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# SLIDE THEORY

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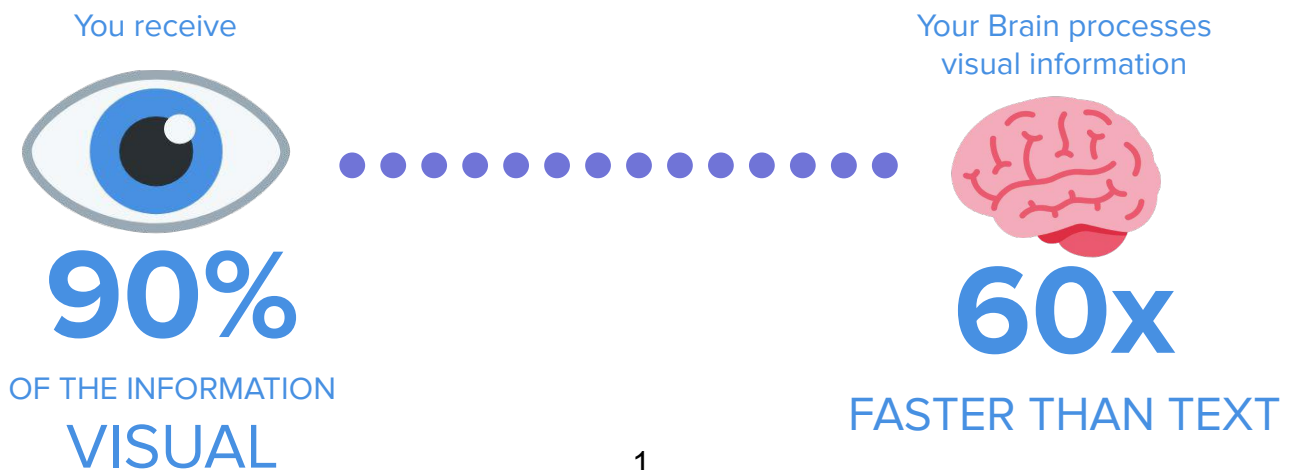
SLIDE THEORY



Once you've fleshed out your talk, it's time to make it visual. The right visuals can help bring your words to life. Visuals are useful because we can't read and listen at the same time, but we *can* listen and look at relevant imagery. How can you add visuals to your ideas to make them more memorable and accessible for the audience? Use a sketchpad and begin to change the words on your presentation outline into images. These images will eventually become high quality photos, displays, charts, slides, etc., so don't worry about how you draw.

Once you've sketched out your visuals, you can build them out in a presentation software program.

Focus on creating visuals that are simple, clear and engaging. You can use stock image websites for appropriate photos. Make sure the images are clear, professional, and unique--not from a template. Make sure all charts and graphs are simple and clear.



Most people have heard the advice about PowerPoint: Keep it simple, don't use a slide deck as a substitute for notes, and don't repeat out loud words that are on the slide. Not only is reciting slides a variation of the teleprompter problem—"Oh, no, she's reading to us, too!"—but information is interesting only once, and hearing and seeing the same words feels repetitive. That advice may seem universal by now, but go into any company and you'll see presenters violating it every day.

Researchers have discovered that ideas are much more likely to be remembered if they are presented as pictures instead of words, or even pictures paired with words. Psychologists call it the Picture Superiority Effect (PSE). If information is presented orally, people remember about 10% of the content 72 hours later. That figure goes up to 65% if you add a picture. Our brain interprets every letter as a picture, so wordy slides literally choke your brain.

Slides can be dangerous. There are many ways to annoy an audience with slides. Ugly, overloaded, confusing slide decks are common. Your face time in front of an audience is golden. When offered the opportunity to give a presentation, don't simply write everything from a document, report, or website onto a slide. Unless slides are essential and the clearest, simplest way to make your point, don't use them. Use visuals and pictures to support your point and appeal to people's emotions.

*At Moxie, we say that bullets are for guns, not slides.*



### THE NITTY GRITTY OF POWERPOINT DESIGN

When you're delivering a presentation, chances are that people are tuning in for a reason. They care about the topic, but they are also curious about the person speaking on it.

