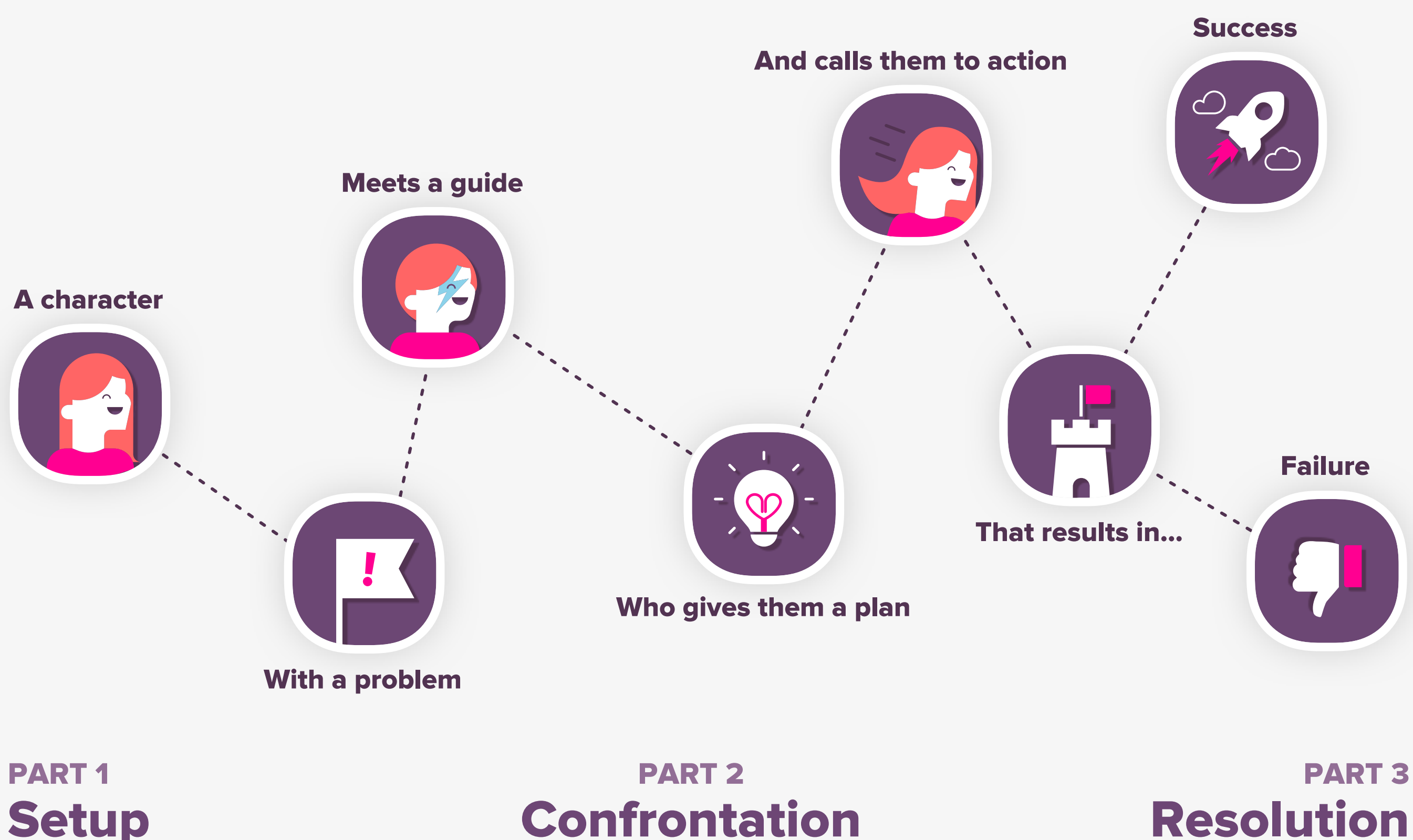
# The Story Factor

**Before we get to the tips, we need to talk about storytelling.**

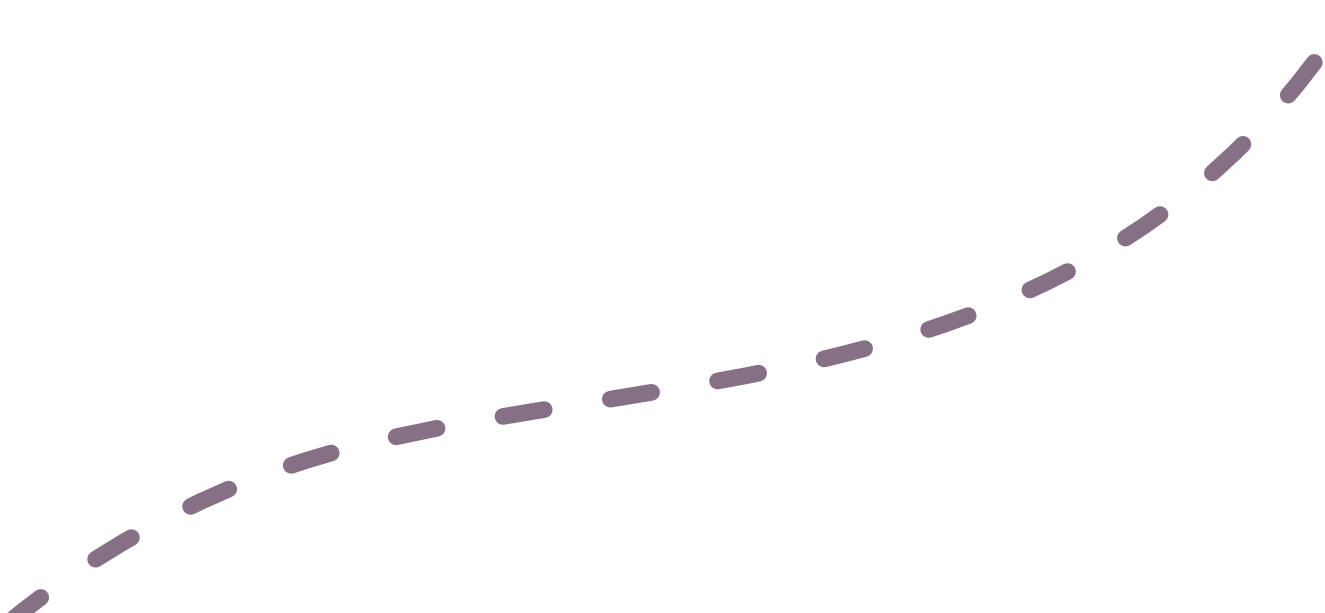
Why? Because people have been telling stories since the dawn of time, and according to research, it's still by far the best method there is for making a message stick. It probably won't surprise you that our brains are wired to absorb narratives better than bullets lists and long informative texts.

So, wherever possible, try to find ways to include stories that illustrate your points. And when you can't tell a story, you can still use story structure to help make your presentation more compelling. We'll show you how.

