A Non-Designer's Guide to Creating

VISUALLY CAPTIVATING PRESENTATIONS

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Visual Slides for a Visual Age

If you're like most people, you've probably created dozens of presentations in your lifetime, and many of these in just under a few hours.

But ask yourself: Do you really know how to design a memorable presentation that will **stick in your viewers' minds** for months, even years to come?

The answer is probably no. Most of us have never actually learned the design principles necessary to impact audiences through visual storytelling. Perhaps the closest we have ever come to crafting a visual message is a PowerPoint presentation full of bullet points, overused stock photos and bland color schemes.

But these kinds of presentations rarely inspire real change, especially in this new age of **visual communication**.

A good public speaker with a boring slide deck may be able to maintain the attention of an audience for a few minutes, but a good public speaker with a well-planned and well-designed visual presentation can truly mesmerize an audience.

In this book, we'll cover basic design principles and tools you can apply right away to take your slide decks from mediocre to stunning.

> My best advice is to not start in PowerPoint. Presentation tools force you to think through information linearly, and you really need to start by thinking of the whole instead of the individual lines.
>
> *Nancy Duarte*

A New Way to Think About Presentations

Say It Visually

For most people, using presentation software to create slide decks has become second nature: You simply choose a design template, insert your text, create bullet points for each slide, add a few images here and there—and voilà! You're done—right?

Not if you really want to impress your audience.

The most effective speakers have learned to wean themselves off bullet-ridden slides in favor of highly **visual presentations** that reinforce their words—instead of repeating them.

This comes to no surprise since human beings are hardwired to process images quicker than textual information—as fast as 13 milliseconds, according to one of the latest studies.

Sadly, however, most students, academics and business people are taught to stick to the old way of creating presentations: full of text-heavy slides that make it harder—not easier—to understand and act upon your message.

People recall 80% of what they see and do, 20% of what they read and 10% of what they hear.

Source

> Video, sound, text, images and spoken words will all come together seamlessly to deliver a message in the most impactful manner possible.

The Future of Presentations

Each day, more than 35 million PowerPoint presentations are created—and millions more hours are spent delivering them before audiences across the globe.

From boardrooms to classrooms, people are gathering at this very moment to listen to the presenter before them and decide whether to act upon the message they're receiving or reject it.

The fate of companies, students' career choices, or important life decisions may very well be influenced by the **visual thinking**—or lack thereof—with which a certain slide deck was created.

It is inevitable, then, that presentations will become more and more visual with time. Instead of static slides, we will start to see increasingly dynamic ones that integrate seamlessly with the live delivery of information.

Video, sound, text, images and spoken words will all come together harmoniously in service of the presenter's mission to deliver a message in the most impactful manner possible.

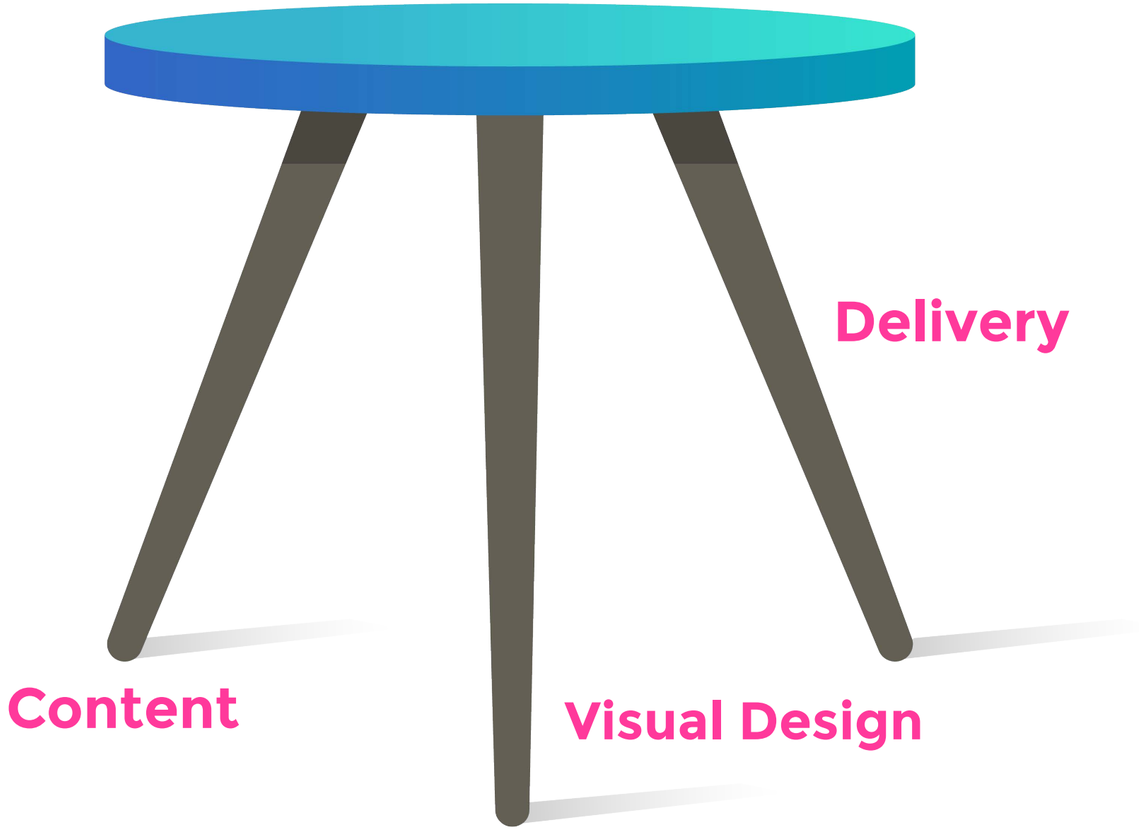
The Three Legs of a Good Presentation

Does this mean that visuals will trump the written word? By no means! Whether you're dealing with a multimedia presentation, a Hollywood movie or a novel, one thing will always reign supreme: the **power of storytelling**.

This is why well-designed slides will always start with a good story and good content—not the other way around.

So, the three essential ingredients to a successful presentation are: the content, the design and the delivery. We will cover each of these components, one by one, in this book.

> You have to make the audience care. Presentations in all their many forms are never just about transferring information alone.
>
> *Garr Reynolds*



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What Is Your Message?

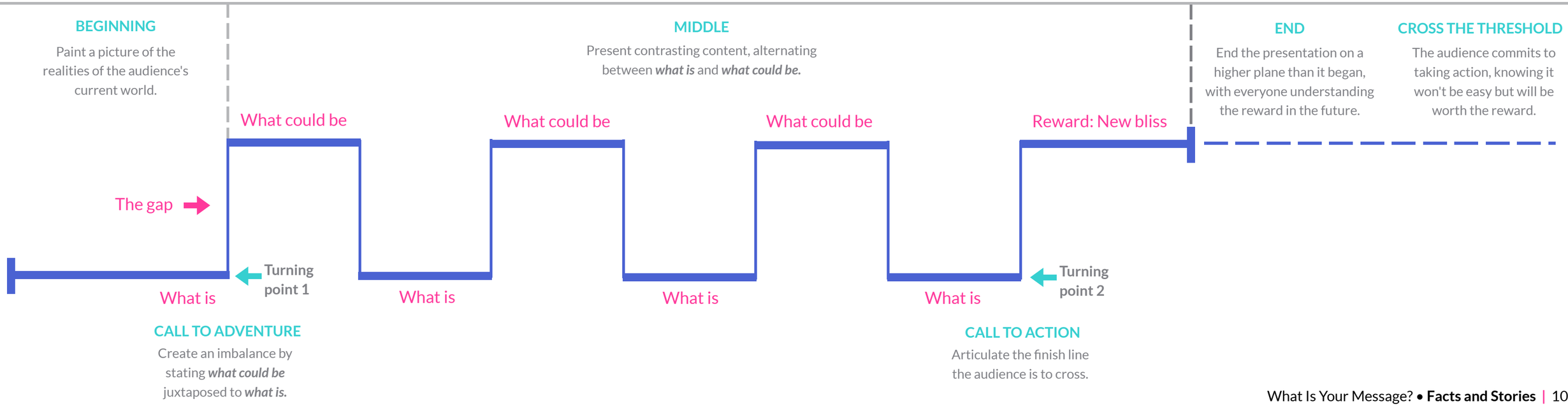
Facts and Stories

We all learned in high school or college that a piece of communication can have one of four purposes: to **inform**, **entertain**, **inspire** or **persuade**.

