

# Step 10: Make Your Pitch

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

To really get traction with your issue, at some point you'll have to talk to more than one person at a time. That means making presentations to groups of people—either by presenting at meetings of groups that already exist or by organizing a meeting of your own. Knowing how to make a killer presentation is important for advocacy, but it's also a valuable job market skill. Lots of organizations have a team-based employee structure that can involve making presentations to team members and senior staff. The better you are at presenting, the more you'll stand out. Fortunately, being a good presenter is a learned skill. In this step, you're going to learn it.



## Presentation Basics

In real life, people make presentations because they want to accomplish something. They present to specific audiences for specific reasons with a specific goal in mind. Instead of creating a fresh presentation for every group, it's easier to prepare a basic presentation that you can tailor to different audiences. (More on that later.) A basic presentation structure for advocating an issue looks like this:

- **Introduction:** Tell your audience who you are, what your issue is, why you're there, and what you want from them.
- **Information:** Educate your audience about the issue, show why it's important, and explain how your solution will help.
- **Call to Action:** Ask your audience to take a specific action to support your issue.
- **Wrap-Up:** Answer questions and end the meeting.

The information section is the longest part of the presentation. (If it isn't, something is wrong.) This is where it can be easy to lose people's attention if you aren't strategic about how you present your information. By following a few basic principles, you'll be able to design and deliver a presentation that will have people interested, engaged, and—hopefully—fired up about supporting you.

## Don't Be a Snooze

For this step, we'll assume this is the first time you've met with the group and most of them don't really know what your issue is all about. Your job is to educate them, persuade them to support your position, and convince them to take some kind of action—but you won't be able to accomplish these goals if you lose people's interest five minutes into your presentation. This

brings us to a sad truth: Presentations are usually boring. People know this. *You* probably know this. (It becomes especially noticeable on those rare occasions when you sit through a presentation that *isn't* boring.)

Fortunately, it's not that hard to make your presentation interesting if you follow these three rules:

1. Keep it moving.
2. Use visual reference points.
3. Engage your audience.



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Horses are being abused and it's really bad and we all need to do something and YOU need to do something and we're working with the county and the city and the Humane Society and the more people we can get to foster horses the more we can save so will you foster one horse or do you know someone who can?!?!?!?

(This is not how.)

## How to Keep It Moving

There's a direct relationship between pacing and boredom. When it comes to presentations, the slower you go, the sleepier people get. This isn't about how quickly you talk—unless you're an auctioneer, you should always speak at a natural pace. Presentations feel slow when the speaker is hard to follow, wanders from point to point, or bogs listeners down with too much information. Keeping it moving is about organizing your information, sticking to the point, and offering only the essential details.

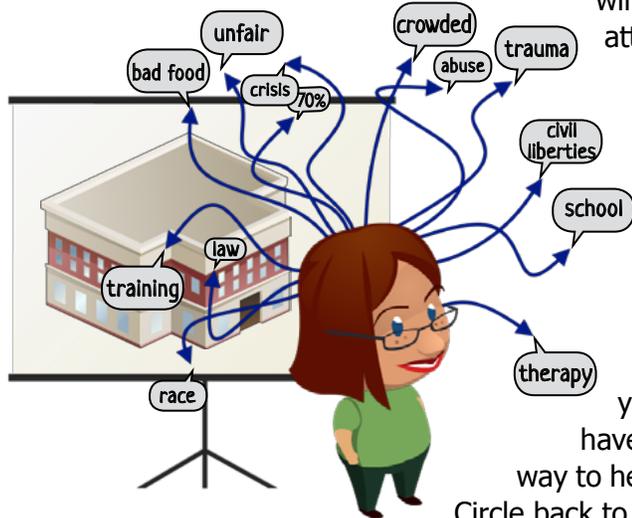
## Organize Your Information

If you haven't organized your information, you probably won't be able to get to the point at all. You'll be talking all over the place and saying things like, "Wait, I forgot to mention..." and "Oh yeah, the really important thing is..." Not only does this slow things down and make you difficult to follow, it also makes your presentation less effective. The point of organizing your information isn't just about keeping yourself on track—it's about carefully planning *when* and *how* to make your key points. What's the best strategy for presenting your information so that it will be persuasive? How can you organize your information in a way that

I'd like to start with an overview of my presentation.



will best keep people's attention? Generally, you want to save your most persuasive stuff for last. Build your case and leave your audience with something so compelling they can't *not* get on board with your plan.