**Almost every good book, movie,  
or presentation follows this format:**







**“But I just want to spice up my finance report, do I really need to use the same structure as a Steven Spielberg film?!”**

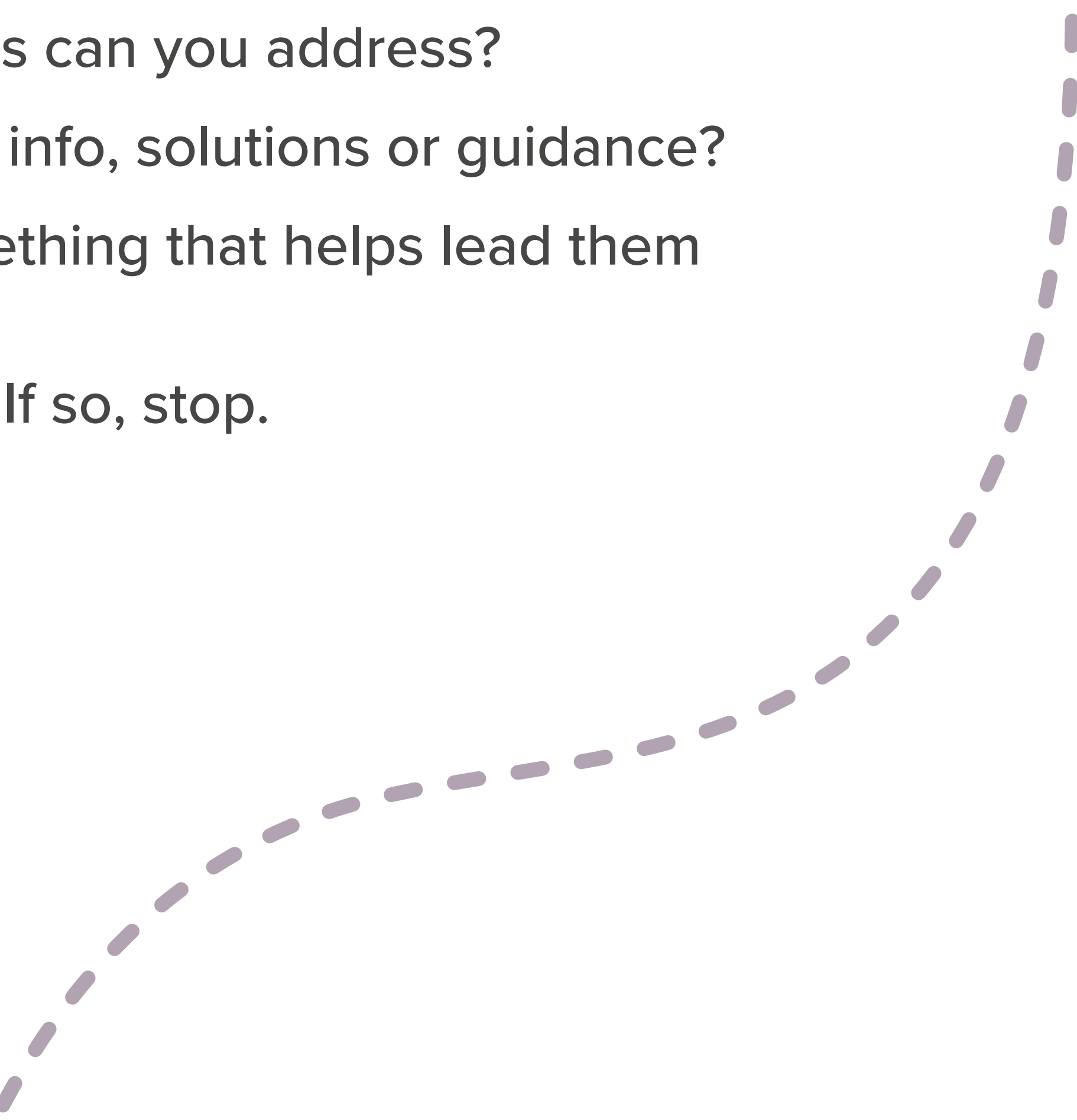
No, you don’t need to use this framework for every deck, but there are some critical elements that we’ll unpack in this guide.

## **You are NOT the hero of the story.**

The most important takeaway here is that stories have heroes and guides. There are usually some friends, foes and random bystanders in the mix too, but let’s focus on the hero and guide.

Many presenters assume that because they’re in the spotlight, they must be the hero. Not true. To really make an impact, presenters should let the listener be the hero and take on the role of guide.

### **Questions to help get you into guide mode:**

- What are your listeners struggling with?
  - What shared problems can you address?
  - How can you provide info, solutions or guidance?
  - Can you include something that helps lead them forward?
  - Are you showing off? If so, stop.
- 



# 20 Quick Hacks





# 5 Easy Presentation Rules



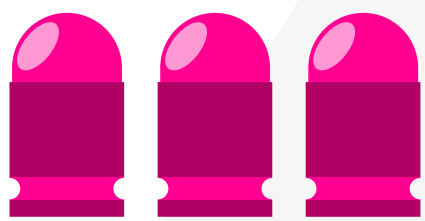
## 1 idea or message per slide

Got more ideas? Use more slides. It's better to add a few extras and stick to the 1 idea rule than to cram everything into the same slide. Give your ideas space to breathe so they really stand out, and people can take them in.



## 2 fonts per presentation

Unless you're a designer, don't get cute with your fonts. Mixing incompatible font styles just makes your deck look unprofessional. If you need some variation, try using bold, italic or different colors.



## 3 to 5 bullets at a time

Bullets can kill, and presentations are no exception. If you need to include a list, stick to 3, 4 or 5 points per slide. Need more? We suggest you either kill some darlings or start on a new slide.



## 7 words or less per line

Long lines of text are hard to read. Stick to 7 words or less per line. This is a PowerPoint presentation, not a Word document.



## 20 slides per presentation

This one isn't law, but the idea is to keep it short and sweet. Sometimes you'll need to add a few more slides to convey all your thoughts in a clear way (see Rule 1). But, don't go adding any extras unless you need to, or using filler slides that don't add value to your presentation. As a general rule, 20 is plenty!



# 5 Things to Try in PowerPoint



## Try starting with paper

Starting with an old deck won't necessarily serve your new message well. We suggest you get your thoughts and outline ready before starting on your slides. Try mind-mapping your message on a whiteboard or piece of paper to get some clarity before you start.



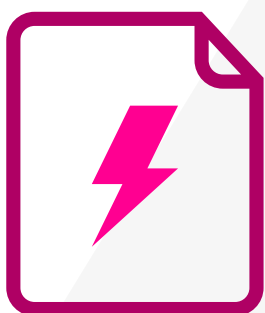
## Try skipping everything but your title

Most decks have too much text. Your presentation should support what you're saying, not compete with it. Only put the most important stuff on the screen. If you want people to listen, don't make them read at the same time.



## Try switching to an empty slide

If your slide doesn't enhance what you're saying, kill it. Empty slides are better than fillers. In fact, shifting to a blank screen when you're talking for a while can actually help create contrast and make the slides you *do* show really stand out.



## Try using Design Ideas

Not sure how to arrange your content? Try PowerPoint Design Ideas. Just make sure you've got the right version of Office and that it's turned on. [Learn more here](#)



## Try Pickit Collections

Stuck for the right image? Let us do the work for you. Find one of our Pickit collections with a relevant theme and browse our professionally handpicked images.



