

Academic Slideshow Design



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

Tel: 757-823-2271

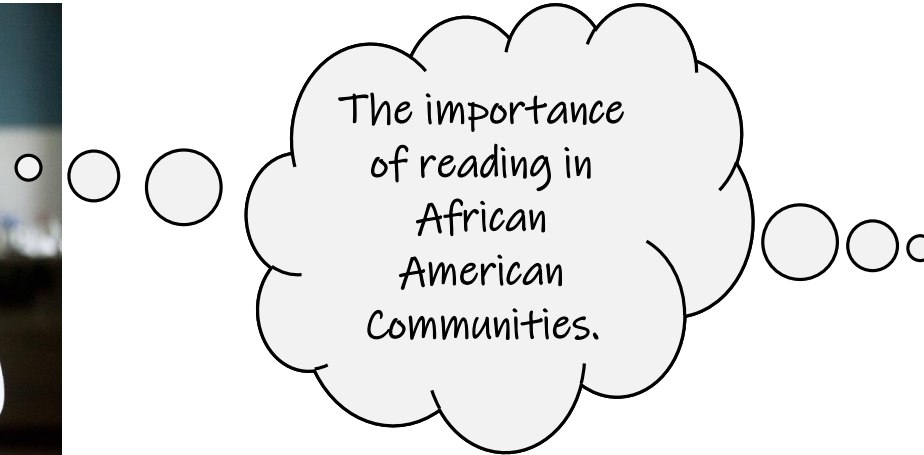
Email: writingcenter@nsu.edu

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The Goal of a Presentation

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

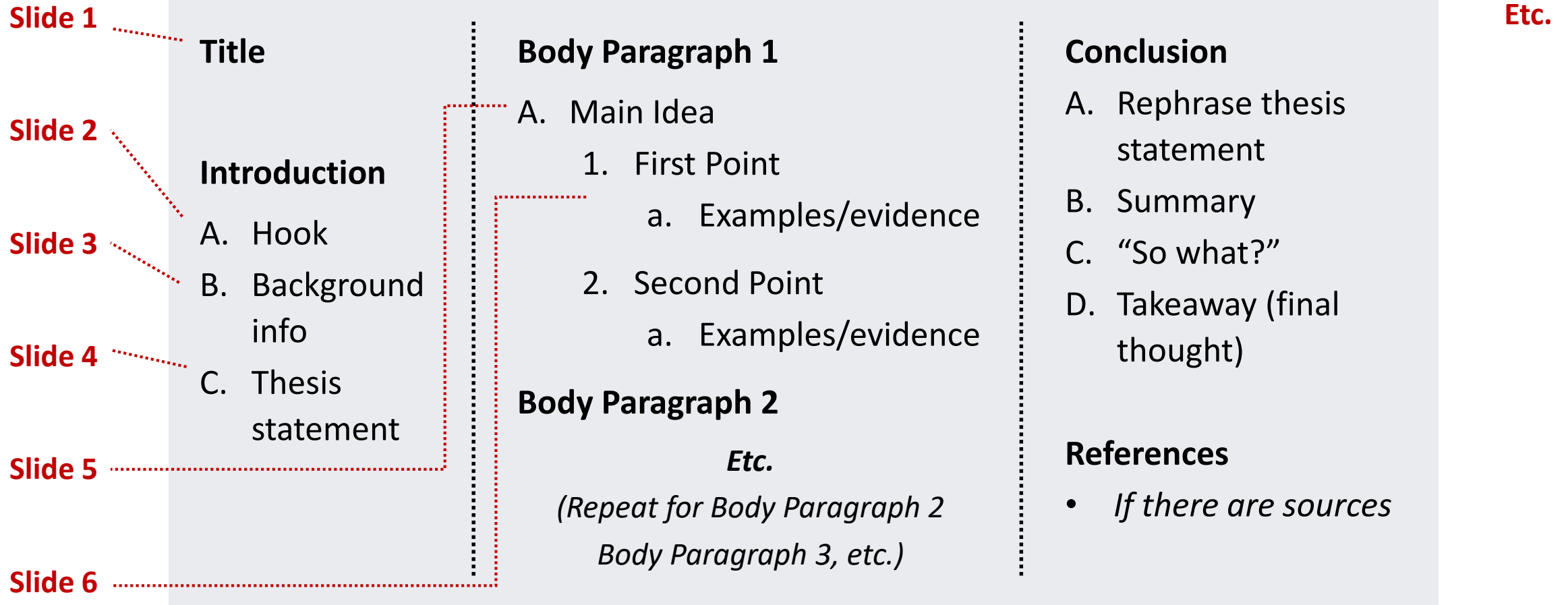
- To deliver a clear position and support it with organized ideas and evidence