## Stick to the Point

When presenting about your issue, think of yourself as a dog with a new stuffed toy. That dog has one goal: Destroy. The. Toy. As your issue's spokesperson, you also have one goal: Get. Their. Support. To do that, you can't be talking about anything and everything. You have to "stay on message" about why your solution is a great way to help fix whatever undesirable situation you're addressing.

Circle back to your solution with every new point you make.

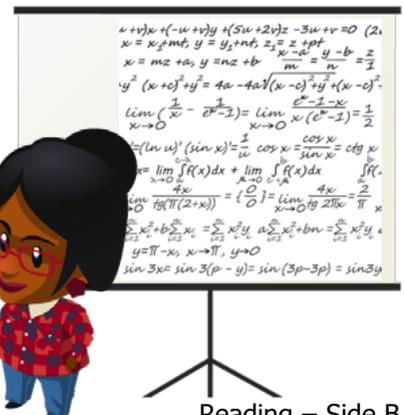
## Offer Only Essential Details

Too much detail has been the death knell of countless presentations. When you know a lot about a topic, it's easy to feel like Everything Is Important. It isn't. Be ruthless about weeding out details until you're left with two main types of details for each point you're making:

1. Information the audience needs in order to understand the point you're making, and
2. The one or two details that most convincingly support it.

When you've done that, move on to your next point.

And that's how a bunch of people each fostering one horse can save LOTS of horses!



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## Use Visual Reference Points

Most people find it easier to pay attention when there's something to look at. Charts, graphs, pictures, maps, diagrams... These kinds of visual representations don't just make a presentation more interesting—they improve people's memory, too. People usually remember more of what they learn when information is presented visually. The more you can actively use visuals to support what you're saying, the better. Key word? *Actively*.

### Just Say No to Blood and Gore

Resist the temptation to show people horrible, graphic pictures of the suffering involved with your issue. People can understand that 7<sup>th</sup> Street is dangerous without seeing the accident victim's autopsy photos. By forcing people to look at disturbing images, you risk alienating more people than you'll win over. They might not want to get involved for fear they'll be subjected to more, or the images might upset them so much that they can't deal with the thought of your issue anymore.

Images are very powerful, and they can be hard for many people to forget. You don't want to be the person that made someone lie awake at night because they can't get your mutilated puppy photo out of their head. Not sure if something is too graphic? When in doubt, leave it out.

Think of visuals as strategic presentation tools. They're things *you actively use*, not just things the audience passively looks at. That means you need to know the purpose of each visual in your presentation: Why are you using *that* visual? How will it help you get your message across? What do you want the audience to learn from it? Here are some common functions that visuals can serve in a presentation:

- **Simplify information.** Imagine the words it would take to explain the information in a graph. (Zzzzz...) There's a reason why they say "a picture is worth a thousand words"—sometimes it actually is. Visuals can show people what you're talking about when it's really hard to explain.
- **Reinforce information.** Information is more likely to stick if you offer it several ways. Most people are visual learners, so visual forms of information help them both remember and understand.
- **Deepen information.** There may be times when a visual lets you show the nuances of a situation that would be hard to describe in words. Or, a visual might challenge people's perceptions somehow. For example, maybe you find a cartoon that makes an important point about your issue.

You may come up with other purposes for visuals, too, and that's great. But whatever you do, do *not* use visuals to "decorate" your slides. That just distracts the audience, and most of the time it doesn't look good.



## Engage Your Audience

It's possible to lull your audience into a stupor even if you're keeping it moving and using visuals. How? By giving a unidirectional presentation in which you deliver information that you don't ask them to do anything with. But don't worry—your audience doesn't need to walk around and participate in activities to be engaged. All you have to do is ask them to think actively about the information you're presenting. Do that by asking them to imagine, compare, remember, picture, guess... anything that has them taking a specific action in their minds.

Incorporating this into your presentation isn't as hard as it might sound. In most cases, you aren't adding anything new to what you would already say. You're just saying it differently. Check out these examples...