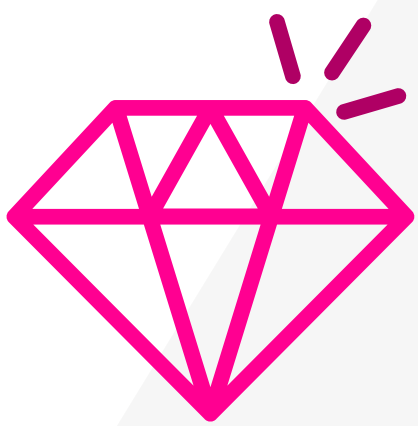
# 10 Presentation Dos & Don'ts

## 5 Dos

### Title Text

#### Use 30+ for text and 40+ for titles

Don't make your audience reach for their reading glasses. Always use font size 30 or larger for text and 40 or larger for titles.



#### Ask: Do I need this slide?

Never use filler slides. More slides won't make you look more professional. What's really professional is to use slides when they add value and be confident without them when they don't.



#### Make sure you care

We get it. Sometimes you just need to stand up and give a report or rattle off some sales figures. But generally, try to talk about things you're actually passionate about. If you don't care, why should your audience?



#### Make the most of your introduction

You only get one first impression, and your audience will decide whether to listen to you in the first few seconds. Instead of wasting your introduction on boring background info or company details, find something relevant to your audience. See *The Hook* on page 17.

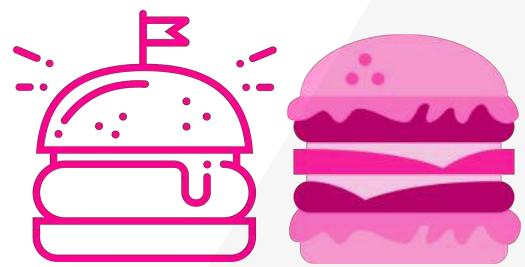


#### Always end with your main takeaway

Don't bury the lead in the middle of your presentation. Even if you climax and drop your truth bomb before the end, make sure to reiterate and tell them what you told them. Reminding people about your key message or action point increases their chances of actually acting on it.

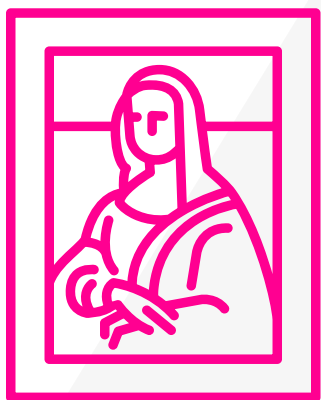
# 10 Presentation Dos & Don'ts

## 5 Don'ts



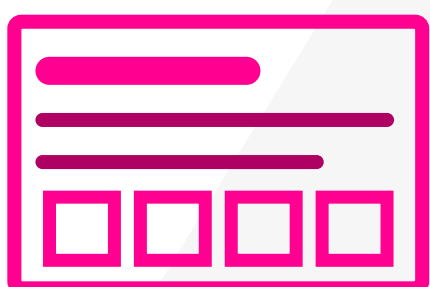
### Don't mix different styles

Whether you're into modern icons, emojis, colorful illustrations, or old school clipart; always try to stick to a style. Mixing looks messy.



### Don't use cliché images

Skip the suited men shaking hands, the bullseye, and that image of a puzzle with one piece out of place. They may illustrate your point, but they might also put some people to sleep. Try something a little less predictable they haven't already seen in everyone else's presentation.



### Don't overfill your slides

Earlier we said one message per slide? Why? To let your content breathe. The same goes for design elements. Never use more than five things per slide if you want them to stand out.



### Don't use tacky transitions

Used well, tasteful transitions and animations can really enhance your presentation. Poorly handled, they can make you look cheap and cheesy faster than a takeaway cheeseburger from McDonald's.



### Don't put everything on your slides

If you're putting everything in your PowerPoint, you should switch to Word and send your audience a doc instead. Presentations are for presenting, so make sure you've got something to say that isn't already on the screen.





PART 1

# Messaging

# The Who, Why, What

If you're going to present well, you'll need to let your audience influence your message. Why? Because beginners, experts, colleagues, and clients often need different sets of information. And the way you address strangers is different from the way you'd talk to friends.

In this section, we'll look at who you're talking to, why you're talking to them, what they need to hear, and what you want to happen when you're done.

## Who are you talking to?



### The Audience

Before you get started, ask yourself some questions to try to get to know your audience.

- Who are you talking to?
- What do they already know?
- Are they rookies or experts?
- Do they know you or are you new?
- Are they familiar with your company or product?



### Point A

Once you've got your audience figured out, you'll need to decide where you want to take them. But first, you need to know where you're starting. Before you can bring them to Point B, you need to know their Point A.





## The Hook

Now that you've identified Point A, you need to find a hook so you can take them to Point B. You only get one first impression and people will decide whether or not to listen in a matter of seconds. So, instead of wasting your intro on irrelevant background info about yourself or your company, start with a bang.

### Some suggested hooks:

- A shared problem they need to solve
- A common concern they care about
- A compelling story relevant to your setting or message
- A person struggle people can sympathize with
- A question to get them interacting (and preferably saying “yes”)



## The Hero

You’ve identified your audience's starting point and found your hook, but before you start drafting your presentation, remind yourself that you're the guide, not the star of the show. Let your listeners be the heroes by addressing their needs, concerns, problems, hopes or fears and leading them to a solution or resolution.



# What do they need to know?

Don't start with what you want to tell them, what you usually tell people, or even what you're good at telling people.

## Ask yourself what they need to know

- What's relevant to them?
- What's the one message you need them to hear?
- What's the one thing you want them to do when you're done?



### Point B

We already talked about the A, but what's the B? Don't just go around in circles saying the same thing over and over. Take them somewhere. Every good presentation includes some sort of movement from one place to another.

If they just remember or act on one thing, what would you want that to be?

Figure out your final destination and craft your presentation, so it all points to that place.





# Why do they need to know it?

This may seem unnecessary if you've already figured out who they are, where they are, and where you want to take them. But, it's a great way to keep yourself in check as you're preparing your deck.



## 2 key questions:

1. What will happen if they don't hear your message?
2. What could happen if they do, and act on it?

By asking the first question, you can quickly identify if you've started adding additional components to your presentation that you don't need and strip it back to the important stuff.

By asking the second question, you can remind yourself of your presentation's potential and motivate yourself to make the most of it.



# The Structure

We've already covered many of the critical components that'll help create a good structure for your presentation, so here we'll mostly be summarizing and giving you a brief overview in one place.

Good stories tend to have six or seven components organized in three main acts ([see page 8](#)). Good presentations don't have to follow the same format, but there are some things we can learn from the story structure.

## Here are a few:

- We should always move from one place to another
- Shared problems/challenges can make great starting points
- We should save the climax to near the end of our talk
- We need to remember who's the hero and who's the guide
- We should either resolve something or activate the audience to do so when we're done





# Point A – Impactful Introductions

Don't start your presentation with irrelevant information about your job background, company or position. This information can be helpful if you want your audience to get to know you, but you can save it until you've shown them that you're worth listening to and getting to know in the first place. Otherwise, chances are they'll drift off before you get to the good stuff.