These same communicational objectives can be applied to presentation giving. For example, within a business setting, your goal may be to accomplish more than one of these objectives: to inform your audience and also inspire them to take action.
In this case, you may want to use a combination of **storytelling techniques** and the exposition of **facts** to get your point across.

In her book *Resonate*, presentation guru Nancy Duarte proposes a way to weave both of these into your narrative. She proposes thinking about presentations as somewhere between two extremes: a report, full of unexciting numbers and figures, and a story, which has the power to keep viewers at the edge of their seats. While facts are used to inform, stories create memorable experiences.

By shifting between facts that provide a snapshot of the current reality and stories that paint a picture of the ideal situation, you create suspense and desire in your audience to learn what comes next. Duarte visualizes this alternating between facts and stories as a sparkline, which represents the dramatic tension created by comparing what is with what could be.



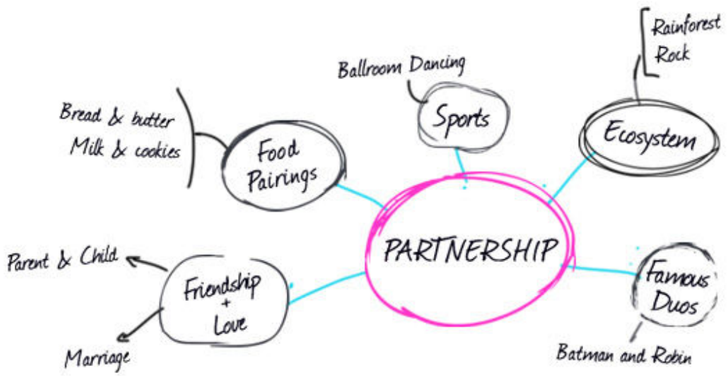
How to brainstorm

Now that you've defined the objective of your presentation—whether to inform, entertain, persuade, inspire, or a combination of all of these—you can now start the brainstorming process.

Although you've probably made the mistake of opening up PowerPoint and creating your slides without any forethought, the best presentations are the product of careful planning and purposeful brainstorming.

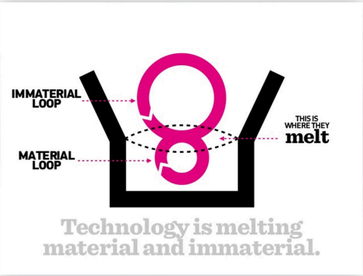
Start by taking a piece of paper and pencil and drawing out your ideas; this will help get your creative juices flowing and allow you to generate ideas freely, without the sense of finality that comes with inserting content onto a slide.

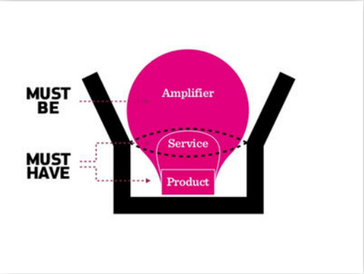
You can use diagrams such as mind maps, Venn diagrams, tree diagrams, and spoke diagrams to illustrate your initial ideas.

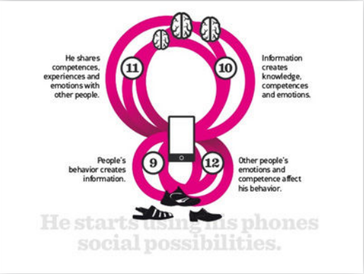


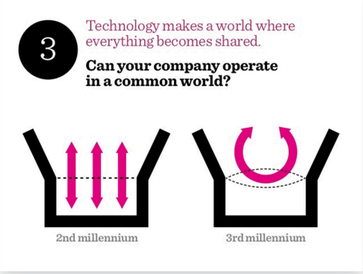
You can also use abstract diagrams or visual analogies to define a visual theme that will tie your presentation together. This slide deck uses an appropriate visual theme to illustrate the "melting" of the material and immaterial worlds.

Source









Create Audience Personas

All great communicators know that the key to crafting a message that will resonate with your audience is to first understand their needs, pain points, motivations and goals. The more diligently you set out to walk a mile in their shoes, the easier it will be to speak their language and offer solutions to their most pressing needs.

Start by asking yourself the following questions:

- **Who is your typical audience member?** List key demographic and psychographic information, such as age, gender, race, income level, interests, values and personality traits.
- **What pressing problem can you help them with?** What information do they hope to attain from your talk? What do they hope to achieve with it?
- **How do they want to receive information?** Are they busy people who want a general overview in an easy-to-process visual presentation? Or are they more interested in a detailed report in document format as well?
- **How much do they know about the subject?** Use language and terms in accordance with your audience's knowledge level and familiarity with the subject matter.
- **What objections might they have?** How might your audience resist your message? Think of ways to address each of these objections.

Rachel

Small Business Owner

- Social Media Marketing
- Key decision maker

Demographics

- Age 32-39
- Skews female
- $70,000 / yr
- Urban location
- Master's Degree
- Married, no kids

Goals and Challenges

- Save time online
- Find interesting content to share
- Maximize social media resources

How we can help

- Schedule post to a queue
- Content suggestions

Create an Audience Journey Map

Next, think of your presentation as a journey in which you will take your audience from point A to point B. What do you want them to do at the end of your presentation? Do you want them to invest in a certain product or cause? Do you want them to change the way they think about a certain problem?

To take your audience to that next level, it is first necessary to map out this figurative journey. Since presentations have a narrative structure—just like stories—start by creating an **audience journey map**, with key milestones along the way. Besides Duarte's sparkline, you can use any of these story structures:

THE EXPLANATION

Teaches new insights or abilities.

The lay of the land

Where are we now, where are we going, and what's between here and there?

Do we agree on our destination?

Our roadmap

Here's the route we will take to get to our destination.

Do we agree on our route?

Our 1st step

Every journey begins with a step, and this is our first.

Are we all still together?

Our next steps...

Here's the next step...and the next, and so on...

Do we know what we've done and where we are?

Almost there...

We are just about there. Let's take a look back over how far we've come.

Do we see how much we've learned?

We've arrived!

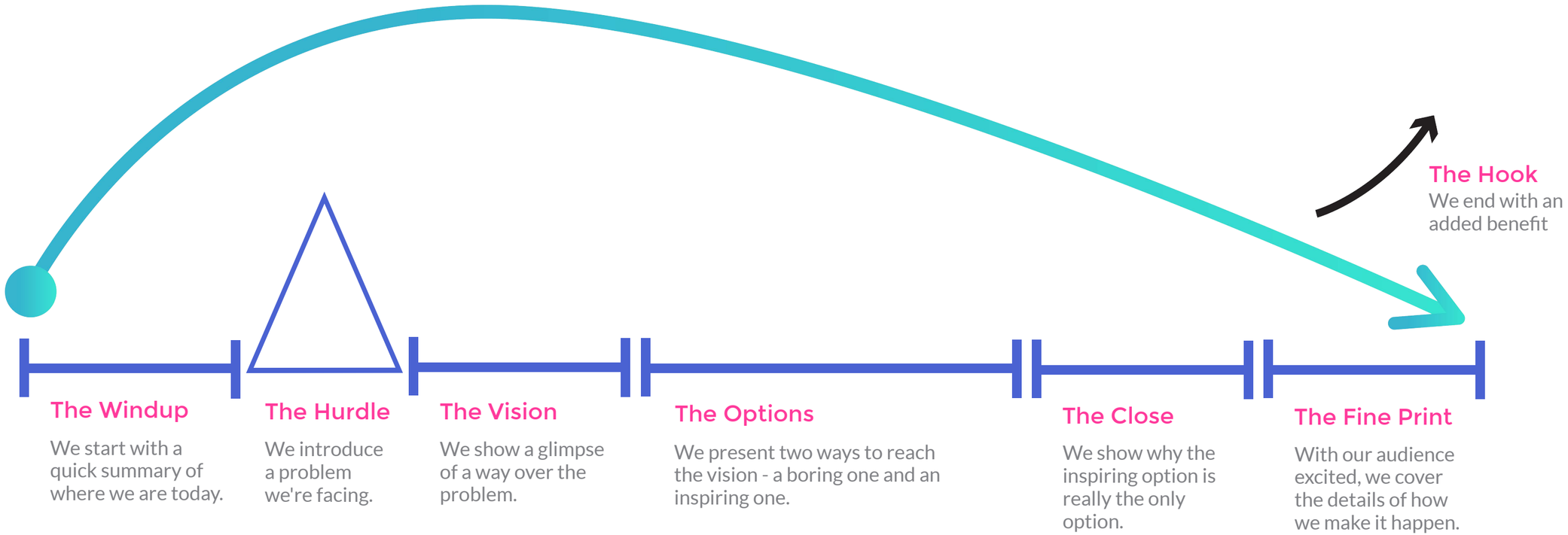
We made it! We now have some new knowledge or ability.