Like essays, academic presentations have **intros**, **body** sections, and **conclusions**.

Essay & Presentation Organization

The outline below could be used to plan an essay or a slideshow



Organization of a Slideshow Deck

1
Title

2
“Hook”

3
**Topic +
Background**

4
Thesis

Introduction

5
Section 1

6
**First Point +
Evidence**

7
**Second Point +
Evidence**

8
Section 2

9
Etc.

Body

10
**Rephrase
Thesis &
Summary**

11
“So what?”

12
Takeaway

13
References

14
**Thank You &
Questions**

Conclusion

Text Issues

Your message is important,
so make sure it's legible



Your message is important,
so it 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**

Contrast

Use colors and backgrounds with high contrast

Good

Pretty Good

Good

Good

Pretty Good

Bad

So-so

Bad

Good

Bad

Pretty Good

Bad

**Always
consider your
audience's
needs**

Font Issues: Background Contrast

Patterns or Images as Backgrounds

Keep it subtle
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*

Bullet Points

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 c o n c i s i o n .

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

~~*You need to revise over and over and over to make your bullets as concise and succinct as possible*~~

~~*Revise over and over to make bullets as concise as possible*~~

Revise repeatedly for concise bullets 

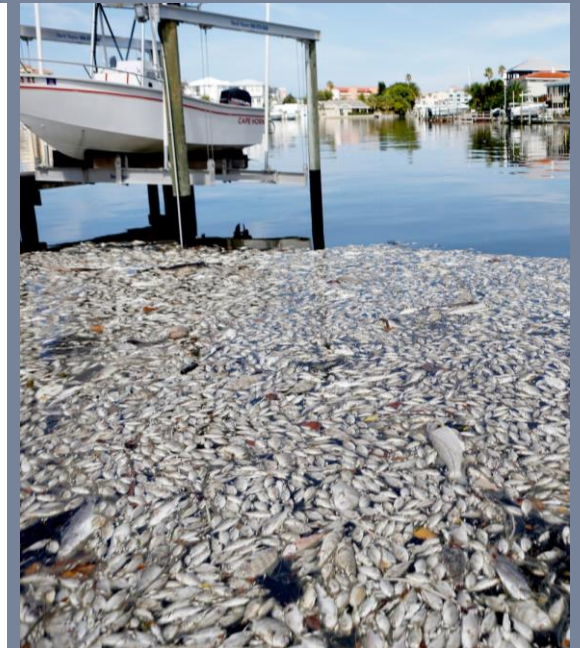