## Here are 5 ways to create killer introductions:

**1 A Problem** Mention a common problem you all want to solve

**2 A Question** Ask a question to get them involved\*

**3 A Story** Tell a compelling story about yourself or something relevant

**4 A Surprise** Do something unexpected that'll catch their attention

**5 A Slide** Use a captivating visual in your first slide to draw them in

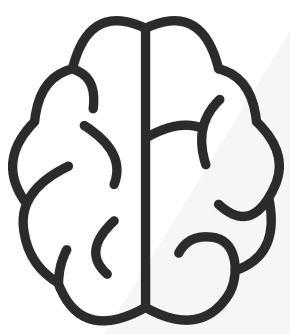
\* Try asking something that gets them saying “yes”. This is just a great way of connecting and building rapport.

# Point B – Actionable Endings

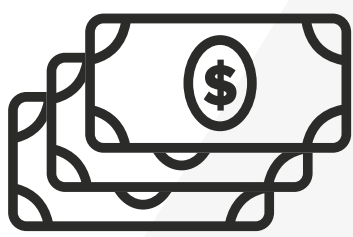
## Where are you taking them?

All presentations aren't created equal. They have different purposes, and if you're not sure of your goal, your audience definitely won't be.

## Do you want them to:



learn something



buy something



do something

*or all of the above?*

## What do you want them to do when you're done?

If you want them to act, focus less on impressing and more on making it memorable and actionable. So many great talks and presentations still leave people feeling unsure about what to do next. So, unless you're doing stand-up or just providing some light dinner entertainment at a company event, try to end with a clear action point or two.







# Can your message be **storified?**

When you've got your outline together and know where to start and finish, see if your talk can benefit from storytelling.

*Our guess is yes.*

## **2 ways to storify your presentation:**

1. Use story arc to make it more compelling. You can achieve this by introducing a problem, challenge or concern early on, and building to a resolution or solution close to the end. Also, make it about helping the listener achieve their goals and be the hero instead of you.
2. Just inject a story or two to bring your presentation to life and make it human. Try a personal story or even a failure you learnt from. Or why not share a case study or a testimonial from a customer?

# Recap

**Information overload? Need a recap?**

Here are the three main points to keep in mind and five quick questions to help you figure them out.

## The Why

- **Why** are you creating a presentation?
- **What** does the audience need to know?

## Point A

- **Who** are you talking to?
- **Where** are they now, and what's their starting point?

## Point B

- **What** do you want the audience to feel, know or do when you're done?



PART 2

# Design



# The Images

## How to choose the right images

Choosing images can be tricky, and there are too many variables for us to put all the dos and don'ts in just a few words.

However, there are a few simple guidelines that can be very helpful when looking for presentation images.

## Images to look for



Photos that look authentic and natural



Icons that follow a consistent style



Images with negative space where text can be placed



Photos with calm backgrounds that don't compete with the message



Images that convey emotion or bring an element of surprise



# Images to avoid



Stock photos that look staged and fake



Photos everyone has seen before:  
*businessmen shaking hands, bullseyes, puzzles etc.*



Images that are low resolution, blurry or pixelated



Photos with too many elements and no negative space



Images with little or no gender, racial and social diversity



Outdated clipart images from the 90s

There are, of course, exceptions to these rules. For example, you might want to make a point that there are too few women in a particular role, or almost only male customers for your product, in which case it might be suitable to use an image showing only that group.



# Pickit Collections

Hopefully, the information on the previous pages has given you an idea of what works and what doesn't. However, you might still want some help sourcing the right visuals and selecting effective images.

**That's where Pickit Collections come in.**

We're continually handpicking the best images and compiling them in themed Editor's Choice collections. Why? So that you don't have to. Examples include PowerPoint Backgrounds, Blue Icons, People at Work, Core Values, and Clipart Characters.





# How to use your images

A picture says more than a thousand words, and there are thousands of ways to use every one of them.

**But here are a few general rules.**



## **Never stretch images**

Always constrain proportions when resizing images, so they don't get stretched. Crop your image if necessary, but don't drag it out of shape.



## **Fill the screen**

An excellent way to keep your slides clean and avoid clashing images is to stick to one photo or background per slide and fill the screen.



## **Write in the negative space**

If you've got a photo with negative space, try putting your text there, so it doesn't obscure the subject matter in your image.



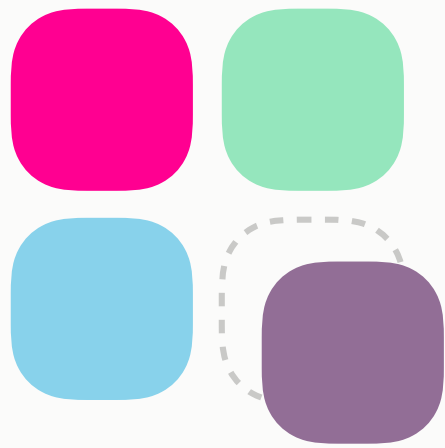
## **Use filters**

If you're using a background photo without negative space and adding text on top, you can tone down the image and increase legibility by using a filter, or by adding a gradient shape with 80% transparency on top of the image. This will make your text pop!

# The Colors and Fonts

We can't tell you which colors or typeface to use, but here are some things to keep in mind.

## Choosing and Using Colors



### **Choose colors that match your company**

If your company has a brand book or style guide, we suggest you follow its lead.



### **Choose colors that match your images**

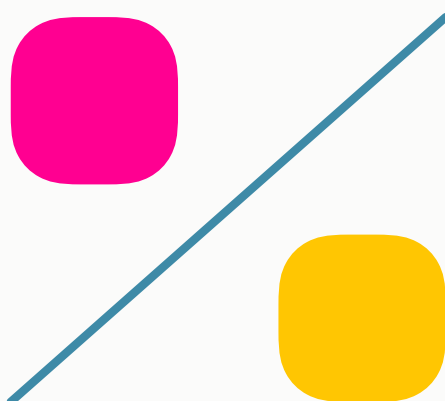
*(or vice versa)*

Think about how your colors and images work together and chose something cohesive.



### **Colors convey emotion, so choose well**

If you want people to feel calm and at ease, tone your shades down. Want something vibrant and full of energy? Go bright!



### **Stick to 1-2 colors per slide, and 3-4 colors per presentation**

Unless you need several colors for an infographic, table or graph; less is more.



### **Use different colors for different parts**

Colors are a great way to create sections or chapters with different themes. If you have 3 main points in your presentation, why not choose 3 matching colors to go with them?



# Choosing and Using Fonts

Like images, fonts can make and break your presentation. Most professionals suggest keeping it simple and sticking to more neutral fonts unless you really know what you're doing.

## The only 7 fonts you'll ever need



Unless of course your company has a favorite font, in which case we suggest you stick to that.

## And a few to stay away from



These typefaces all have their place, but it's not in your PowerPoint! Let the guy at the lemonade stand have Comic Sans all for himself. And leave Papyrus where it belongs—on the movie poster for Avatar.

## “How many fonts can I use per presentation?”

We suggest you stick to 1 or 2. If you need some variety, try using **bold** or *italic*, or even different colors.