Can we repeat it on our own?

Source

THE PITCH

Recommends a new action or solution



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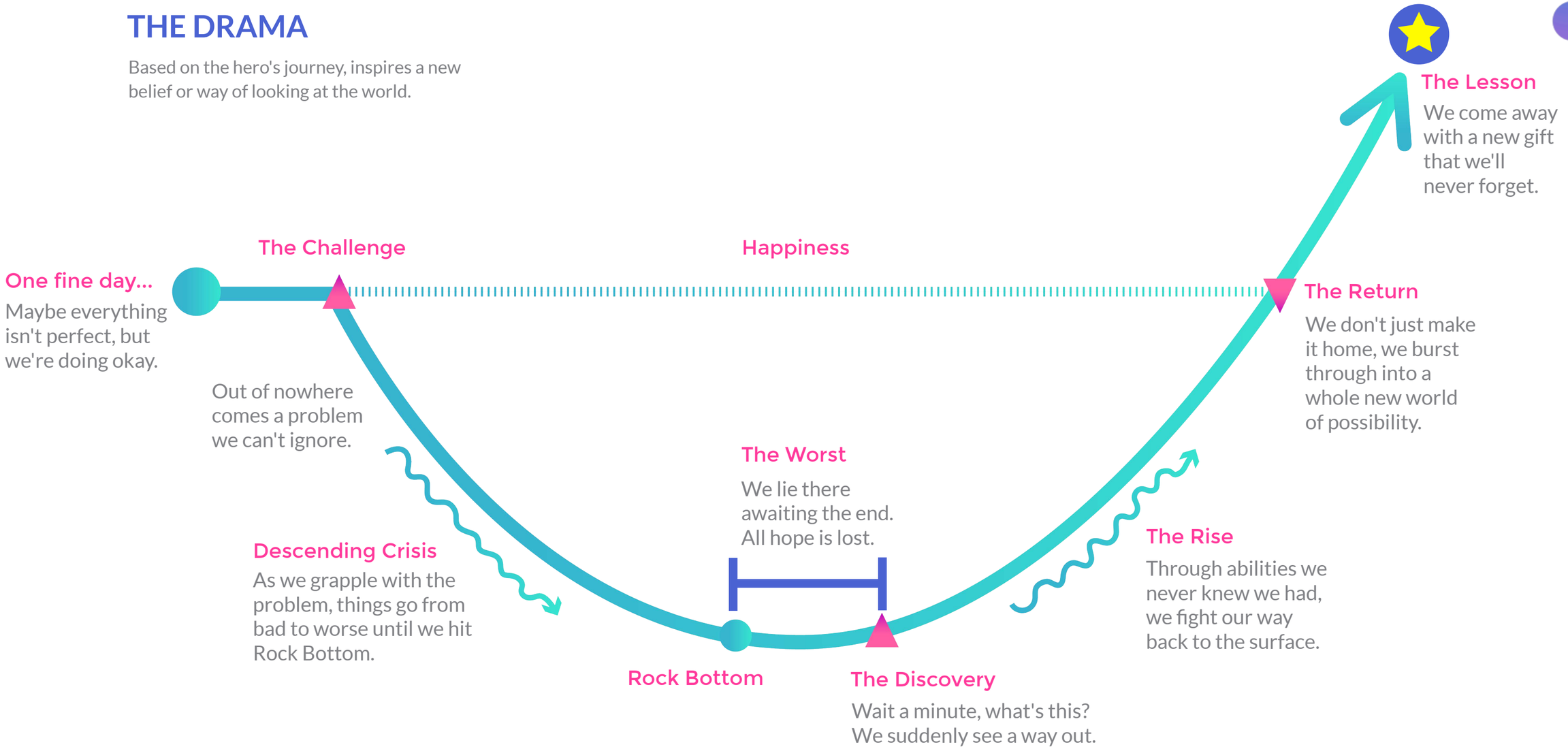
THE DRAMA

Based on the hero's journey, inspires a new belief or way of looking at the world.



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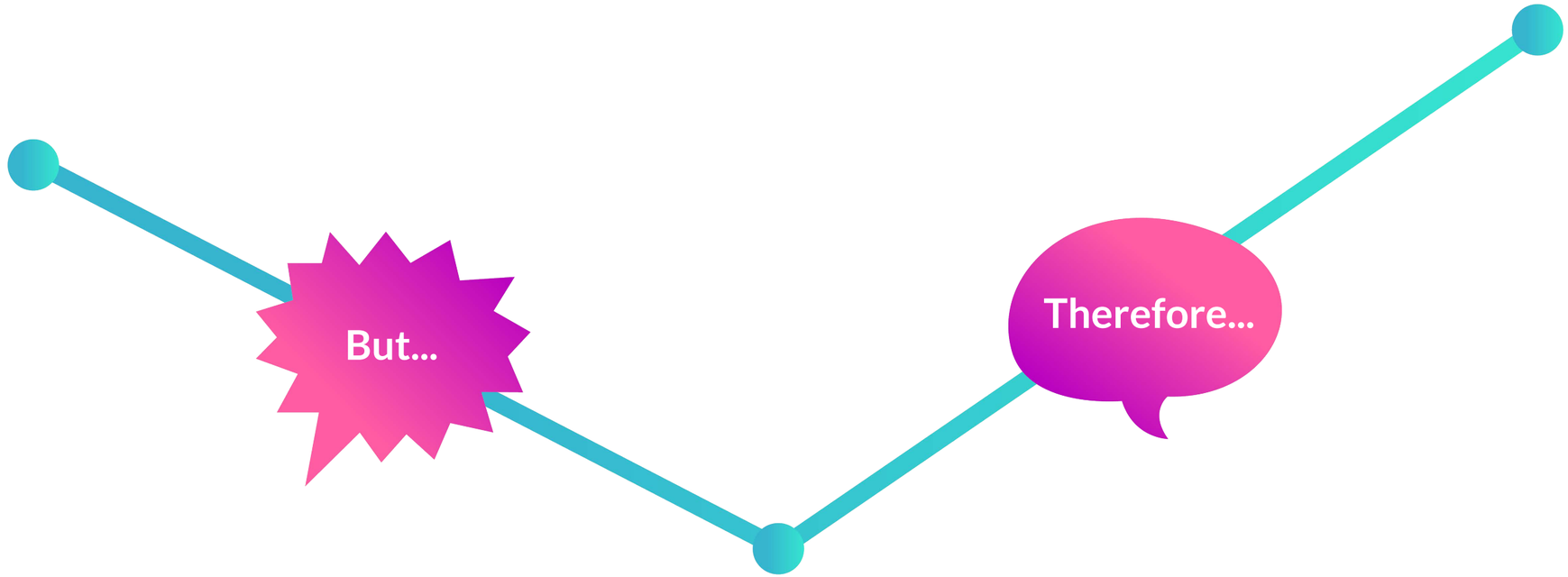
SITUATION-COMPLICATION-RESOLUTION

In the consulting world, or in B2B sales, Situation-Complication-Resolution is a common presentation structure. It's a three-act structure, linked by two words: "but" and "therefore."



Situation

What's happening now. An unbiased view of the current conditions.

Complication

The challenge ahead. Use data to back this up. It shines a light on the problem and adds tension to the story.

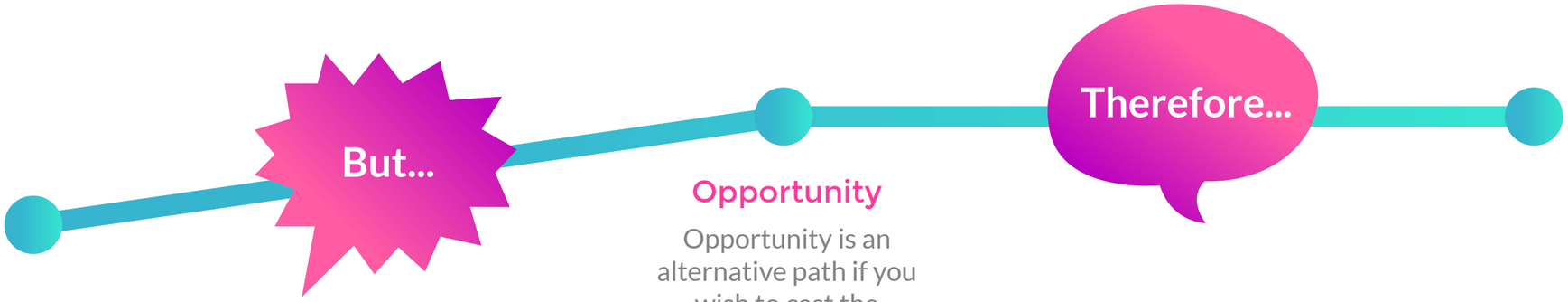
Resolution

The proposed product/service or solution that meets the challenges. Make sure you have evidence to add credibility to the story.