That's why it's essential to keep your slides simple when delivering a presentation to an audience in-person. You want the focus to be on the message, rather than just the slides themselves. Keep the slides on-topic, but simple enough that people can still pay attention to what you're saying, using the visual presentation to support your message.

#### *Keep text to a minimum*

One way to accomplish this simplicity is to reduce the amount of text in your presentation. People recall information better when images are paired with it (as opposed to text), so to help your message resonate with the audience, focus on visual content when you create your slides -- we'll cover more on that shortly.



## *Rethink Visuals*

When you reduce the amount of text in your slides, you'll need compelling visuals to support the message you're delivering to your audience. But that doesn't mean you can just throw some nice-looking photos onto your deck and move on. Like any other content strategy, the visual elements of your presentation need to be strategic and relevant.

## *Templates*

While PowerPoint templates have come a long way since the program was first unveiled to the world, they're still very commonly used. To help make your presentation unique, choose a theme that your audience hasn't seen dozens of times before -- one that matches your brand and complements the topic you're speaking about.

Sometimes, it pays to look beyond to other presentation platforms other than PowerPoint to find unique templates, like Prezi. There are also many visual content design sites that offer customizable templates that you can adapt for your own brand and topic, like Canva. In fact, in addition to templates, Canva also offers its very own platform for building presentations from scratch.

## *Charts and Graphs*

One of the best ways to support the message you're delivering in your presentation is by including data and statistics -- and the good news is that they, too, can be represented visually, rather than bulleted out in text.

That's where charts and graphs come in: They provide a colorful and engaging way to present the details that support your point. That said, make sure they fit in with the rest of your presentation's visual theme -- otherwise, it'll distract the audience from what you're talking about, rather than enhancing it.

## *Color Themes*

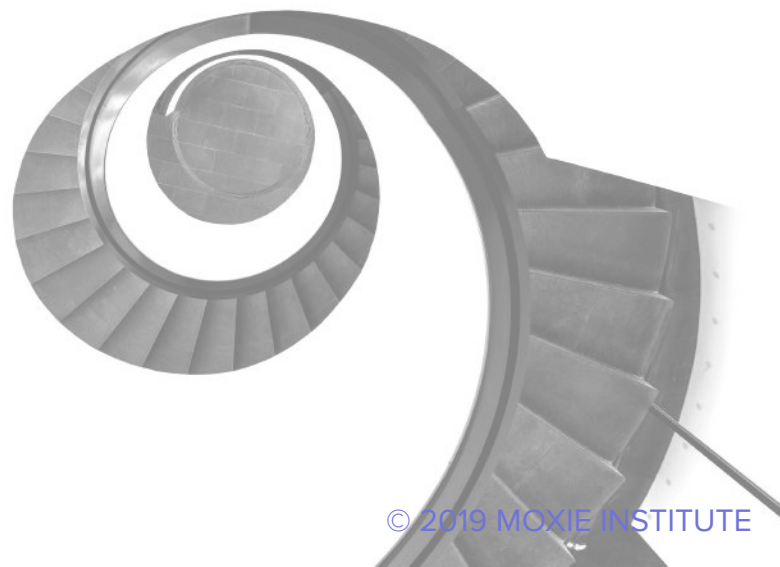
There's been some research around the way color can influence our emotions, especially when used in marketing -- in some cases, changing the color of a CTA button boosted conversions by 21%. And while the goal of your presentation may not necessarily be to make a sale, you might be trying to invoke certain feelings or impressions, which a strategic use of color can help you do.

## *Fonts*

When you do include text, you want it to be readable enough for your audience to fully consume and interpret it easily. You do not want your font to distract from your message. If you include text that's too small or dense to read effortlessly, your listeners will focus on trying to decipher it instead of paying attention to what you're saying. That's why many designers recommend choosing Sans Serif fonts that opt for "legibility over fun." Additionally, the text should not only be big enough for people in the back of the room to read, but it also needs to be presented in the appropriate color to maintain visibility over your background.

## *Image Quality*

Incorporating fabulous visual content into your presentation will go to waste if the images are low-quality. Make sure your photos and other visual assets are high-resolution enough to be crisp and clear when displayed on a huge presentation screen.