Just make sure you keep it classy so you don't get mistaken for a kindergarten teacher. Unless of course you're a kindergarten teacher, that is.

## “What size fonts should I use in my presentation?”

We suggest 30+ for text and 40+ for titles. That way, it's easier to read (*even for those way up the back*) and it's a good way to force yourself to write less and let your talk do the talking.





# The Slides

If we could cover everything about slide design in one page, then there wouldn't be any presentation design agencies making a living from from creating and polishing people's decks.

That said, there are a few ways to cheat and look like a pro without trying.

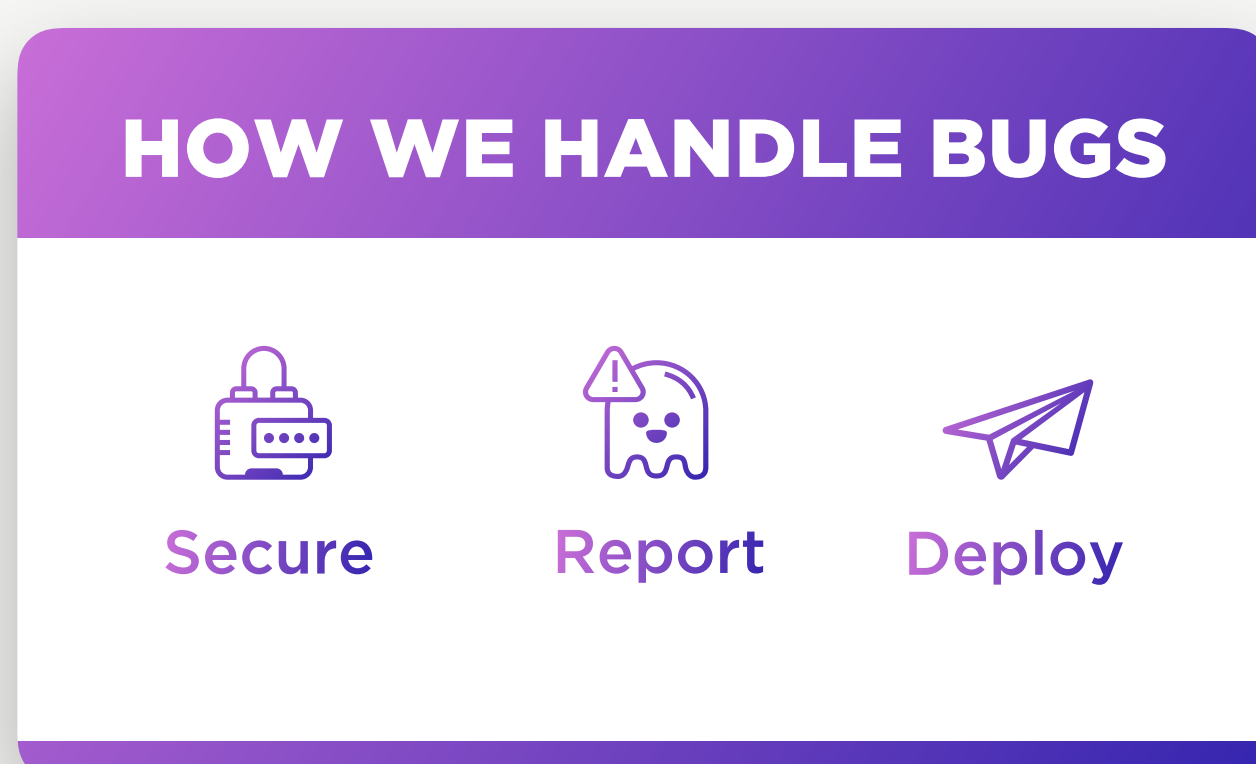
1. Stick to a big image in the background with a filter and text on top. *See example 1*
2. Use photos with negative space and put your text in the empty space. *See example 2*
3. Choose 3 matching shapes, icons or clipart images instead of using bullets. *See example 3*
4. Watch a TED Talk or two and copy something you like.
5. Use PowerPoint Designer!



*Example 1*



*Example 2*



*Example 3*

## “How many slides should I use?”

Some presenters seem to think more slides = more professional. Not true. Sometimes you might need to add a few extras to convey all your ideas in a clear way. But, don't go adding slides unless you need to, and don't use filler slides that don't add value to your presentation. In most cases, 20 is plenty!

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## “How much should I put on each slide?”

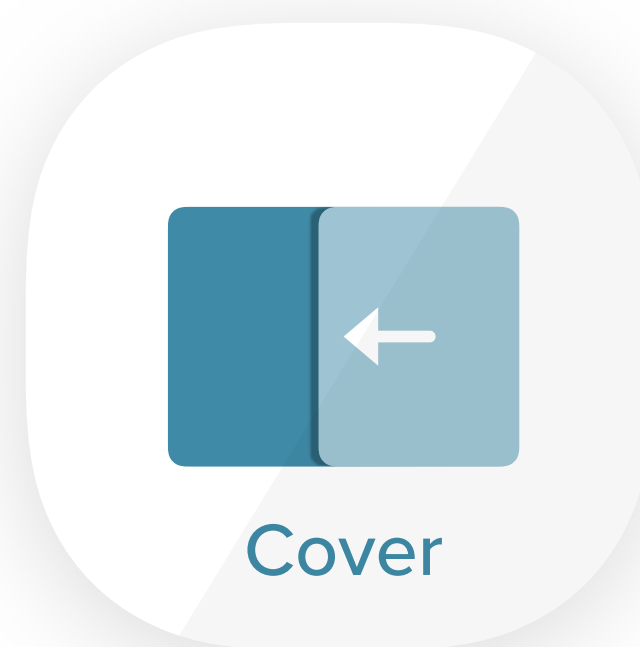
Always stick to 1 idea or message per slide. If you have more ideas, add more slides (*without ignoring the above*). Don't exceed 4-5 elements per slide to avoid clutter, and if you're using bullets, stick to 3-5, and use them with care.



# The Transitions

You can do almost anything with PowerPoint, but that doesn't mean you should. Some transitions are better left alone, and others should only be handled by professionals who really know what they're doing.

**We suggest you stick to transitions like these:**



Avoid dated transitions like Checkerboard, Random Bars and Curtains. There are exceptions of course, but as a general rule, it's better to keep it simple and play it safe. You want your presentation to be memorable, but for the quality content, not the cheesy transitions.