Source

SITUATION-OPPORTUNITY-RESOLUTION

A variation of the previous model, the Situation-Opportunity-Resolution story structure simply replaces the complication with an opportunity, linked by “but” and “therefore.”



Situation

What's happening now. An unbiased view of the current conditions.

Opportunity

Opportunity is an alternative path if you wish to cast the presentation in a hopeful light.

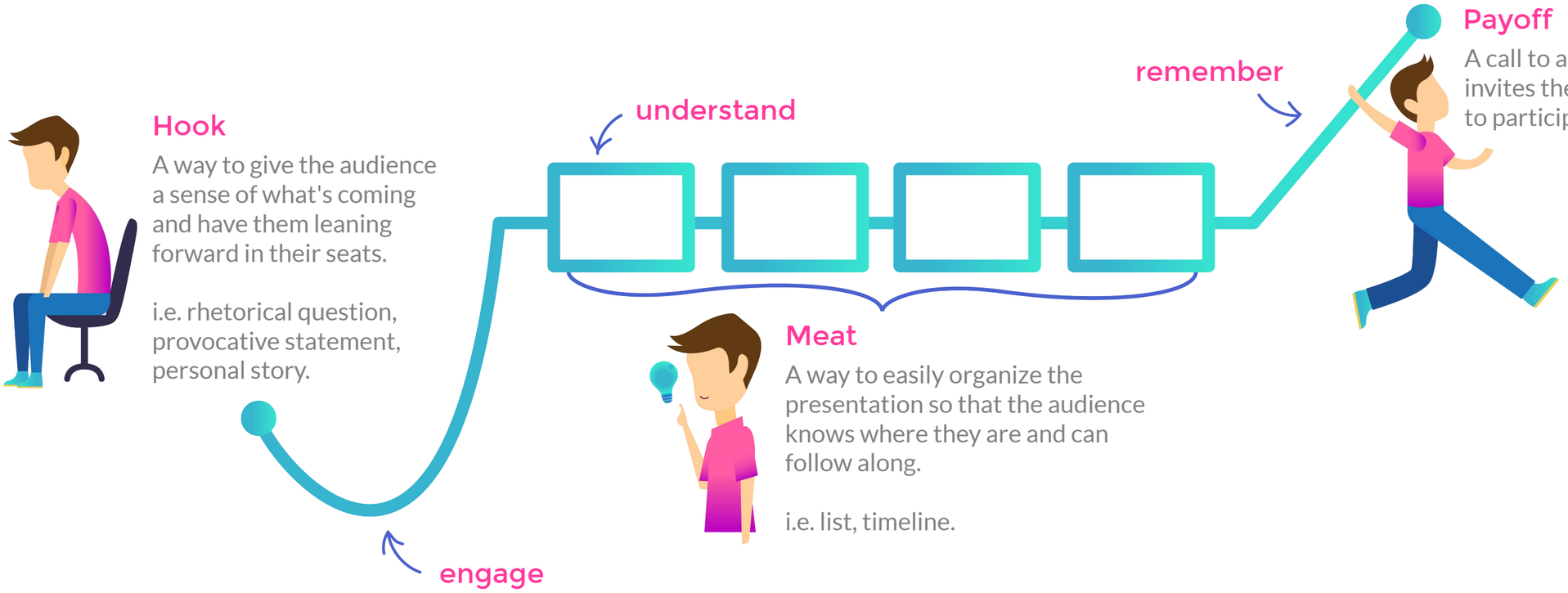
Resolution

The proposed product/service or solution that meets the challenges. Make sure you have evidence to add credibility to the story.

Source

HOOK, MEAT AND PAYOFF

A story structure frequently used by fassforward Consulting Group, this is a simple formula that starts by engaging your audience with a hook (such as a provocative question or a story) and then proceeds to deliver the meat of your presentation and end with an effective conclusion that circles back to the introduction.



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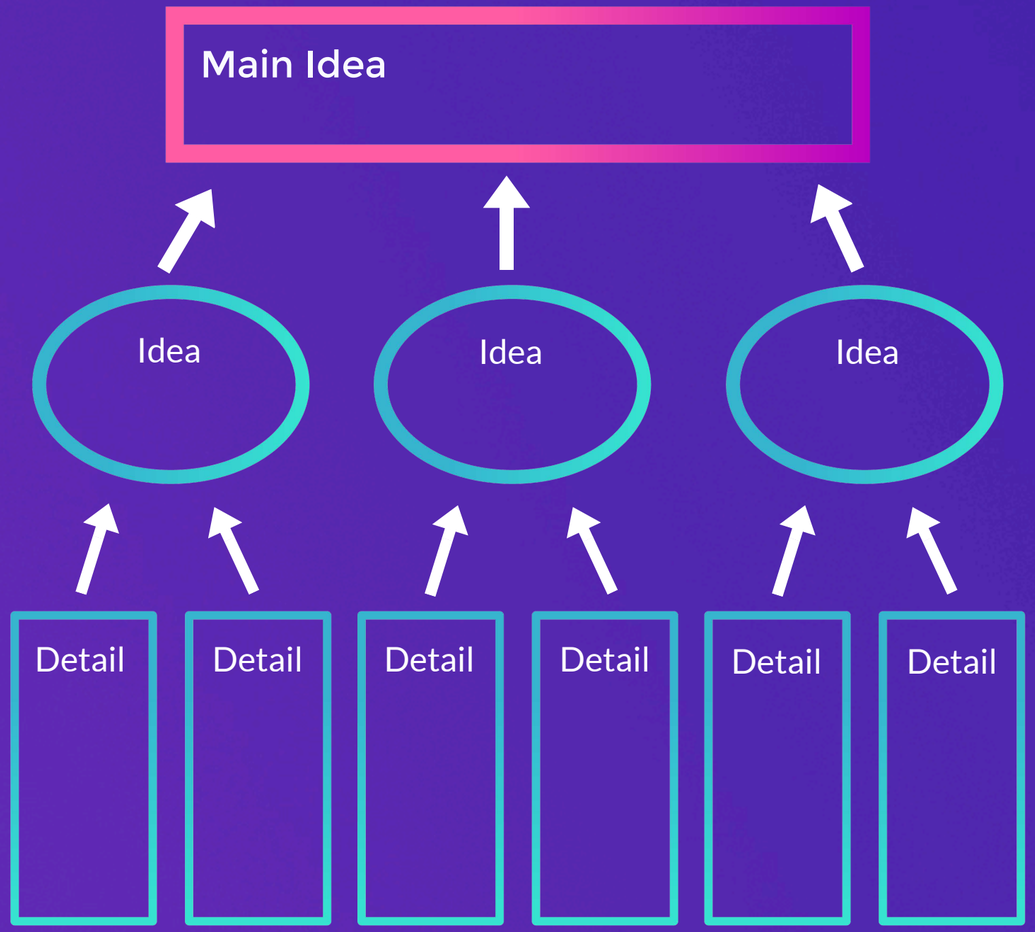
The Big Idea

Once you've mapped your audience's journey, make sure to not lose sight of the main focus of your presentation. Just like an academic paper needs a thesis statement, your presentation should have one "**big idea**" that can be summed up in a few sentences. This statement should articulate your unique perspective on an issue and why your audience should care about it.

To build an airtight case within your narrative, you will need to use corroborated facts and figures to back up your claims.

You can start outlining your case by going back to your one big idea and then identifying each of your main points, followed by supporting details. To help you craft an airtight argument, you can use an idea map like this one on the right.

> The single most important skill you must have to lead is the ability to tell your own story..
>
> *Bo Eason*



Create a Storyboard

Since a successful presentation is built not just on good content but on an effective design, the next step is to create a visual storyboard, much like those used to outline the content in a video.

The overarching theme you decided on in the brainstorming process will be useful for visualizing your deck in this stage, which should contain no more than one idea per slide, as in this example.