Instead of saying this...	Engage them like this...
As you can see in this picture...	Compare this picture with... Imagine this picture without... What do you notice about ____ in this picture?
Seventy percent of people believe...	What percentage of people would you guess believes ____?
This graph shows...	Notice the trend on this graph. Compare the first bar on the graph with the last bar. Imagine what this graph will look like ten years from now.

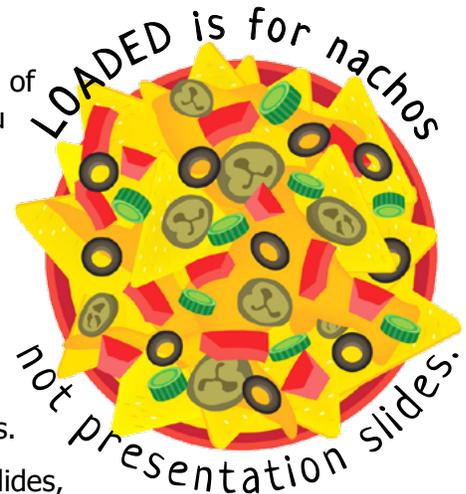
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## Presenting with Slides

You've probably heard the saying "less is more." In the realm of presentation slide design, this is an absolute truth. The more you pack onto a slide, the more cluttered the slide will look, the harder it will be to read what's on the slide, and the less useful the slide will be. So how can you be a slide design minimalist and still back up your points? By following two principles:

1. Use your slides to *support* your information—not to deliver it. Don't try to pack your whole speech onto slides. Instead, treat each slide as a vehicle for a visual reference point. Let your visual convey the message and back it up with a few bullet points.
2. Because less is more, it's okay to have more with less—more slides, that is. Instead of having ten slides that each contain enough info to make someone's head spin, have twenty slides that include just a little information each. More slides doesn't mean more time—just more clicks.



Compare these two slides:

**SLIDE A**

**Crashes On 7<sup>th</sup> Street**

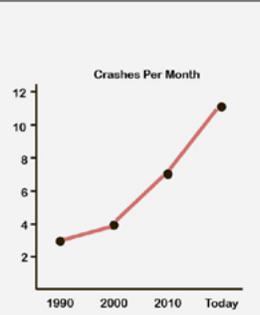
- There were only 3 crashes per month in 1990, 30 years ago
- By 2000 there were 4 crashes per month
- Ten years later, it increased to 7 crashes per month
- Today there are 11 crashes per month
- That is nearly 3 crashes per week on average
- Most crashes are caused by drivers who were exceeding the speed limit
- All data came from Centerville Police Department records



**SLIDE B**

**7<sup>th</sup> STREET CRASH HISTORY**

- Dramatic 30-year increase
- Nearly 3 crashes per week
- Speeding drivers cause most crashes



Year	Crashes Per Month
1990	3
2000	4
2010	7
Today	11

Source: Centerville Police Department

Notice that Slide B is designed to support what the speaker is saying, while Slide A delivers all the information by itself. Assuming people could even read Slide A from where they're sitting, you wouldn't *need* a speaker. What else do you think makes Slide B more clean and clear?

## Target Your Audience

When you're advocating for an issue, your audiences will probably be groups of stakeholders. Each presentation you make is your shot to convince that particular group the issue matters—not just in general, but to *them*. Personally. To tailor your presentation to a particular group, first do what you did in Step 5 and find the connections between their interests and your issue. Figure out ways that your proposal can help them do what they're trying to do, or if that seems like a long shot, at least figure out what you have in common. Then, work

those things into your presentation in the appropriate places. That usually won't mean a whole new set of slides. A few changes here and there should suffice, or it could be enough to insert reminders into your speaking notes so you point out common concerns as you're discussing your key points.



### To Handout or Not to Handout?

Unless you're teaching a class—which, in this situation, you aren't—don't make handouts to go with your presentation. Handouts tempt people to read ahead instead of paying attention to what you're saying. Instead, have flyers they can take with them *after* the presentation to remind them about the issue and what they can do.

