



Presentation Skills: Layout & Design Skills

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Using this guide

Starting in Higher Education can feel overwhelming but with the right approach to your studies, you can ensure you get the most out of your course and have a great time doing it!

We recommend that you take some time to work through this guide at the start of your course as a good understanding of this skill and the strategies discussed will help you to elevate your learning.

It is important to note that not every technique will work for you and you should take whichever approach suits your needs best.

This guide has been curated by the Student Experience and Engagement team with the help of other academic resources.

Designing the slide deck

Effective presentations are not just about delivery; they depend heavily on the quality and relevance of your content.

1. Clarity and simplicity:

Keep slides clear and concise. Avoid writing too much text on your slides as you may risk reading aloud the information to your audience. Each slide should convey a single idea.

2. Consistent design:

Maintain a consistent design theme across the slide deck. Use the same font, design style, colour scheme and style to create a cohesive look.

3. Visual Appeal:

Include visuals such as images, charts, and graphs to enhance understanding. Use high-quality, relevant visuals that support your message.

4. Legible Text:

Ensure text is readable by using a clear font and appropriate font size. Sans-serif fonts like Arial or Calibri are often recommended.

5. Bullet Points and Lists:

Use bullet points or lists to present information in a structured and easy-to-follow format. Avoid dense paragraphs of text.

Designing the slide deck

6. Contrast:

Use contrasting colours for text and background to enhance visibility. Dark text on a light background or vice versa is a common practice.

7. Limited Text per Slide:

- Follow the "6x6" rule – no more than six bullet points per slide, and no more than six words per bullet point.

8. Engaging Headlines:

- Craft compelling headlines for each slide that capture the main idea. Headlines should be concise and attention-grabbing.

9. White Space:

- Allow for white space around elements on your slides. This helps reduce visual clutter and improves overall aesthetics.

10. Slide Transitions and Animations:

- Use slide transitions and animations sparingly. They can enhance engagement, but excessive use may distract from the content.

11. Brand Consistency:

- If applicable, incorporate your brand colours and logo into the slide design for a professional and cohesive look.

Designing the slide deck

12. Clear Flow:

- Ensure a logical flow between slides. Each slide should naturally lead to the next, guiding the audience through your narrative.

13. Interactive Elements:

- Consider incorporating interactive elements, such as clickable links or audience polls, to engage your audience.

14. Accessibility:

- Ensure that your slides are accessible to all audience members. Use high contrast, provide alternative text for images, and design with inclusivity in mind. Go to page 5 for more information on this.

15. Practice Delivery:

- Rehearse your presentation with the slide deck to ensure a smooth and confident delivery. Familiarity with the content helps maintain audience engagement.

Remember, the goal of your slide deck is to support and enhance your verbal presentation, not replace it. Design your slides to complement your message and capture the audience's attention effectively.

Accessibility

Creating accessible PowerPoint presentations ensures that individuals with disabilities can access and understand the content. Here are some tips to make your PowerPoint presentations more accessible:

1. Use Built-in Layouts:

Start with built-in slide layouts to maintain a structured format. This helps screen readers navigate through the content more effectively.

2. Add Descriptive Titles:

Provide clear and descriptive titles for each slide. Screen readers use slide titles to help users understand the context.

3. Use Headings and Subheadings:

Organise content using headings and subheadings. This helps users with screen readers navigate the document easily.

4. Use Descriptive Text:

Add alternative text (Alt Text) to images, charts, and other visual elements. This ensures that users with visual impairments understand the content.

Accessibility

5. Contrast and Colour:

Ensure sufficient contrast between text and background colours for readability. Avoid relying solely on colour to convey information.

6. Font Size and Style:

Use a minimum font size of 18 points for body text and 24 points for headings. Choose clear and easily readable fonts.

7. Avoid Text Over Images:

Avoid placing text directly on images. If necessary, use text boxes with a solid background for better contrast.

8. Transcripts for Multimedia:

Provide transcripts or captions for audio and video content. This benefits users with hearing impairments.