> Your slides should be a billboard not a document!
>
> *Lee Jackson*

Slide Design Made Easy

Create Visual Slides, Not Documents

One of the most common mistakes non-designers make with their slides is filling them with bullet points and large blocks of text. This is a distraction to your audience since they will either choose to listen to your words or read the points on your slide, but they cannot do both at the same time.

Rather than use your presentation as a sort of teleprompter, why not create visual slides that reinforce the words coming from your mouth, instead of repeating them?

Design your slides with as little text as possible and make it easy to read, even for those sitting in the last row in the room. This means that the bigger the venue, the bigger the text should be.

If you're presenting before an audience who will be interested in the fine-grained details of your message, then consider handing out a separate document to be reviewed later, but not before the event as this will divert their attention away from you, the presenter.

> Design your slides with as little text as possible and make it easy to read, even for those sitting in the back of the room.

> The first 30 seconds and the last 30 seconds have the most impact in a presentation.
>
> *Patricia Fripp*

Handle Text Like a Designer

1 POINT SIZE

Placing text on a slide may seem like a simple task, but it involves a number of important design choices that will affect the way your viewers perceive and process your message.

For starters, make sure to use uppercase letters for short titles and not complete sentences, as this makes them harder to read.

Business guru Guy Kawasaki also advises to use text with a point size no smaller than 30. For larger venues, such as a TED conference, there are presenters who use text as big as 72 to 120 points.

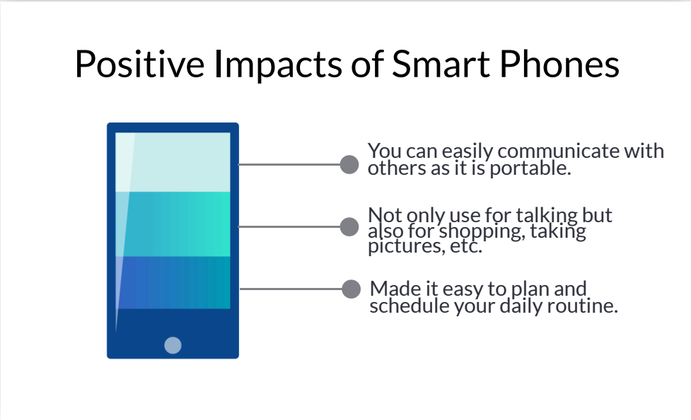
hello	30 pts.
hello	48 pts.
hello	60 pts.
hello	72 pts.
hello	120 pts.

2 LEADING

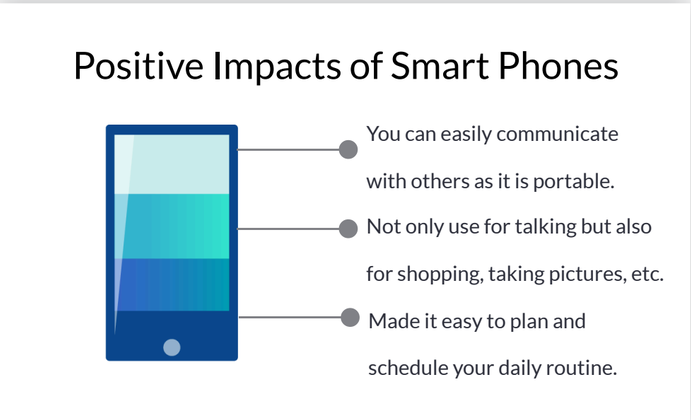
Another common mistake is too little or too much space between lines, known as **leading**.

Most presentation tools allow you to adjust the leading so that your text can breathe. Since the default spacing between lines in presentation software is often too high, it's a good idea to modify it in accordance with your chosen font.

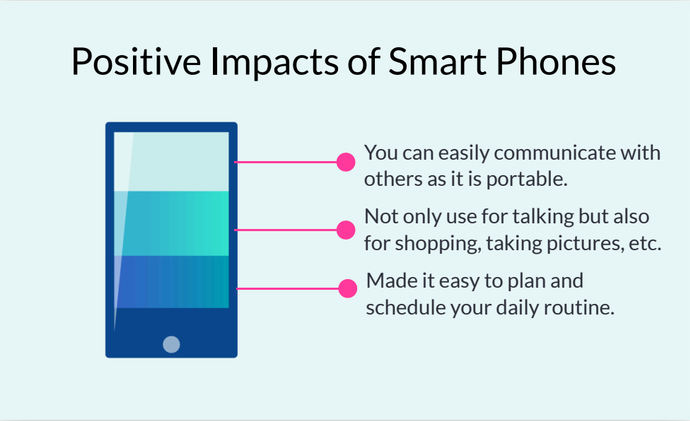
Take a look at how the slide on the left has too much leading, while the one on the right has too little. The leading applied to the slide in the middle is just about right.



Too little leading



Too much leading



Just right

3 LIST YOUR FAVORITE FONTS

With so many fonts out there, it can easily become a time-consuming task to choose the best ones for your slide deck.

One way around this is to create a list of your preferred fonts for use in any visual presentation.

Sans serif fonts (which do not come with small lines at the end of strokes, unlike serif fonts) work well in presentations with small amounts of large text. For longer paragraphs of text, **serif fonts** are recommended as they improve readability.

Presentation guru Garr Reynolds lists some of his favorite fonts: Caslon, Garamond, Baskerville, Helvetica, Futura, Bodoni, Frutiger, Rockwell and Franklin Gothic.

You can create your own list by browsing through this selection of free web fonts, as we've done here.

Rubik

Alegreya Sans

Libre Franklin

Cormorant

Playfair Display

Fira Sans

4 HOW TO PAIR FONTS

There are certain rules to keep in mind when pairing fonts. We've summarized them here with some visual examples.

Use fonts from the same typeface.

One of the easiest ways to avoid design blunders is to choose fonts from the same font family. For example, by pairing a bold font with a thinner variation from the same family, you'll achieve just the right amount of contrast.

Before

Business Outlook
Economic Boom

After

Business Outlook
Economic Boom

Stick to two—max three—typefaces.

You might be looking too hard for just the right combination. Instead of overthinking it, just stick to two or three combinations and, above all, keep it simple.

Before

Business Outlook

Economic ***Boom***

A period of significant output within a population. The period is marked by **productivity increases, sales increases, wage increases and rising demand.** An ***economic boom*** may be accompanied by a period of inflation.

After

Business Outlook

Economic Boom

A period of significant output within a population. The period is marked by productivity increases, sales increases, wage increases and rising demand. An economic boom may be accompanied by a period of inflation.

Assign distinct roles to each font.

A good tip to remember is that consistency is crucial to a professional-looking design. One way to do this is to assign a role to each of the fonts used throughout your presentation. For example, you can use the same font for slide titles, another for body text, a third font for diagram labels and so on.

Before

Marketing Research

Consumer research

Information for marketing research is collected from direct observation of the consumers, mail surveys, telephone or face-to-face interviews, and from published sources.

After

Marketing Research

CONSUMER RESEARCH

Information for marketing research is collected from direct observation of the consumers, mail surveys, telephone or face-to-face interviews, and from published sources.

Choose fonts with the right personality.

Another key to pairing fonts is recognizing that each font has a personality and a mood. Don't make the mistake of pairing fonts that simply aren't meant to go together or don't match the visual theme of your slide deck.

Before

MARKETING RESEARCH

Consumer research

Information for marketing research is collected from direct observation of the consumers, mail surveys, telephone or face-to-face interviews, and from published sources.

After

MARKETING RESEARCH

CONSUMER RESEARCH

Information for marketing research is collected from direct observation of the consumers, mail surveys, telephone or face-to-face interviews, and from published sources.

Avoid similar-looking fonts.

While fonts from the same family are meant to be used together, combining similar-looking fonts from different families can fail to achieve the right kind of contrast. If you want to understand why, think of how you'd look if you wore a navy blue blazer with royal blue pants—terrible combination!

Before

Marketing Research

Consumer research

Information for marketing research is collected from direct observation of the consumers, mail surveys, telephone or face-to-face interviews, and from published sources.

After

MARKETING RESEARCH

Consumer Research

Information for marketing research is collected from direct observation of the consumers, mail surveys, telephone or face-to-face interviews, and from published sources.

Create the right amount of contrast.

A key characteristic of any good design is contrast. One way to achieve this is to ensure there is enough difference in point size between your titles, sub-headers and body text. Another way is to vary the weight (or boldness) of the different fonts used. A third way is to combine a serif font with a sans serif or a distinct font with a more neutral one.