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## PRESENTATION PLANNER

### CHOOSE AN AUDIENCE

You're going to prepare your presentation as if you were speaking to a specific group of people, so get out your Stakeholder List from Step 5. Choose one group to be your "audience" and copy the information about that group from your Stakeholder List into this table:

Stakeholder group:	Their interest in the issue:

### CHOOSE YOUR MAIN POINTS

In real life, you'd probably want to shoot for a 20-minute presentation. But for this project, you're going to do a 5-minute micro-presentation. (Ninja presentation skills! Seriously.) To make a short presentation work, you need to choose your main points carefully. Here's how:

KEY POINT

- 

KEY POINT

- 

KEY POINT

- 

1. Start by answering this question: If you could only make three points, which three would you make?  
» *List them here, one sentence each, in no particular order.*
2. Now, look at the three you've chosen. Which one most closely relates to your stakeholder group's interests? Or, which one would be the easiest to connect to your stakeholder group's interests?  
» *Put a star by that point.*
3. Can any of your other points be connected to your stakeholder group's interests?  
» *Put stars by those, too.*
4. Finally, think about possible ways to arrange your three points. Does any point have to come before or after one of the other points? Which point do you think is the most persuasive or compelling? You'll want to save that one for last if you can.  
» *Number your points in the order you think will be most effective.*

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## PRESENTATION PLANNER P.2

### PLAN YOUR DETAILS & VISUALS

KEY POINT #1	Describe the visual you will use:	Explain the purpose of the visual:
Key Point:		
List 2 details that best support this key point:		
Detail A:		
Detail B:		
KEY POINT #2	Describe the visual you will use:	Explain the purpose of the visual:
Key Point:		
List 2 details that best support this key point:		
Detail A:		
Detail B:		
KEY POINT #3	Describe the visual you will use:	Explain the purpose of the visual:
Key Point:		
List 2 details that best support this key point:		
Detail A:		
Detail B:		

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## PRESENTATION PLANNER P.3

### TARGET YOUR AUDIENCE

Review the key points you identified as connected to your stakeholder audience's interests. Then, look at the details you listed for those key points. Where is the common ground? Below, explain exactly how you'll connect your key points to your target audience. (If any of your points don't apply, write n/a.)

I'll connect Key Point #1 to my audience like this:

I'll connect Key Point #2 to my audience like this:

I'll connect Key Point #3 to my audience like this:

### CALL THEM TO ACTION

Your key points, details, and visuals are all part of your presentation's information section. After you've presented that part, it's time to call your audience to action. But be careful: The call to action will backfire if you overwhelm them with a long list of stuff you want them to do. To avoid this, offer just two suggestions for action—one for people who are really fired up about getting involved and one for people who want to be supportive without going all in. (Of course, you won't tell them that part.)



Option asking for minimal effort or commitment:



Option asking for more effort or commitment:

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## PRESENTATION PLANNER p.4

### INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Now that your presentation is sketched out, write your introduction. You don't want to launch into your presentation out of the blue, but you also don't want to get bogged down laying a lot of groundwork before you start. Adapt this formula to create a quick intro that transitions smoothly into your presentation.

My name is [name], and [first line of your elevator speech]. I'm here today because [bad thing is happening]. We could change that if [generalize your objective], and I'd like to show you how [your specific overall objective] could help [make good thing happen].

My name is Sara, and I'm working with the county to develop a foster care program for abused horses. I'm here today because there is nowhere in our community to shelter rescued horses. We could change that if we had a network of foster homes, and I'd like to show you how our "Foster One Horse" plan could help abused horses in our community.

Use this space to develop your own intro:



### WRAP THINGS UP

This part's easy: After the call to action, you'll simply let your audience know where to find more information, thank them for listening, and ask if anyone has questions. When you're done answering questions (or if nobody has any), thank the audience again and say "I hope you'll all consider supporting [your solution]." That's it. Done!

### PREPARE YOUR PRESENTATION

With everything planned out, now it's time to put your presentation together. This has three parts:

