Academic Slideshow Design

Two Locations: In the Lyman Beecher Brooks Library, First Floor and Madison 109

Tel: 757-823-2271
Email: writingcenter@nsu.edu Website: nsu.edu/writing-center
The Goal of a Presentation

The goal of an academic presentation is similar to an academic essay:

• To deliver a clear position and support it with organized ideas and evidence

Like essays, academic presentations have **intros**, **body** sections, and **conclusions**.
The outline below could be used to plan an essay or a slideshow:

**Title**

**Introduction**
- A. Hook
- B. Background info
- C. Thesis statement

**Body Paragraph 1**
- A. Main Idea
  - 1. First Point
    - a. Examples/evidence
  - 2. Second Point
    - a. Examples/evidence

**Body Paragraph 2**
- (Repeat for Body Paragraph 2) [Etc.]
  - (Repeat for Body Paragraph 3, etc.)

**Conclusion**
- A. Rephrase thesis statement
- B. Summary
- C. “So what?”
- D. Takeaway (final thought)

**References**
- If there are sources
Organization of a Slideshow Deck

1. Title
2. “Hook”
3. Topic + Background
4. Thesis

5. Section 1
6. First Point + Evidence
7. Second Point + Evidence
8. Section 2

10. Rephrase Thesis & Summary
11. “So what?”
12. Takeaway
13. References
14. Thank You & Questions
Text Issues

Your message is important, so make sure it’s legible.

Consider your audience’s needs:

- They may be in the back of the room
- They may be viewing on Zoom or similar
- The screen may be in a bad location

*Your audience should never have to struggle to see*
Font Size & Clarity

Size:
- This is what 18 points looks like (Calibri)
- 12 points is smaller than you think (good for citations)
- 24 points never fails
- Some fonts are smaller (24 points)

Spacing
- Cramped text is hard to read:
- If you try to save room by reducing space between lines, your audience (and message) will suffer

Style:
- Sans Serif fonts are easiest to read
- Serif fonts are more academic but harder to read in smaller sizes
- Avoid “cool” or “cute” fonts
- Cursive fonts are not recommended

Highlighting
- **Bolding** is clearer than *italicizing*
- Colors can be used *strategically*
Use colors and backgrounds with high contrast

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<td>Bad</td>
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Always consider your audience’s needs
Patterns or Images as Backgrounds

If you want to use a dramatic and colorful background, try to make the text stand out

• *This font is 26 points, bold and has added shadow definition*

• *This text box is white with 40% transparency*
Don’t just type out everything you want to say without editing. Convey information strategically in as few words as possible. Rely on bullets for the main ideas and deliver the details and elaboration orally. Remember that no one wants to read a wall of text in a presentation, so revise repeatedly for concision.

Text guides the audience; speech informs it

- Spoken details don’t need to be on the slide
- Bullet points are preferred over long passages
- Audiences don’t want to read a wall of text

Revise repeatedly for concise bullets
Bullet Points

- No more than 3 to 5 bullets per slide
- Keep lists grammatically parallel (e.g., every item begins with a noun or a verb, etc.)
- Don’t use periods if bullets are not complete sentences

Global Warming’s Impact on Oceans

- 50% decline in marine life in the last 40 years
- Dramatic reduction in habitat and food for thousands of species
- 10%–40% decrease in marine oxygen levels

(Johnson and Kim, 2019)
Images

• Use high quality images – not fuzzy or pixelated
• Avoid pictures with logos or watermarks on them
• Use Google Images, Bing Images, or royalty free image sites
• You can edit and resize photos to make them work for you
Animations aren’t typically needed in student slideshows

- They may even complicate your presentation
- However, animations can guide and focus your audience

Use animation strategically (if you use it)

- Too much motion can make your slideshow look childish
- Slow animations can drive the audience crazy
- Quick and simple animations are best
- Instead of animating every bullet, animate sections of your slide
Title Slides