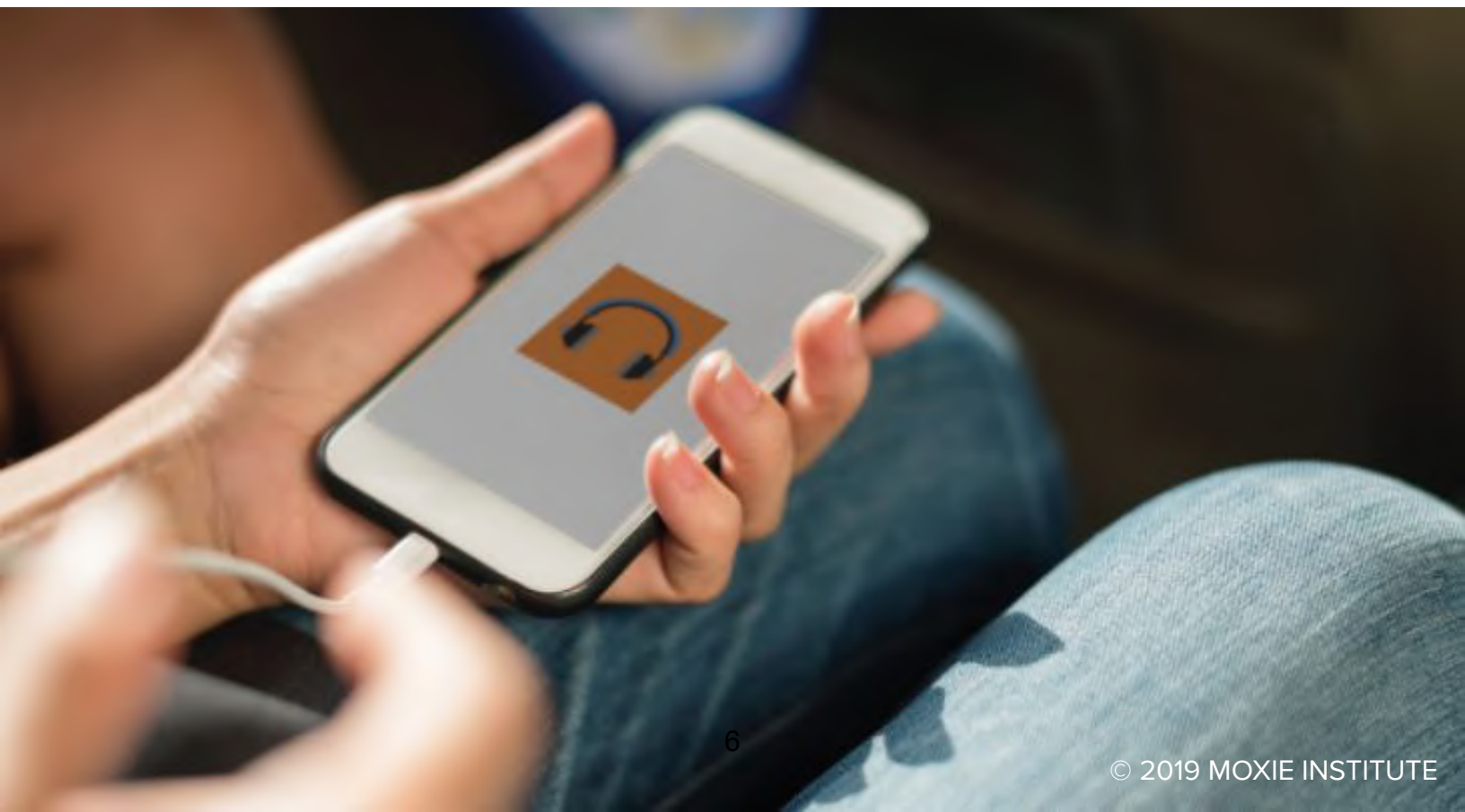
### *Incorporate Multimedia*

There's a reason why we love examples. You can give out the best advice available, but sometimes, in order to believe it, people need to see it in practice.

Multimedia is one way to achieve that -- in a manner that can also capture and maintain your audience's attention. A simple Google search for "music in presentations" yields enough soundtrack results to suggest that it's a unique way of engaging your audience, or at least to create a welcoming atmosphere before and after you speak.

Within the presentation itself, video -- as it is in so many other applications -- serves as valuable visual content to keep your audience engaged.