9. Use Simple Language:

Keep language simple and straightforward. Avoid jargon and complex terms that may be difficult for some users to understand.

Accessibilty

10. Logical Reading Order:

Ensure a logical reading order for your slides. Screen readers follow the order in which elements are arranged on the slide.

11. Avoid Automatic Timings:

Avoid using automatic timings for slide transitions and animations. Allow users to control the pace of the presentation.

12. Hyperlink Descriptions:

When using hyperlinks, provide descriptive text instead of generic terms like "click here." This helps users understand the link's purpose.

13. Slide Titles for Data Charts:

If you have data charts, include descriptive slide titles. This helps users understand the content of the chart.

14. Test with Accessibility Tools:

Use built-in accessibility checkers in PowerPoint to identify and fix accessibility issues. This ensures your presentation meets accessibility standards.

Accessibilty

15. Provide Handouts:

Share accessible handouts or supplementary materials to accompany your presentation. These materials can be helpful for reference.

16. Colour Coding:

If you use color coding, provide additional cues (such as patterns or labels) to convey information for users who may not perceive colors.

Alt Text for Links:

Include descriptive alternative text for hyperlinks. Screen readers announce these descriptions when users navigate through the links.

Consistent Structure:

Maintain a consistent structure throughout your presentation. This helps users with cognitive disabilities understand and follow the content.

By incorporating these accessibility features, you ensure that your PowerPoint presentations are inclusive and can be effectively accessed by a diverse audience.

Effective fonts

Remember to use font sizes that ensure readability in the room where you'll be presenting. Titles should typically be larger (24-36 points), while body text can range from 16 to 24 points, depending on the font and the size of the screen. Additionally, use font colour and contrast to ensure that text stands out against the background.

Remember that while these fonts should generally be avoided, there may be specific situations where they could be used for creative or thematic purposes. However, for most professional and academic presentations, it's best to stick to with clean, legible fonts that enhance readability and convey a sense of professionalism.

Arial
Aptos
Calibri
Gill Sans
Verdana
Tahoma
Century Gothic
Trebuchet MS
Montserrat
Open Sans



Comic Sans
Papyrus
Curlz MT
Windings
Impact
Brush Script
Chiller
Jokerman
Mistral
STENCIL



Effective fonts

Comic Sans	Often considered unprofessional and should be avoided in most formal or business presentations. It's a playful font that doesn't convey a serious tone.
Papyrus	Decorative font that may appear artistic but can be challenging to read and is often overused.
Curls MT	Highly stylised font with ornate letter forms. It's not suitable for presentations as it can be distracting and hard to read.
Windings	Symbol font with no alphanumeric characters. It's not suitable for body text or titles, as it doesn't convey written language
Impact	Bold and condensed font that can appear heavy and overpowering in presentation slides. It's best used sparingly for titles or headers.

Effective fonts

Brush Script	Cursive font that can be difficult to read, especially in smaller sizes. It's not recommended for body text.
Chiller	Decorative font with a distressed look. It can be hard to read and doesn't convey professionalism
Jokerman	Highly stylised and decorative font that is not suitable for formal presentations. It's better suited for artistic or creative projects.
Mistral	Cursive font that may look elegant but can be challenging to read from a distance.
Stencil	Mimic letters stencilled onto surfaces. They are not well-suited for large blocks of text and can be difficult to read.

A final note

If after working through this booklet you are still unsure about how to design and build your presentation slides, please do not hesitate to contact our Student Engagement Officer who can offer additional advice and guidance to build your confidence and skill-set.

- You can contact us via our central email - **studyskills@ucenmanchester.ac.uk**
- One-to-one appointments are available through **Microsoft Bookings**.
- See the digital screens at your campus for drop-in session information.

Have your say

Your input is invaluable in helping us to enhance the Study Skills package we provide. Your honest responses will enable us to identify areas of improvement and tailor our approach to better support your learning journey. After you have completed this booklet, please take 5 minutes to let us know what you thought!

You can do this by scanning the QR code below!