The title slide creates your slideshow’s first impression; make sure it’s well designed

- Large, clear fonts
- Arresting images
- A thoughtful and descriptive title
- All required course and assignment info
  - Your name, course, date, etc.
- Typo free

Let’s evaluate a few examples
Short Story Analysis by Anonymous Smith
Anonymous Smith

Nafissa Thompson-Spires
Exploring African American Identities

Anonymous Smith
Mar. 17, 2022
Poor study habits can lead to academic failure. One of the most prevalent and destructive study habits is procrastination. When students procrastinate, their mental state is adversely affected. They are more likely to experience stress, and this leads to negative thoughts about their potential for success. In addition, procrastinators expend energy seeking out diversions to mask their panic, leading to exhaustion and making work is accomplished. Another dangerous study habit is ignoring lectures and assigned reading materials. Students who do this fail to realize that homework assignments usually have a close connection to lectures and readings...
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Poor Study Habits Lead to Academic Failure

Habit #1: Procrastination

• Stress causes negative thoughts and prediction of failure
• Diversion-seeking behavior leads to exhaustion

Habit #2: Ignoring Lectures and Readings

Etc.
Citing & Academic Formatting

MLA Recommendations:
• **Title slide**: The same information as an essay
• **In-text citations**: For sourced facts and quotations
• **Full source** for data tables and figures
• **Works Cited**: Include if you cited sources in the slideshow

APA Gives No Guidance
• But applying MLA’s recommendations seems reasonable

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Minimum Wage Increases

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Works Cited


Microsoft PowerPoint Is Recommended

• This is standard in most universities and business
• It can be installed as an app or used online
• It works well with Blackboard
• Exports to PDF accurately
• Almost every other slideshow maker can save files as a PowerPoint file (PPTX)

Google Slides and Apple Keynote

• Slides requires a consistent internet connection, and its incompatible with Blackboard
• Keynote only works on Apple computers and is incompatible with Blackboard
• Exporting from either to PPTX or PDF formats can be buggy
Speaking Style

Speak Up
• Speak so that people in the back of the room can hear you clearly

Slow Down, But Not Too Much
• Nervousness and overpreparation can lead to a rushed presentation
• It’s also hard to focus on very slow speech

Reduce Filler Words
• E.g., ‘umms,’ ‘ahhs,’ ‘y’knows,’ etc.

Don’t Mumble
• You may be wearing a mask, so make sure you enunciate

Don’t Highlight Nervousness
• Apologizing, explaining errors, nervous laughter don’t usually help – just move forward
Body Language

Stay Calm
• Practice calm, slow, steady, deep breathing beforehand

Control Your Body and Face
• Avoid fidgeting, frowning, clenching your fists, swaying, etc.
• Try to stay loose
Body Language & Attitude

Connect with the Audience

• Speak to the audience (a presentation isn’t a speech)
• Make eye contact with various audience members as you present
• Look alert, engaged, and enthusiastic
• Speak in a natural, conversational voice
Don’t Read Your Presentation

Presenters who read to their audiences usually...

- have flat intonation and dull voices
- can’t improvise as needed
- fail to connect with their audiences

*The same is true for presenters who memorize scripts*
Instead of reading or memorizing, speak from notes

- Elaborate on your points based on your familiarity with the topic and slides – not a script.
- This allows you to connect with your audience by speaking naturally and making eye contact

To successfully present this way, rehearsal is essential!
Review

Organization

• Structure a presentation like an essay, with introduction, body, and conclusion sections

Design

• Design your slides with legibility and audience attention in mind
  • Clear fonts
  • Minimal text
  • Meaningful, high-quality images
  • Details delivered orally

Citations

• Cite sources within the presentation and on a bibliography slide near the end

Speaking Style

• Speak to the audience in a relaxed, natural style
• Don’t read or recite to them
Thank You!

Any questions?
Reflection

Student Workshop Evaluation

Faculty Workshop Evaluation

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