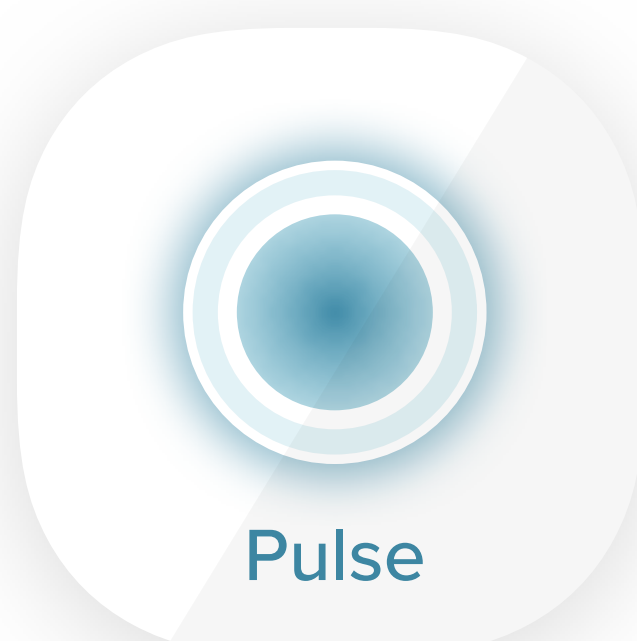
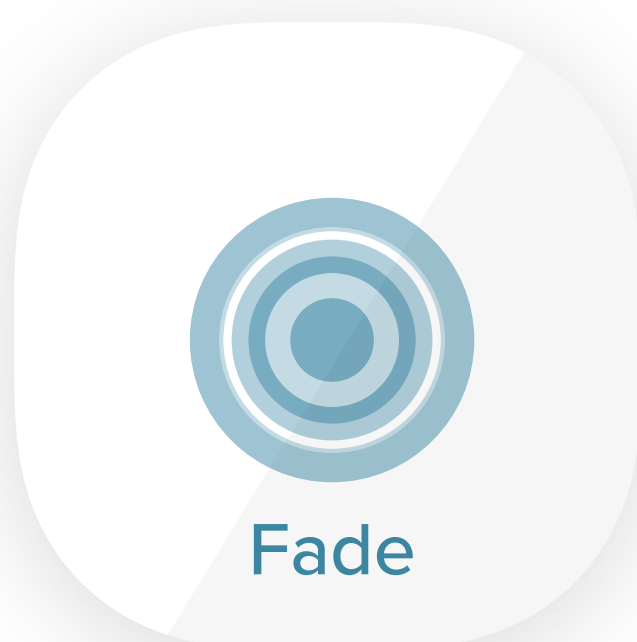
## Morph

If you want to add some more movement without resorting to over-the-top transitions, try Morph. It enables you to create custom transitions by moving and resizing objects, without needing to know anything about motion graphics.

# The Animations

The same goes for animations as for transitions. Unless you're trying to make people laugh and cringe, skip animations such as Boomerang and Shape. Instead, keep it simple and stylish.

**We suggest you stick to animations like these:**



**Tip:** Often it helps to slow your transitions down a little. Particularly if you're using something with fairly jerky or abrupt movements.

*You can change that in the Animaton pane under Timing.*



PART 3

# Delivery





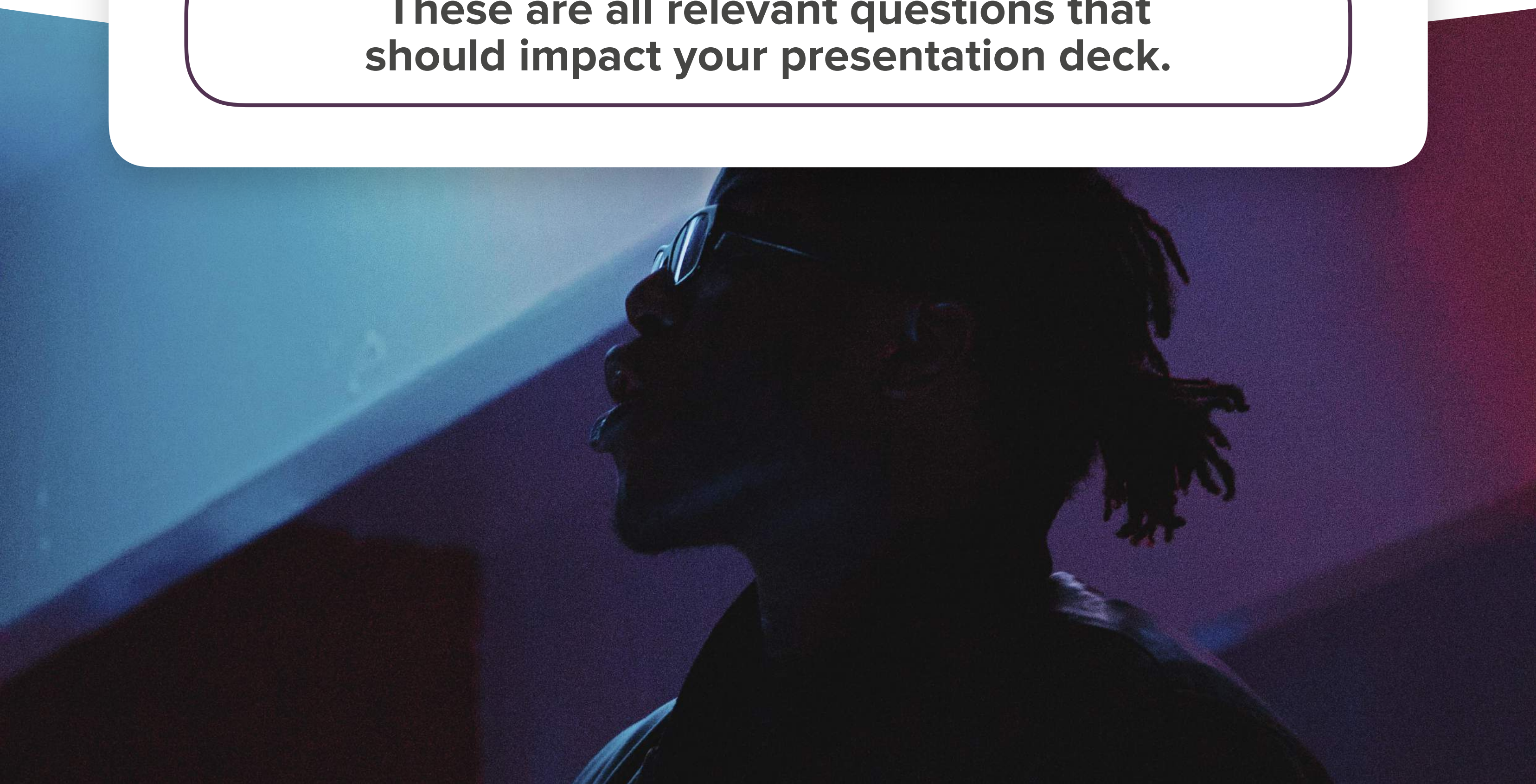
# The Setting

Before you create your deck, we suggest you consider your setting. Things that work in an auditorium often don't work as well in a board room or at your desk. And a presentation you're sending in an email should never be the same as the one you use on stage.

## Where are you?

- Will you be presenting on a laptop, a small screen in a meeting room, or on a larger stage?
- Will you be sitting or standing?
- How large is the audience, and how far will they be from your screen?
- Do you have access to the room beforehand so you can set up and rehearse?
- Are you the only presenter, and what's happening before and after you present?