Before

Marketing Research

Consumer research

Information for marketing research is collected from direct observation of the consumers, mail surveys, telephone or face-to-face interviews, and from published sources.

After

MARKETING RESEARCH

Consumer Research

Information for marketing research is collected from direct observation of the consumers, mail surveys, telephone or face-to-face interviews, and from published sources.

How to Use Images Like a Pro

1 AVOID STOCK PHOTOS

If you want to stand out from run-of-the-mill presentations, make sure to avoid stock photos as much as possible. Or, at the very least, avoid cheap-looking, overused stock images of hands shaking in front of a globe or happy co-workers with perfect smiles.

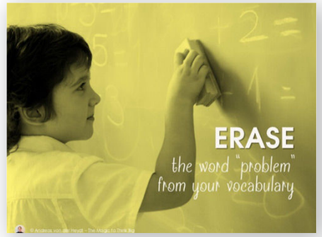
Choose “natural” above all else. This means natural lighting, natural poses, natural settings, and even people or things that will be natural for your specific audience.

2 TYPES OF IMAGES

There are several types of images to choose from for your visual slide deck.

Thematic images

Depending on the visual theme you chose for your presentation, select appropriate images to illustrate this concept.



Source

Source

Abstract images

Although you want to avoid the typical PowerPoint templates with gradient backgrounds and abstract curves, there are certain abstract background images that evoke just the right mood or feel.

Source

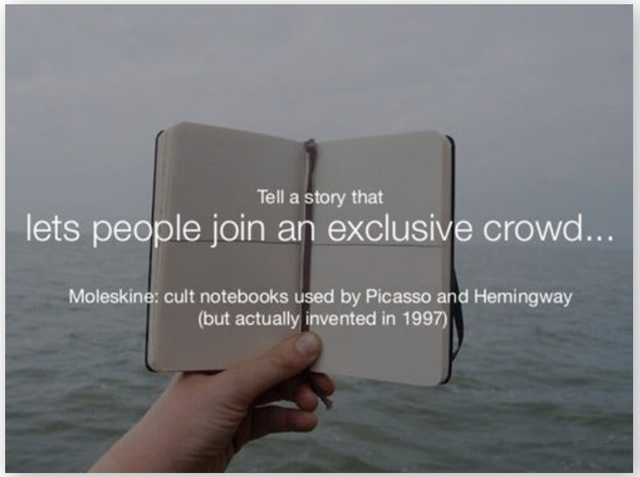
Source

Source

Source

Real-life images

If you're going to refer to real-life examples in your presentation, you can also use your smartphone or camera to take your own images.



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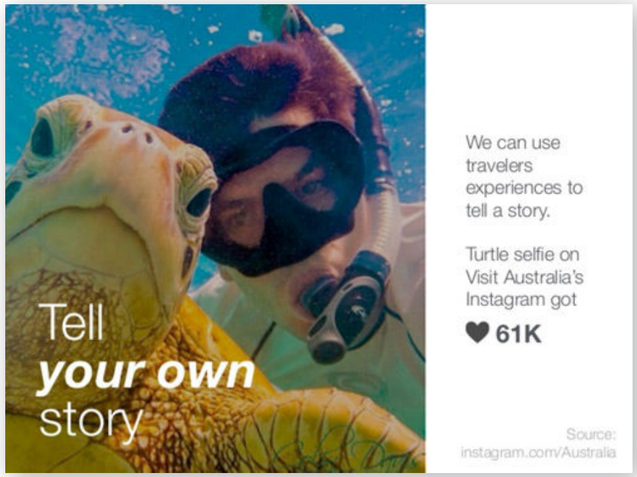
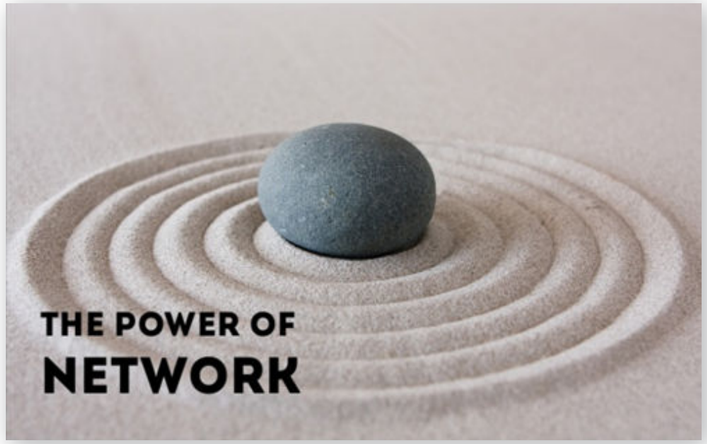


Source

Illustrating concepts

You can also illustrate a concept by choosing just the right image. For example, if you're discussing diversity in the workplace, you can use images that exemplify the concept without using stock images of humans. Also, you can use contrasting images to make the concept even clearer.



Source

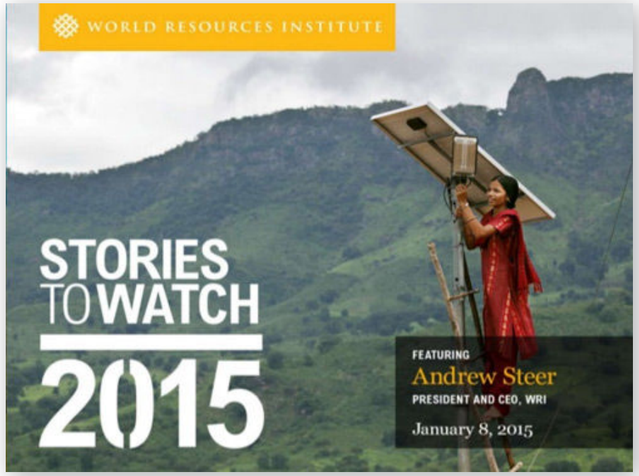
Source

Humorous images

Renowned public speaker Seth Godin uses humorous images to engage his audience. For example, he used this image of bats turned upside down to make the point that a problem can look very different from an alternative perspective. A simple change in angle makes the bats look like they're having a good time at a party.

Evocative images

Powerful imagery that evokes strong emotions is also useful for weaving a captivating visual story. Just be careful not to overdo it.

