

How To Structure Your Presentation Worksheets

HOW TO OPEN A TALK

Your audience needs to be both fully engaged and predisposed favorably toward you and your message. Neither will happen unless you can grab their attention sufficiently enough that they're ready, willing, and able to listen to you spin your verbal magic.

Once they're engaged, be sure you have a well organized talk that hits home with listeners. There are three reasons why your introduction needs to be engaging and interesting immediately:

- 1 Audiences make value judgments about you, your organization, and your message, in the first 30-60 seconds of your presentation.
- 2 Your opening sets the entire tone of your virtual presentation.
- 3 The first minute is when you introduce your message and tell the audience why they need to hear it.

Sound like a tall order? It really isn't, if you follow these steps:



STEP 1: Title

To think of a title, take a strong position. Strong titles are the fastest way to make your message clear. If you think about it, titles are always the first words on your slides and usually the first impression you make on an audience. Unfortunately, most people pick boring titles for the same reason they make boring presentations—it takes less work and it feels safe. But ‘safe’ puts people to sleep and it’s a wasted opportunity to stand out and make a good first impression.

Ask yourself: If you had only one single point to make, what would it be? That’s what your title should communicate.

Here are three examples of interesting title templates:

- 1 The top 5 problems with (Insert here) and how to solve them
- 2 Why (Insert here) is awful and what we can do about it
- 3 Mistakes I made in (Insert here) and what I learned

STEP 2: Greeting

Your greeting is an essential part of your introduction because it presents both you and your topic to your audience, giving your listeners a flavor of what will follow. Equally important, it opens up the channel of communication between you and your listeners. It alerts an audience to whether you’re going to be interesting or not. Furthermore, it starts by influencing listeners when they’re primed to pay maximum attention.

How skilled are you at starting and ending your presentations? In order to engage listeners, to influence them, and for them to retain key information, you need a strong opening and closing. These facts are based on concepts called primacy and recency.

Primacy asserts that an audience will remember most vividly what is heard at the start of your talk, while **recency** maintains that the audience will also remember what is said at the end. With regard to public speaking, this points to your introduction and conclusion.

STEP 3: Hook

Congratulations! Through your greeting, you've successfully initiated a relationship with listeners. Now you're facing the most critical moment in your presentation, which just may be the most fun for you. That's because both you and your listeners are primed for what comes next.

Audiences retain best what they experience first. And why wouldn't they? Everyone is focused at the start of a talk. For you as a speaker, the equation is simple: Give the audience something interesting and exciting, and they will pay attention and be "primed" for the influence of your words.

This is where your hook comes in. The hook has some important functions. It must a) engage the audience, b) pique their interest (if it surprises them, so much the better), c) present your topic in an interesting light, and most importantly, d) speak to their personal situation by tapping into who they are and how they think.

Here are some examples of how to add a punch to the opening of your talk:



Personal Story

Stories connect and engage the audience. Punctuate your personal story with images, quotes, or videos to help draw people in.

Unexpected Revelation

Reveal something unexpected. Do or say something that goes against what people predict. This could be a shocking quote, a question with a surprising answer, or even a statistic that goes against conventional wisdom.

Novel Example

Show or tell something novel. You can show a powerful image that's never been seen, reveal a relevant short story that's never been heard, or share a statistic from a brand new study that gives insights into the problem.

Challenging Example

Challenge conventional wisdom or the audience's assumptions. Consider challenging their imaginations. Test their intellects by asking hypothetical questions that require them to think. For instance, you could ask, "How would you like to fly from New York to Tokyo in 2 hours? Impossible? Well, some experts think it's possible!"

Humorous Perspective

Use humor to engage the audience with a shared laugh. There are huge benefits to laughter and we all know it's contagious. Laughter connects an audience and even releases endorphins. There is an old saying that "If they're laughing, they're listening." Additionally, never tell a joke, always tell a failure!