**These are all relevant questions that should impact your presentation deck.**







## Here are some examples how:

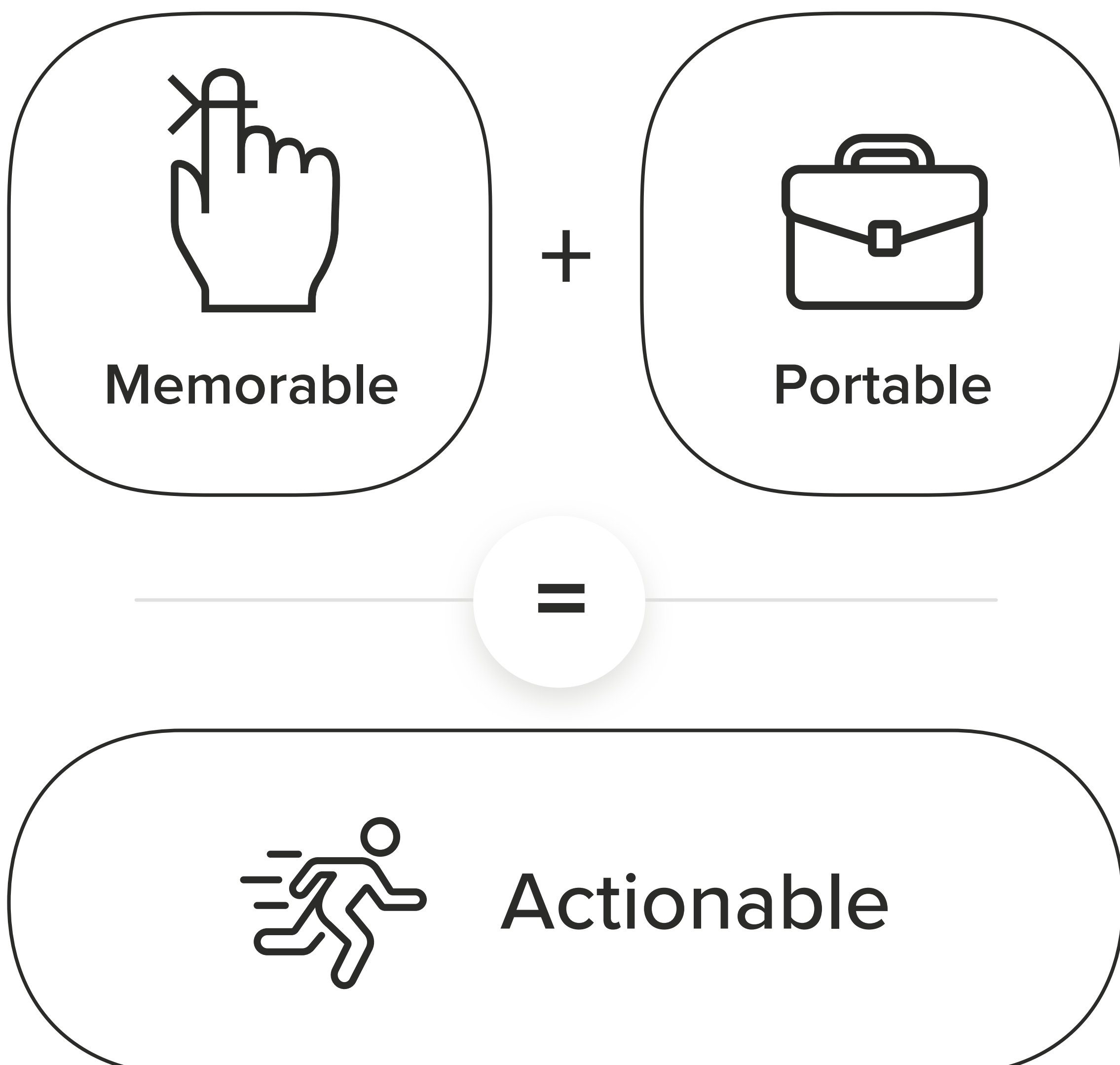
- If the screen is small, you'll need fewer elements in your slides
- If there are people sitting far from you, you might need bigger fonts
- If you're on stage, you might need a monitor or laptop to see your next slide
- If you have access beforehand, always test the equipment and get comfortable
- If you can impact what's happening before and after you, make sure it doesn't clash

# The Words

An entertaining presentation isn't necessarily an impactful one. Real impact leads to some sort of result or action afterwards, and for that to be possible, people need to know what to do.

Choosing the right words and messaging can affect that. People will follow clarity and act on what they can understand. It's one thing for a presenter to wow or impress the audience, it's another thing to equip them.

**The best presentations are ones that are memorable and portable.**





## “How do I make my message more memorable?”

Spend time crafting a sticky sentence, keyword, theme or one-liner people can easily take with them. As much as we want to encourage you to spend time creating quality slides, it's even more important to take time to boil down your main message into something portable.

---

## “Shouldn't I have more than 1 point per presentation?”

Most presentations ought to have one primary goal, sometimes called “The Why”. When you've figured out your main message and end goal, then it's often a good idea to put together a few supporting points; whether they be information, arguments or problems to be solved.

**3 is the magic number.\***

*\* It's said that, in his famous speech, Winston Churchill actually said “blood, sweat, toil and tears”, but that the brains of the people couldn't remember 4 words, so we collectively edited his speech and chose 3.” The Greeks were fans of 3 too, and who are we to argue?*

# Go easy on the bullets.

- They
- were
- made
- for
- killing
- things\*

*\*Presentations are no exception*

## How to use headlines

Often, a headline is all you need, and you can save the rest for your talk. If you find yourself adding both a title and some text to your slide, ask yourself if you really need more than the headline. Leaving the rest out leaves you with something to say that people can't just read for themselves.

## How to use bullets

Bullets can kill, so use them carefully. They can also be a handy tool for summarizing and helping people remember things. If you do use a bullet list, stick between 3 and 5. No more, no less.



# The Rhetoric

There are plenty of places to get some training on public speaking and rhetoric so we won't try to reinvent the wheel here, but we will answer a few common questions.

## **“What’s the most important thing to do to become a good public speaker?”**

Be authentic. Find your own style and stick to things you know and care about. Clarity, authenticity, and passion are the best ingredients for a killer presentation.





# “What are some quick ways I can improve my public speaking today?”

Here’s a list of a few things you can work on that will provide immediate results:



**Eye contact** – Too short is shady, too long is creepy. 2-3 seconds usually is best, and if you’re on a larger stage and feel nervous, try looking just above the audience. Also, don’t play favorites. Try to include everyone around the room.



**Hands** – Film yourself or get someone else to watch you and figure out your annoying gestures and bad habits. Fix them.



**Movement** – Pace the stage too much and you’ll look nervous. Stand still clinging to the podium or hiding behind your laptop and you’ll also look insecure. Aim for a measured amount of movement, and if possible, move around to different parts of the stage or room.



**Face forwards** – When you’re presenting, you’re having a conversation with the people listening, so try not to turn your back to your audience.



**Practice** – If you have the time, practice your presentation at least once before delivering it. There’s no better way to get a feel for what works and what needs changing.





## **“What’s the biggest mistake people make when delivering a talk?”**

Wasting the introduction on unnecessary information and losing the audience before they even get started. If you don’t get your opening right, it doesn’t really matter how good the rest of your presentation is. Start with a bang. You only get one first impression. See page 21.

## **“What other common mistakes can be easily avoided?”**

Not caring about your content. We’ve all seen people present things they don’t even seem interested in themselves. Choose subject matter you actually care about, and if you don’t have that luxury and are forced to cover something else, at least do yourself and your audience a favor and keep it short! Or send a Word document instead. If you’re not interested, why should they be?