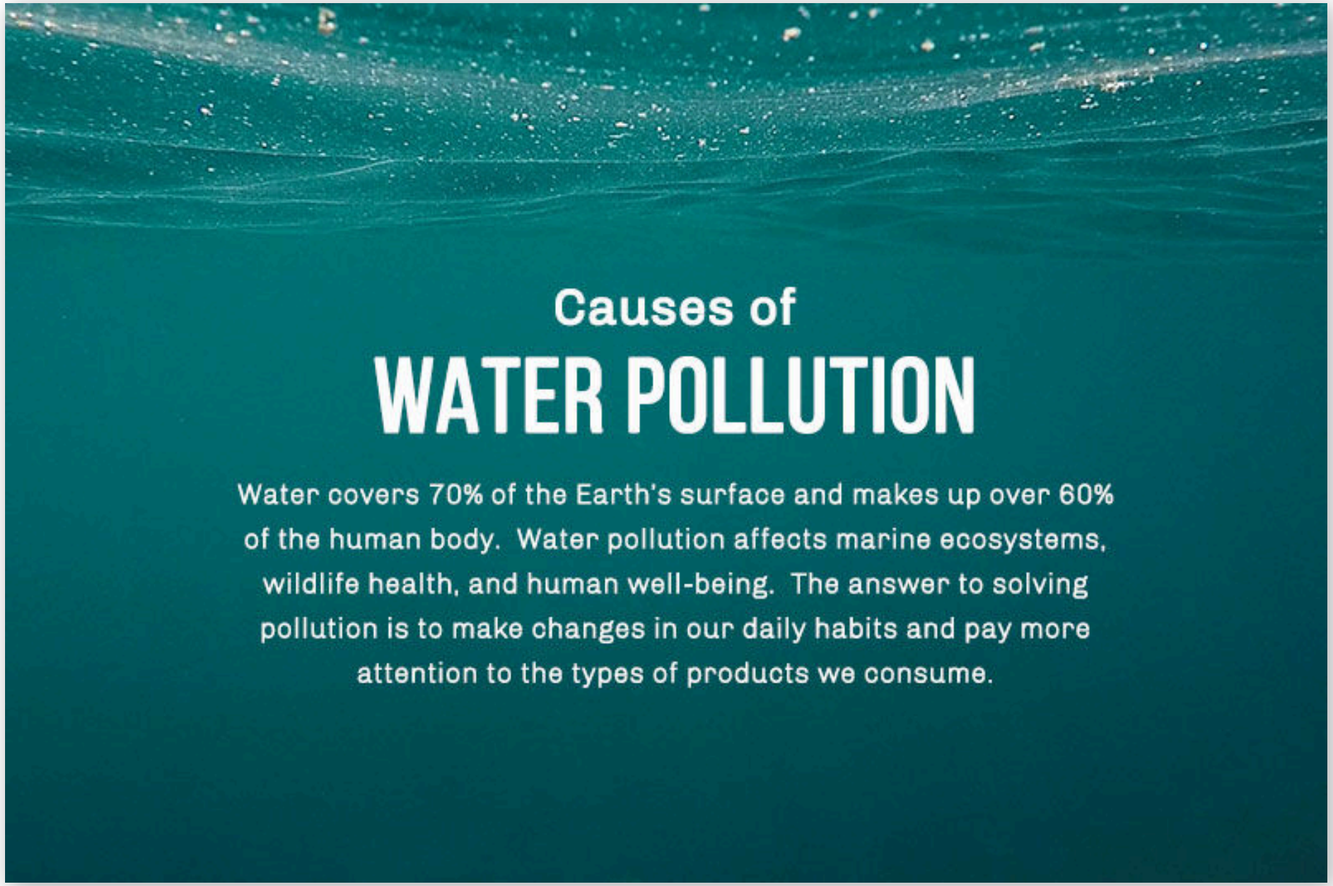


Source

3 FULL-SCREEN IMAGES

Many amateur presentation designers make the mistake of using small images in their slide decks. Instead, why not use full-bleed images that act as slide backgrounds?

Look at how this image background is much more impactful than its smaller counterpart.



4 PARTIAL-BLEED IMAGES

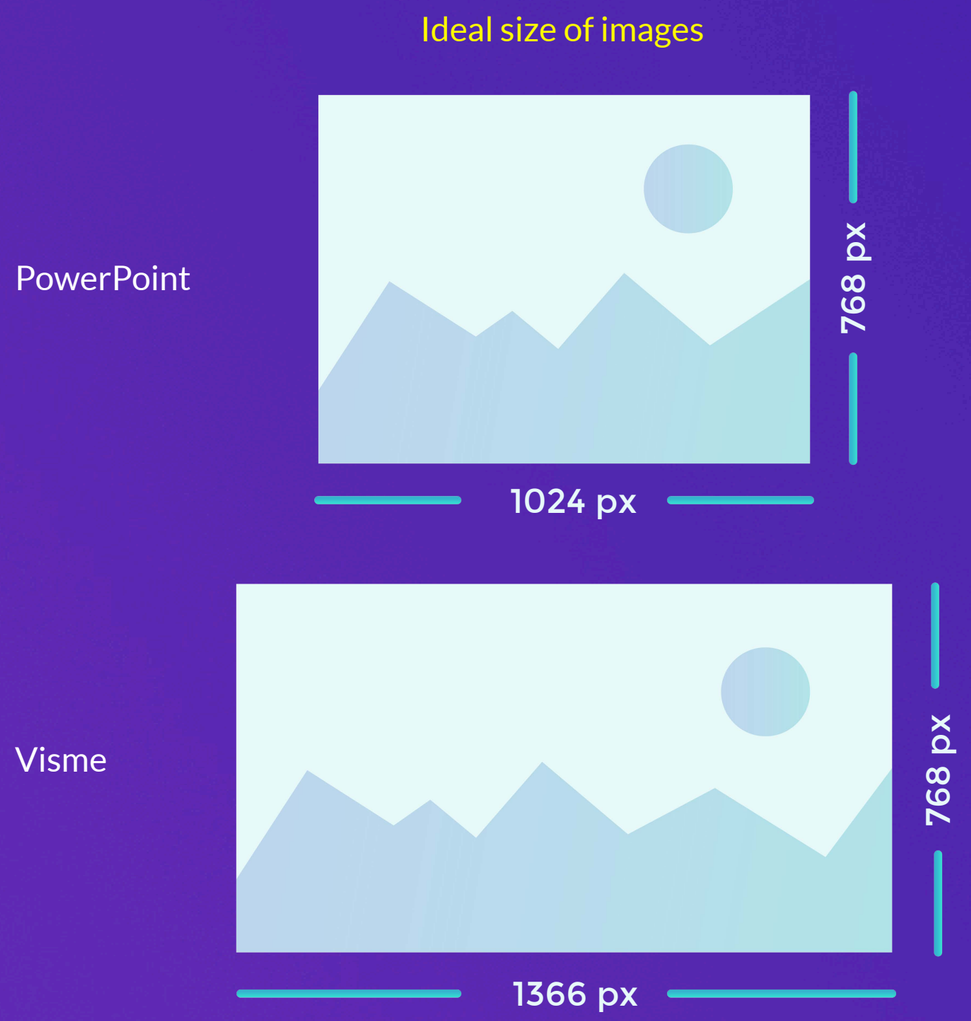
There are times when partial-bleed images may work as well. In this case, some elements, not all, will run off the edge of your slide.

You can then use the blank space to place your text, as is done in this example.

5 USE HIGH-RESOLUTION IMAGES

You can create image-based backgrounds by using high-resolution images that are larger than your slides. This way, you can extend them a bit beyond the edges of your presentation slides.

For example, if you're using PowerPoint, you'll need to find images larger than 1024 x 768 pixels. But if you're using newer presentation tools with a more expansive, cinematic feel like Visme, then you should search for images larger than 1366 x 768 pixels.



Don't distort images

Make sure to never distort your images by stretching them without locking the aspect ratio, which keeps the ratio of the length to the width constant.

DON'T

DO

Use one image per slide.

Also, avoid using several images on a single slide, unless you're creating a collage. In this case, don't make the mistake of placing several tiny images on a slide; instead, frame them nicely and use partial-bleed images, as seen in this example.