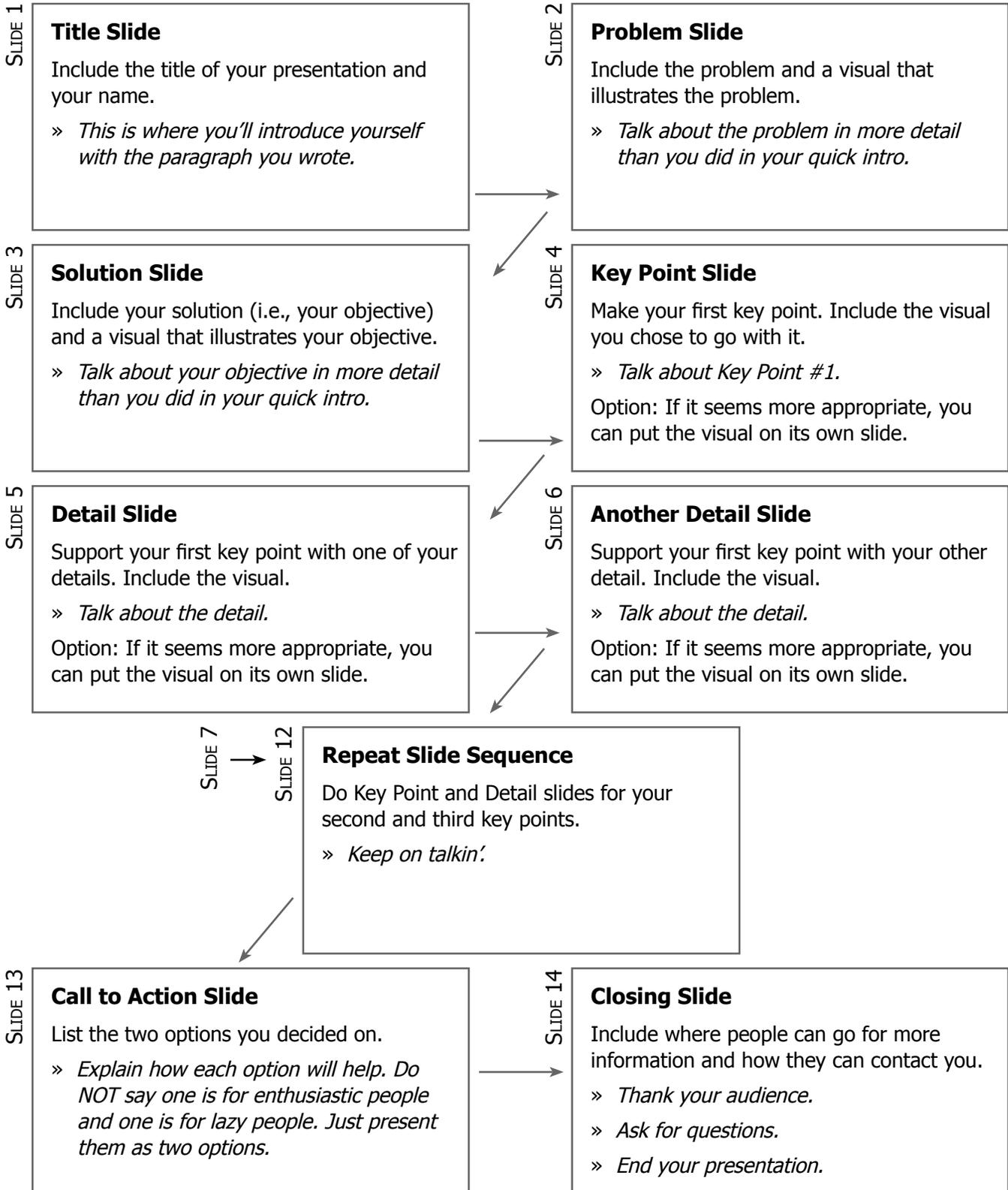
- 1. Create your slides.** Follow the Slide Guide to create the slide deck for your presentation.
- 2. Make speech notes for yourself.** Go through your slide deck from beginning to end and decide what you want to say from slide to slide. Use your own system or the Speaker Notes Template to make notes that you can refer to as you're giving your presentation.
- 3. Practice!** Make sure your notes help you as much as you think they will by practicing out loud as you click through your slide deck. Time yourself to see if you're under 5 minutes. If not, adjust what you're planning to say until you're within the time limit.

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## SLIDE GUIDE

This guide offers a slide-by-slide template for creating your presentation slides. Use it as a reference as you're building your slide deck. It's okay to adjust this plan, but if you do, be sure you're following the principles of good presentations and slide design.



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## SPEAKER NOTES TEMPLATE

**SLIDE TITLE:**

**SLIDE TITLE:**

**SLIDE TITLE:**

**SLIDE TITLE:**