# The Sendout

Many presenters make the mistake of sending the same presentation they use on stage, or vice versa. Don't!

Live presentations should have less text, leaving the bulk to the presenter to deliver verbally. Sendouts should have more information, including the key points, arguments, stories, and information included in the verbal presentation.

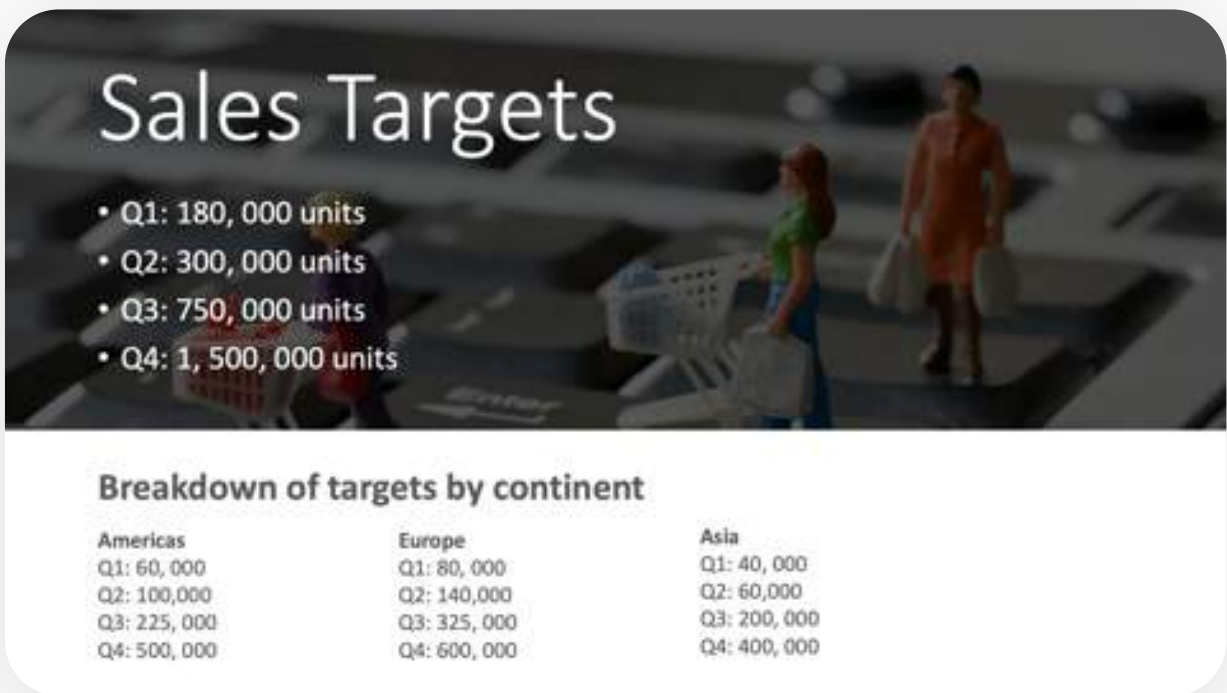
A trick is to imagine something halfway between your live presentation and a Word document.

Here's an example of the same presentation in 2 versions.

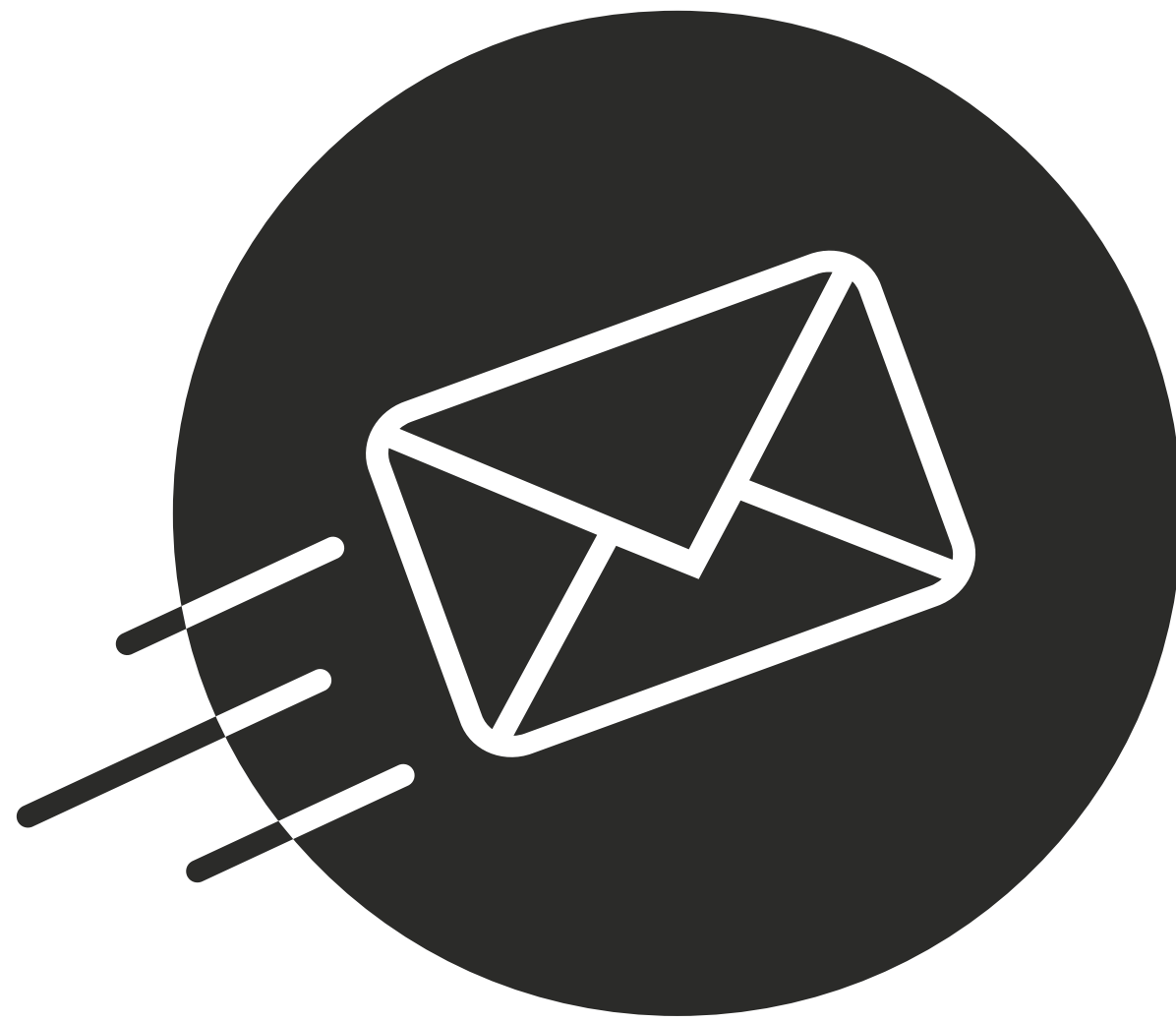
## Presentation 1 For the stage



## Presentation 2 For sending afterwards







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