After all, 43% of people want to see more video content from marketers, often because it helps to illustrate and explain theories in a way that the spoken word or photographs can't do alone.





### TOP THREE TIPS TO EDIT YOUR POWERPOINT SLIDES

*“The main thing I try to do is write as clearly as I can. I rewrite a good deal to make it clear.”*

– E.B. White

It could be argued that the editing process is more vital to writing than the act of writing itself. Your first draft is a hectic mess of cake batter: a mix of ingredients covering your hands, clothes, and kitchen.

Editing is the moment when that mess is baked together to become something tangible and less gooey: A delicious cake.

When it comes to content creation, MOXiE follows a specific philosophy that informs the way we edit speechwriting.

Minimal content is always our core goal, but the idea behind it is much richer than that. Our aim is not to create telegraph shorthand, but rather, say what needs to be said in as few words as possible. No jargon, no fluff, just the facts.

Our writing goals are never reached in the first draft. Sometimes they don't happen until the 7th draft, which can be intensely frustrating, but also offers a larger reward when client work and internal projects finally receive two thumbs up.

When we approach editing more like a creative process and less like a drone-task for grammar aficionados, it can shape content in unexpected (and much improved) ways.

When we edit a presentation, we look at three core areas to improve:

*Make it shorter.*

*Make it consistent.*

*Make it impactful.*

Here are some ways to improve each of these areas, with an additional checklist at the end to make sure your presentation content becomes the delicious cake it was meant to be.

### *Make It Shorter*

When we say “shorter,” we don’t mean you should cram all of your ideas into two slides. Our focus is still on keeping each slide design-friendly and visually appealing by reducing the amount of text overall. Each slide should contain one solitary idea: no more than that. If you add ten slides, but they are beautiful and each have a single word or two on the screen, you will spend the same amount of time explaining the same amount of concepts, but it will look infinitely more appealing.

Having a hard time getting rid of text on each slide? Not ready to “kill your darlings,” as Stephen King suggests? **Consider trying the following challenge:**

**The “Twitter” Challenge** – 140 characters is all that this social media site allows users to post. Trust us, people have become better editors because of it. Since slides don’t have to be read as complete sentences (you shouldn’t be reading directly from your slides anyways, tsk tsk!), consider taking our version of the “Twitter” challenge: 30 characters or less for each slide.

For example, instead of saying: “Our yearly profit report shows that profits have exceeded expectations,” say: “Profits are up,” which is 14 characters with spaces. It says what you need it to say, and anything else can be added verbally or shown with a chart, preferably on the next slide.

Reducing text on each slide is about slicing and dicing the things you will be explaining as you deliver, or that the audience already knows. It’s about eliminating filler, run-on sentences, and sometimes even full sentences. Occasionally, all you need is a single word that can guide you through the structure of the talk, like “profits.” Presentations are much more flexible than MLA-formatted essays: there are no rules, only eyesores that occur when too much text is on-screen.



### *Make It Consistent*

Consistency isn't merely about using the word "cupidity" on one slide and "bro" on another. It's ensuring your work is structured with a beginning/intro, middle/core, and end/outro. Main points should be revisited, stories should be wrapped up by the end, and themes should be continued throughout and not forgotten later. Consistency can be achieved by creating an outline before you begin, or by writing down the key concept from each slide after you've finished the first draft. An outline could look a little something like this:

**Slide 1 – Title, "Yearly Report"**

**Slide 2 – Thought provoking question: "Have you seen our numbers?"**

**Slide 3 – Answer: "They're amazing."**

**Slide 4 – Chart to prove how amazing**

Keeping an eye on your goal for each slide can prevent important points from slipping through the cracks or remaining unvisited later. The structure of your presentation should be carefully examined from start to finish.

### *Make It Powerful*

If you wouldn't want to sit through your own presentation, no one else will. Creating slides for impact sometimes requires that you take a step back (or several) and let someone else look at your content. It also means that you spend a little more time revising and refining your **call-to-action** at the end, ensuring that the audience is left with their jaws dropped. The audience should be taken on a journey throughout your presentation. It starts with them sitting down, not knowing the information they are about to hear. Then gradually, in bits and pieces, your story is told until it reaches the end.