Bullet Points

- 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



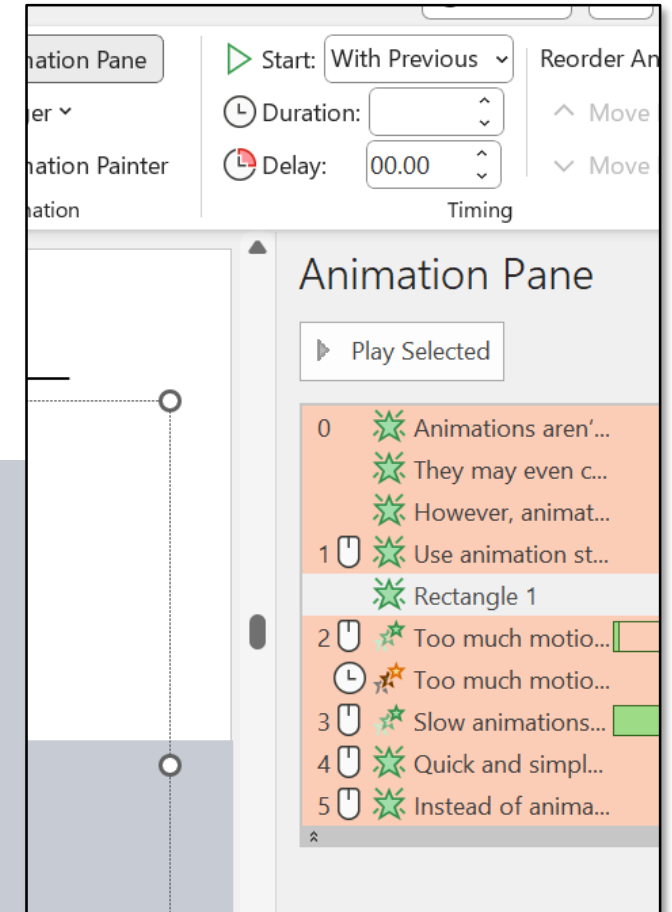
Animations

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

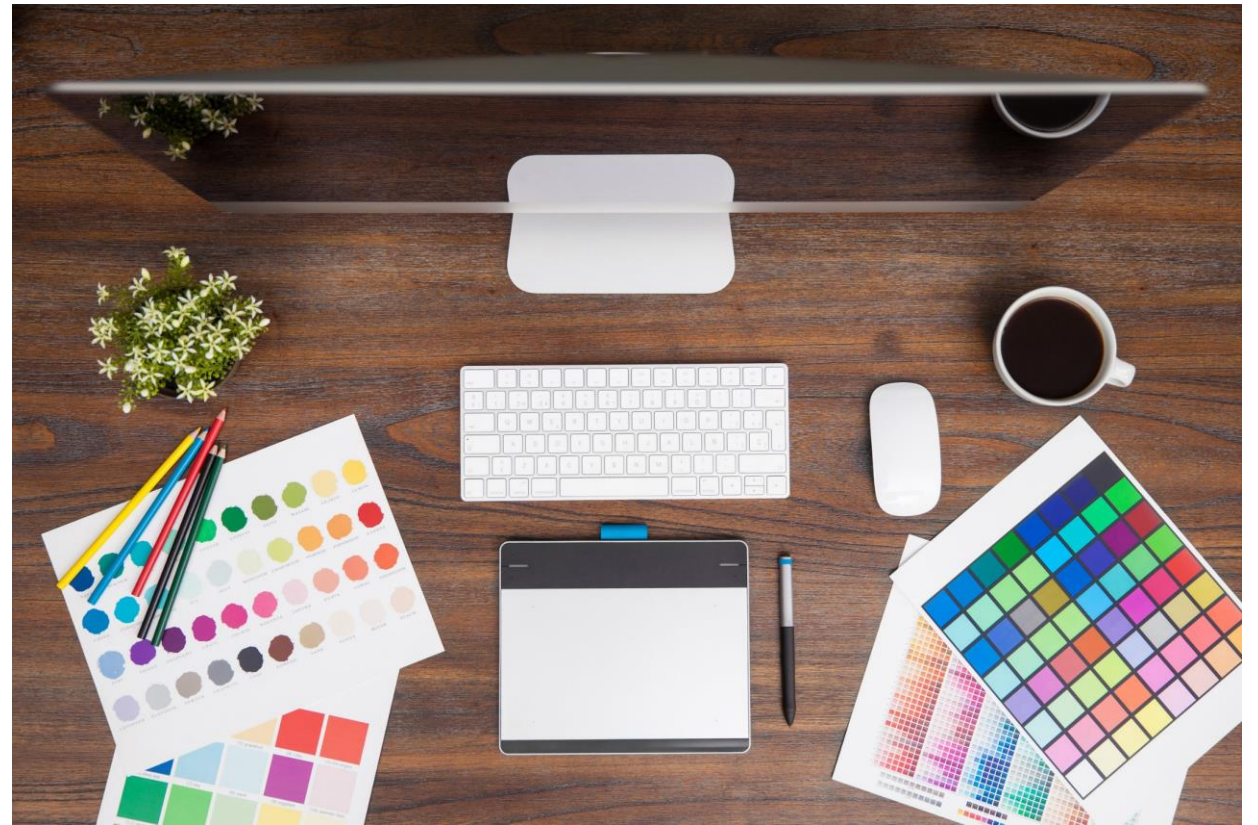


Title Slides

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

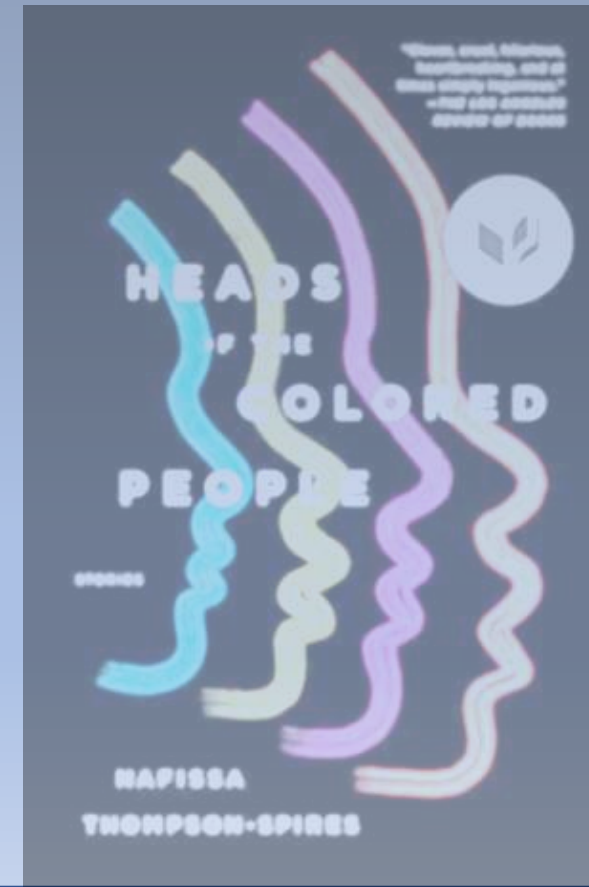
Nafissa Thompson-Spires



Exploring African American Identities

Anonymous Smith

Mar. 17, 2022



Nafissa Thompson-Spires' Explorations of African American Identities

Anonymous Smith

Short Story Analysis

ENG102

March 17, 2023

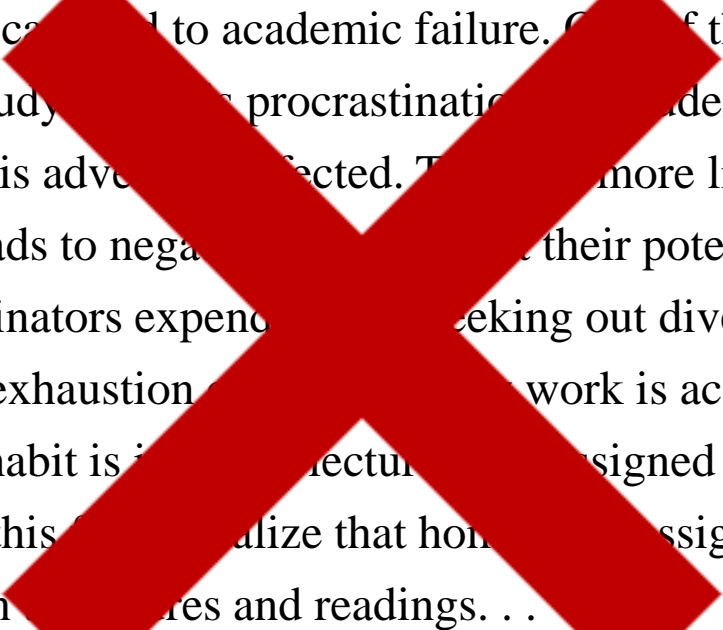


Information Slides

Blocks of text are not audience friendly.