BEGIN YOUR VIRTUAL PRESENTATION WITH IMPACT

As a springboard to launching your presentation with verve and originality, here are a dozen more devices that can be used as speech hooks when you're wondering how to start a speech:

Whatever you decide to use, be sure to infuse it with your personality and perspective. Remember, the best hooks immediately engage an audience both intellectually and emotionally. It takes some trial and error, but the rewards of nailing that first impression are worth it.

- Thought-Provoking Question
- Inspiring Quotation
- Striking Visual
- Insightful Statistic
- Startling Statement
- Personal Experience
- Expert Opinion
- Sound Effect
- Physical Object
- Testimony/Success Story



STEP 4: Call to Adventure

Finally, you are ready for the **Call to Adventure**. This is the moment when you tell the audience about the journey you'll be taking together and how you'll get there. You may prefer to think of it as a blueprint of the speech, showing how all the ideas fit together.

The **Call to Adventure** is the speech element which a majority of speakers leave out. Again, they're concerned with delivering content, and forget to share why it should matter to the audience.

It's far more effective to tell people how your presentation will benefit them instead of just listing bullet points on a slide titled 'Agenda'. Doing this can be as simple as saying: "These are the specific points I'll be discussing in this talk. The reason I want to share this with you today is..."

It's far more effective to tell people how what you'll say will enrich them or make their life easier, than to just pop on a slide that reads "Agenda" with five barren bullet points.

To create your **Call to Adventure**, consider what people in the audience already know about your subject, as well as how much they care about it.

If you assume your listeners have more knowledge or interest than they actually do, or if you start using jargon or getting too technical, you'll lose them. The most engaging speakers do a superb job of quickly introducing the topic, explaining why they care so deeply about it, and convincing the audience members that they should too.



HOW TO ORGANIZE THE BODY OF YOUR TALK

The body of your talk should include three main sections. You can think of the sections as stepping stones. Remember, you are taking your audience on a journey so imagine you are leading them along the way.

Why three? Classic storytelling structure (thanks to Aristotle and the Greeks) always includes three acts. In classic comedy, occurrences are funny in threes. And, in our modern society, most audience's attention spans are too short to go past three sections.

Here are a few different ideas on how you can break up your talk into three stepping stones.

Which Three Stepping Stones Work Best For Your Talk?

IDEA 1

What/So What/Now What

IDEA 2

Past/Present/Future

IDEA 3

Problem/Solution/Benefit

IDEA 4

Problem/Context to the Problem/Your Solution

IDEA 5

What/Why/How



HOW TO CONCLUDE A TALK

Following the body of your talk, you'll need to write your conclusion. The talk needs to end vividly and memorably so your message continues to resonate long after you've finished speaking. Similar to primacy, you're now concerned with the concept of **recency**.

To reiterate, this means audiences are most likely to retain what they experience last.

The following steps will help make your talk “sticky” while allowing your ideas and message to connect, convert, and create lasting change.

STEP 1: Take it Back to the Beginning

Always return to your original point. If you started with a story, be sure to refer to it again at the very end.

Example: A public speaking workshop in Japan started with a picture of Obama and the quote “Yes you can!” At the end of the day-long workshop, the same slide returned and the presenter asked the question, “Can you be a great presenter?”

The audience, without hesitation, answered “Yes, I can!”

STEP 2: Summarize Your Main Points

Repetition is an important part of learning so it's valuable to give a quick summary of your key concepts. A good presentation should:

- 1 Tell the audience what you'll say
- 2 Say it
- 3 Tell them what you said

It can feel cliché, but it's a proven method that helps your audience remember your talk.

STEP 3: Clincher

Use a punch technique. You can refer to any of the techniques that you used to create the opening.

STEP 4: Summarize Your Main Points

Be clear, direct, and specific in your CTA. A good CTA helps the audience understand how they can be a part of the solution and initiate change.