### *The Triple-Checklist*

After you've worked through some larger editing issues like consistency, it's time to revisit your work for some of the smaller issues before you finalize the draft. Here are a few things to ask yourself:

- Have you read the entire presentation out loud to check for mistakes?**
- Has anyone else read it?**
- Are your verbs in the right tense?**
- Are your main takeaways clear?**
- Is the text short and to-the-point on each slide?**
- Is there a logical order to the slides?**
- Do you have a strong conclusion and call-to-action?**
- Consider your audience: are you repeating anything they already know?**

Sometimes editing requires you to take a step away from the project and revisit it with fresh eyes. We often have a day or so between each round of edits at MOXiE, which helps us take a breather and revisit our content goals later.

Editing is so much more than crossing the t's and dotting the i's; it's about refining your creation and improving your own understanding of the content. When done mindfully, editing can ensure that you can enjoy the delicious double-layer German chocolate cake that is your presentation.



## BONUS: TED GUIDE TO CREATING + PREPARING SLIDES

Not every speaker decides to use slides, but if they do, there's one cardinal rule to follow: Keep it simple.

### *Editing Your Slides*

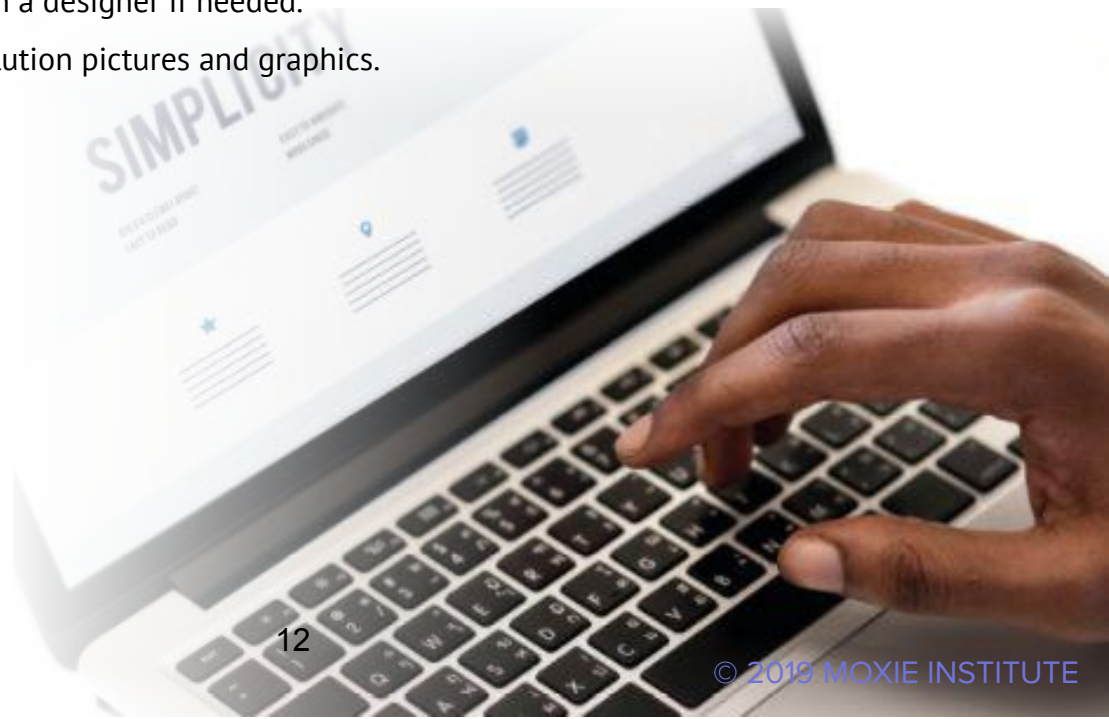
Slides can be helpful, but are not necessarily suited for a particular talk. In fact, many of our best TED and TEDx Talks omitted slides. So if you don't think you need slides, don't use slides. Your talk is strong enough without them.

When you do choose slides, the general consensus is that **less is more**. A single, strong, graphic image or succinct line of text will tell your story better than a crowded collage of pictures or long paragraphs. Remember, people need to process everything a speaker is saying while simultaneously absorbing the slides.

It's important to review your slides, edit, and cut when needed.

When it comes to images and design:

- Make sure the slides are image rich, and easy to understand. Bring in a designer if needed.
- Only use high-resolution pictures and graphics.