- Convert academic writing to slides by focusing on core points and keywords.

Poor Study Habits



Poor study habits can lead to academic failure. One of the most prevalent and destructive study habits is procrastination. Students procrastinate, their mental state is adversely affected. They are more likely to experience stress, and this leads to negative outcomes for their potential for success. In addition, procrastinators expend energy seeking out diversions to mask their panic, leading to exhaustion when work is accomplished. Another dangerous study habit is skipping assigned reading materials. Students who do this often realize that homework assignments usually have a close connection to lectures and readings. . .

Information Slides

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The diagram consists of red dotted lines that originate from underlined portions of the text and point to labels on the right side of the slide. The labels are: 'Main Idea' (pointing to the first underlined sentence), 'First Point' (pointing to the underlined word 'procrastination'), 'Example 1' (pointing to the underlined word 'stress'), 'Example 2' (pointing to the underlined word 'diversions'), and 'Second Point' (pointing to the underlined phrase 'ignoring lectures and assigned reading materials').

Main Idea

First Point

Example 1

Example 2

Second Point

Information Slides

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.



Main Idea

First Point

Example 1

Example 2

Second Point

Citing & Academic Formatting

MLA Recommendations:

- Title slide: The same information 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*

Global Warming's Impact on Oceans

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Minimum Wage Increases

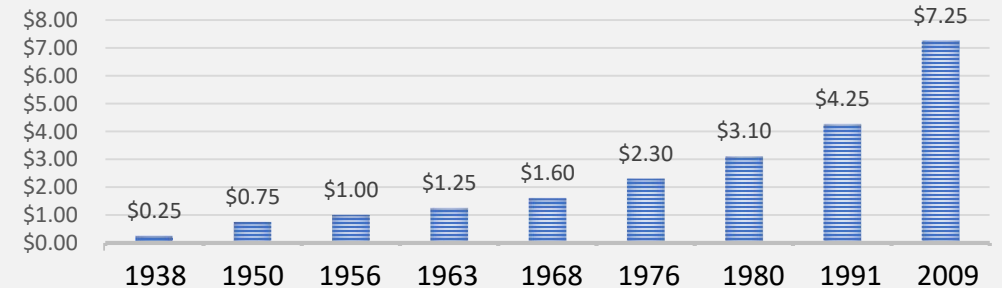


Figure 1: Federal Minimum Wage 1938 to Present

Source: "minimum wage." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Edited by Paul Lagasse, Columbia University Press, 8th edition, 2018. Credo Reference

Citing & Academic Formatting

Format the bibliography like an essay's References page (APA) or Works Cited page (MLA).

Works Cited

Blowfield, Mick. "Living Wage." *The A to Z of Corporate Social Responsibility*, Wayne Visser, et al., Wiley, 2nd edition, 2010. *Credo Reference*, http://0-search.credoreference.com.library.nsu.edu/content/entry/wileyazcsr/living_wage/0?institutionId=6704. Accessed 03 Dec. 2022.

"Inflation Calculator." *Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis*, 2022, <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/about-us/monetary-policy/inflation-calculator>. Accessed 03 Dec. 2022.

"minimum wage." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Edited by Paul Lagasse, Columbia University Press, 8th edition, 2018. *Credo Reference*, http://0-search.credoreference.com.library.nsu.edu/content/entry/columency/minimum_wage/0?institutionId=6704. Accessed 03 Dec. 2022.