Your CTA is meant to **inspire** the audience. End on a positive note to give people hope and encouragement.

Inspiration moves people to create change. It's a positive and powerful emotion that helps compel people to take action. Think about how you could instill this at the end of your talk.



HOW TO CREATE AN OUTLINE FOR YOUR TALK

Many people resist outlines because they seem old school and low tech. However, a simple outline is the foundation of ideas that support your talk. An outline will give you a simple, clear structure.

If the slide deck that you spent 20+ hours preparing gets corrupted, your laptop explodes, or your dog eats your notes, you can always fall back on your outline. And you won't be alone. Famous speakers who worked with outlines include Mark Twain, Winston Churchill, and Franklin Roosevelt.

Now let's work on organizing your ideas.

What follows are key steps to make sure that you achieve the goal you set out to reach with your audience—whether they are prospects, employees, customers, or another type of stakeholder. Instead of rushing to throw together information, follow these steps to maximize your influence.



OUTLINE (STRAWMAN)

TITLE:

OPENING:

Greeting

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Hook

.....

Call to Adventure

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BODY:

Stepping Stone 1

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Stepping Stone 2

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Stepping Stone 3

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CONCLUSION:

Take it Back to the Beginning

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Summarize Your Main Points

.....

Clincher

.....

BONUS: HOW TO MAKE A TED-WORTHY OUTLINE

There are many theories on the best structure for a great presentation.

There's no single trick to it, but here is at least one structure that we've found to work particularly well:

- 1 Start by making your audience care using a relatable example or an intriguing idea.
- 2 Explain your idea clearly and with conviction.
- 3 Describe your evidence, as well as how and why your idea could be implemented.
- 4 End by addressing how your idea could affect your audience if they were to accept it.

Whatever structure you decide on, remember:

- The primary goal of your talk is to communicate an idea effectively, not to tell a story or to evoke emotions. These are tools, not an end in themselves
- Your structure should be invisible to the audience. In other words, don't talk about how you're going to talk about your topic—just talk about it!



INTRODUCTION

Draw in your audience members with something they care about.

- If it's a topic that the general TED audience thinks about a great deal, start with a clear statement of what the idea is. Conversely, if it's a field they never think about, start off by invoking something they do think about often and relate that concept to your idea
- If the idea is something fun, but not something the audience would ever think about, open with a surprising and cool fact or a declaration of relevance (not a statistic!)
- If it's a heavy topic, find an understated and frank way to get it off the ground. Don't force people to feel emotional

A strong introduction is crucial. Get your idea out as quickly as possible. Don't focus too much on yourself. Don't open with a string of statistics.



BODY

In presenting your topic and evidence:

- Make a list of all the evidence you want to use: Think about items that your audience already knows about and the things you'll need to convince them of.
 - 1 Order all of the items in your list based on what a person needs to know before they can understand the next point, and from least to most exciting.
 - 2 Now cut out everything you possibly can without losing the integrity of your argument.
 - 3 Consider making this list with a trusted friend, someone who isn't an expert in your field.
- Be brief if your audience needs to be reminded of old or common information.
- Use empirical evidence and limit anecdotal evidence.
- Don't use too much jargon. Explain new terminology.
- (Respectfully) address any controversies in your claims, including legitimate counter-arguments, reasons you might be wrong, or doubts your audience might have about your idea.
- Don't let citations interrupt the flow of your explanation. Save them for after you've made your point, or place them in the fine print of your slides. **Bonus Tip:** Think about what in your outline would be better expressed visually and plan accordingly in your script.

Conclusion

Find a landing point in your conclusion that will leave your audience feeling positive about you and your idea's chances for success.

Don't use your conclusion to simply summarize what you've already said. Instead, tell your audience how your idea might affect their lives if it's implemented.

- Avoid ending with a pitch (such as soliciting funds, showing a book cover, using corporate logos).
- If appropriate, give your audience a call to action.