When it comes to text and content, ask:

*Do the slides have a lot of text?*

Text-heavy slides will only distract the listener from the heart of the message.

*Do the slides have too much information?*

No slide should support more than one point.

*Is each slide necessary?*

Too many slides can be distracting. Make sure every slide has a purpose -- for those that don't, cut them.

### Prepare Slides for Presentation

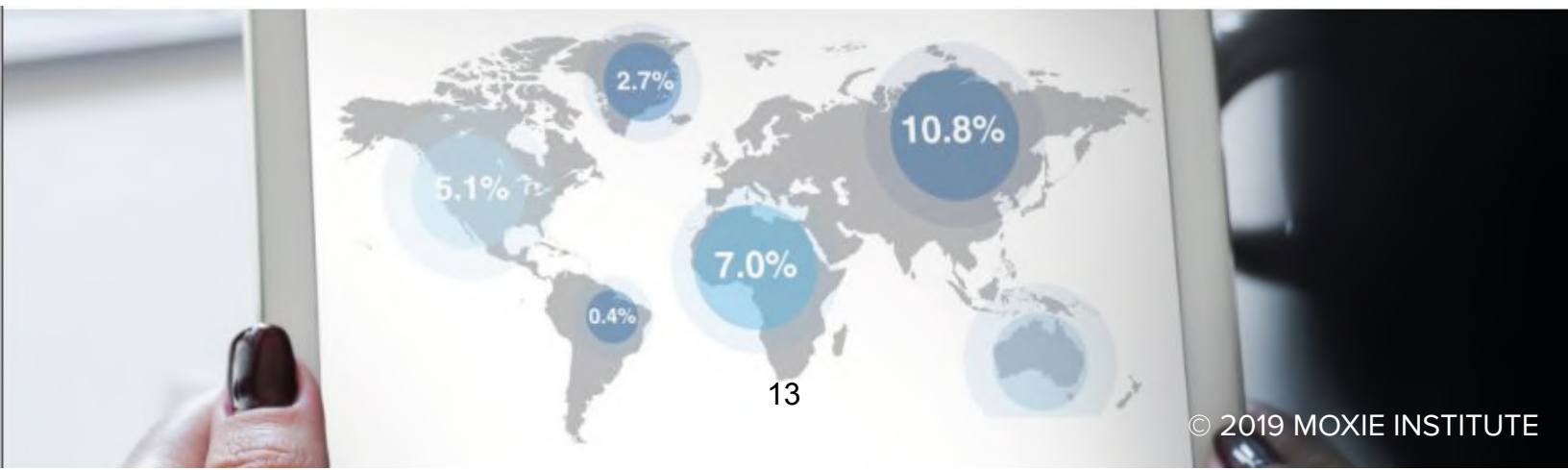
Here are the need-to-knows:

*Text size is important*

The slide text should be large enough to be legible to the person sitting farthest from the stage. Make sure you test this during rehearsal, and make changes if needed.

*Use a simple slide background*

A simple background keeps the text readable. If you are using a dark or black background, make the text light and bold.



**Make sure the slides are measured and sized correctly.**

You can't always be sure what type of presentation screen you'll be dealing with. (And changes often happen at the last minute!) Build slides that will work in any of the following dimensions:

- Widescreen HD (16:9 aspect ratio): 1920x1080 (high resolution)
- Widescreen HD (16:9 aspect ratio): 1280x720 (low resolution)
- Squarescreen (4:3 aspect ratio): 1024x768 (high resolution)
- Squarescreen (4:3 aspect ratio): 800x600 (low resolution)



## TEDx Tips

- Rather than one complex slide, show several slides – each with one idea, image or data point.
- Images represent what you're saying, so there is no need to verbally describe the images displayed on the screen.
- Eliminate “headline and bullet points” slides; they are tiring to read.
- Consider making a rule of a maximum of six lines of text per slide. (Most of the time, just one or two lines will do.)
- To help the audience remember a person, place, or thing you mention, you may use images or photos.
- Use a common sans serif font (like Helvetica or Verdana) over a serif font (like Times).
- You must own the rights to all images used on your slides. If using an image under a Creative Commons License, cite the source at the bottom of the slide.