"Minimum Wage Laws." *Basic Economics: A Common Sense Guide to the Economy*, Thomas Sowell, Basic Books, 5th edition, 2014. *Credo Reference*, http://0-search.credoreference.com.library.nsu.edu/content/entry/basicbasic/minimum_wage_laws/0?institutionId=6704. Accessed 03 Dec. 2022. http://0-search.credoreference.com.library.nsu.edu/content/entry/collinsecon/minimum_wage_rate/0?institutionId=6704. Accessed 03 Dec. 2022.

PowerPoint

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

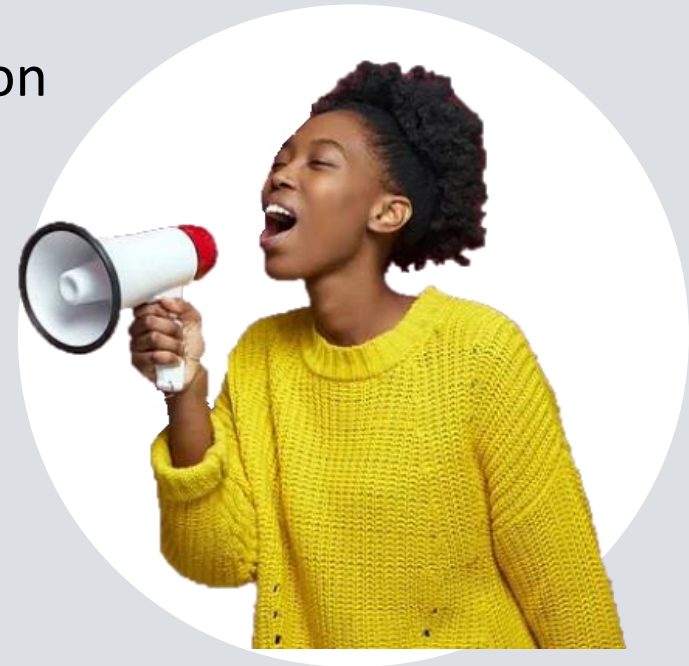
- E.g., 'umms,' 'ahhs,' 'y'knows,' etc.

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



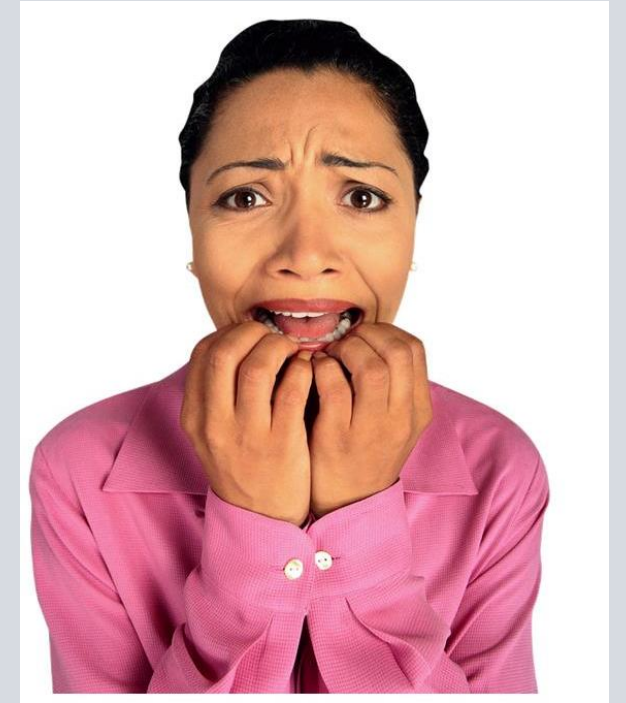
Body Language

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



Speak Naturally

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
 - Meaningful, high-quality images
 - Minimal text
 - 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



A group of diverse business professionals, including men and women of various ethnicities, are smiling and clapping. They are dressed in business attire. The image is slightly faded to make the text stand out.

Thank You!
Any questions?

Reflection

Student Workshop Evaluation



Faculty Workshop Evaluation



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- Email: writingcenter@nsu.edu
- Website: nsu.edu/writing-center
- Booking Site: nsu.mywconline.net/