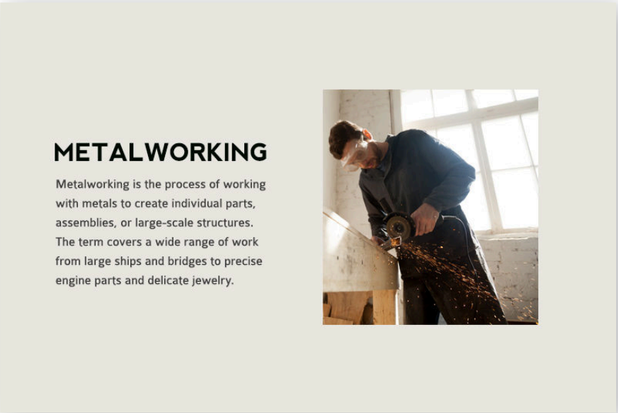
DON'T

DO

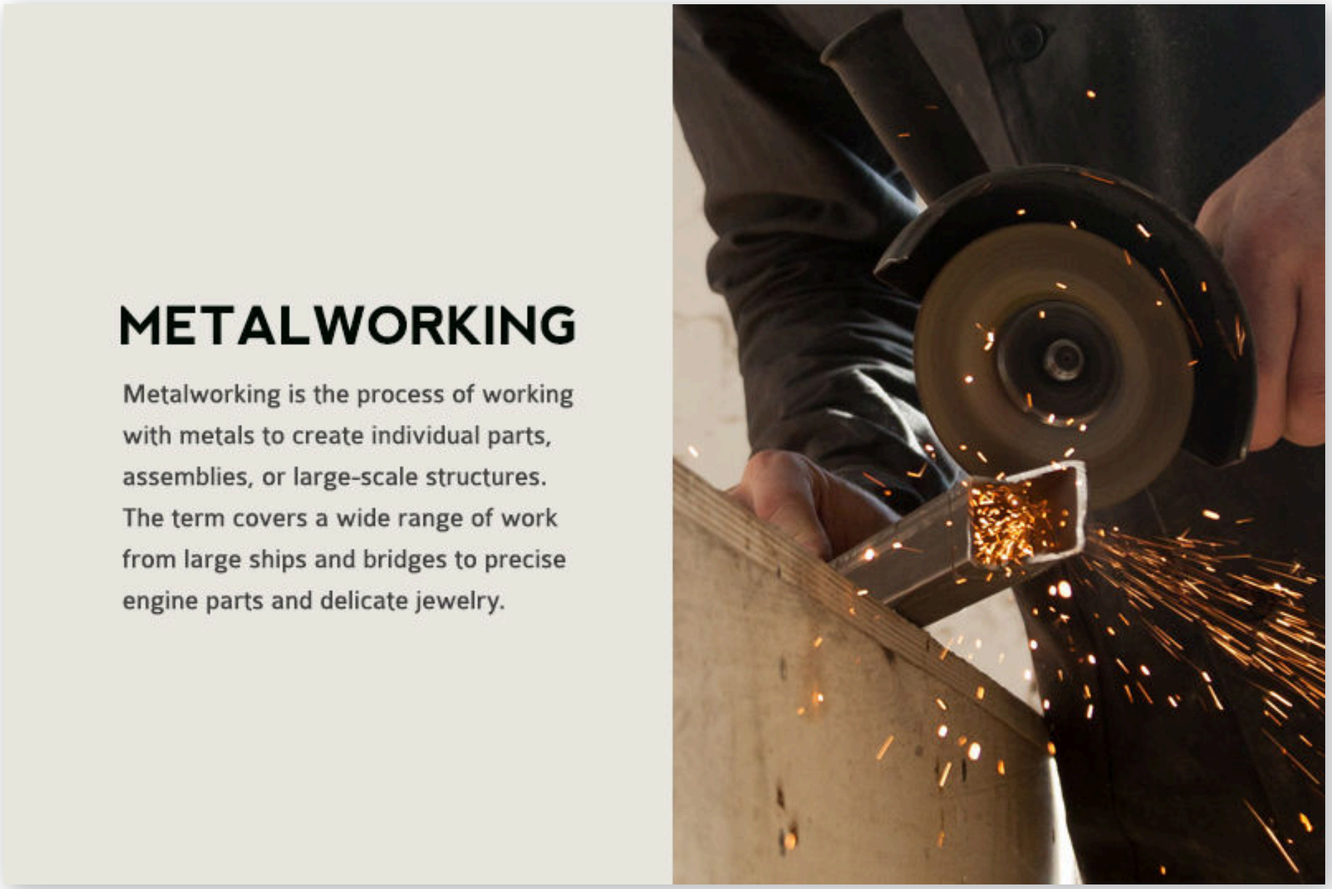
6 CROPPING IMAGES

Another important technique for creating impactful visual slides is cropping. There are times when a mediocre image can be vastly improved by cropping it so that your subject of interest comes into focus.

DON'T



DO



Cropping may also help your image combine more harmoniously with the rest of elements on your slide, as is done in this example.

If you do decide to crop your image, make sure it's large enough so that it can still be used without having to stretch it, which would result in a pixelated image.

DON'T

DO

8 HOW TO COMBINE TEXT WITH IMAGES

Combining text with images is as much an art as it is a science. But there are certain rules you can apply to help you create effective visual slides, even if you don't consider yourself the artistic type.

For starters, look for images with one or more of the following characteristics, which allow you to neatly overlay text without compromising readability:

- **Images with lots of empty space** or uncluttered portions. Landscape images work particularly well for this purpose.

- **Images with blurred sections** where you can place text. This will also help your text "pop" as it clearly delineates the foreground from the background of your slide.

- **Images with elements** that direct the viewer's gaze toward the section where you will place your text. For example, an image with a person looking in the direction of your text will conveniently draw viewers' eyes to your message.

How to Create Visual Balance

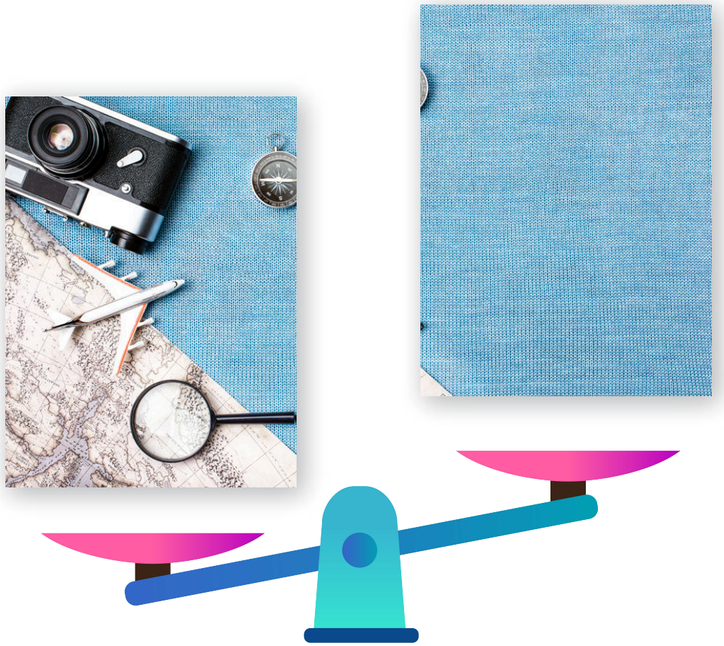
Next, place your text in such a way as to create balance in your overall composition. We will dive more into this later (see Chapter 5), but as a general rule of thumb, you should place elements so that the visual "weight" of each object is counterbalanced by another element of comparable visual interest.

DON'T

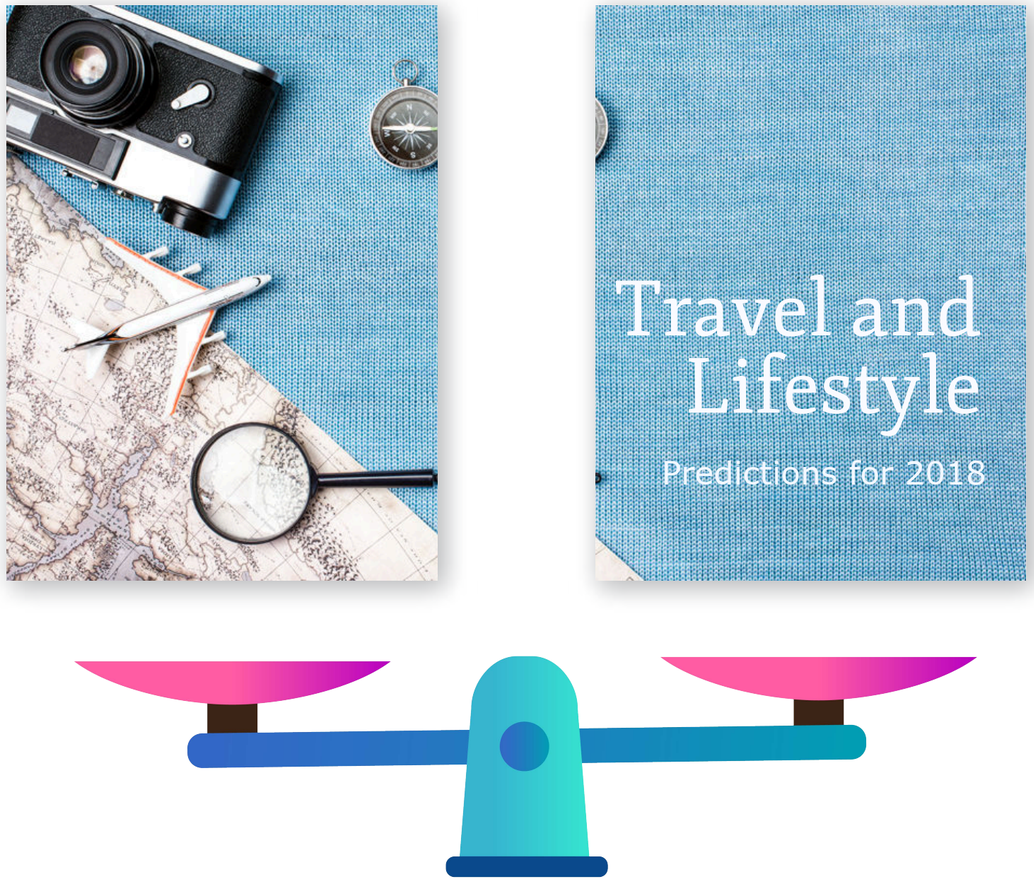
DO

Think of it as balancing a scale: The side with the heavier object will make the scale tip to one side, so you need to place some weight on the other end to keep the two sides on an even keel.

UNBALANCED



BALANCED



How to Marry Images With Text

Another important principle to keep in mind when designing slides is that “the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts.”

This means that each part of your slide should come together to create a meaningful whole to be interpreted quickly and effortlessly by your audience.

To create a harmonious design, make sure to not only use fonts and images with a consistent feel, but also tie elements together by using implied movement created by a line of gaze, as in the previous example, or a color scheme that is drawn from your image, as is done here.

> Another important principle to keep in mind when designing slides is that “the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts.”

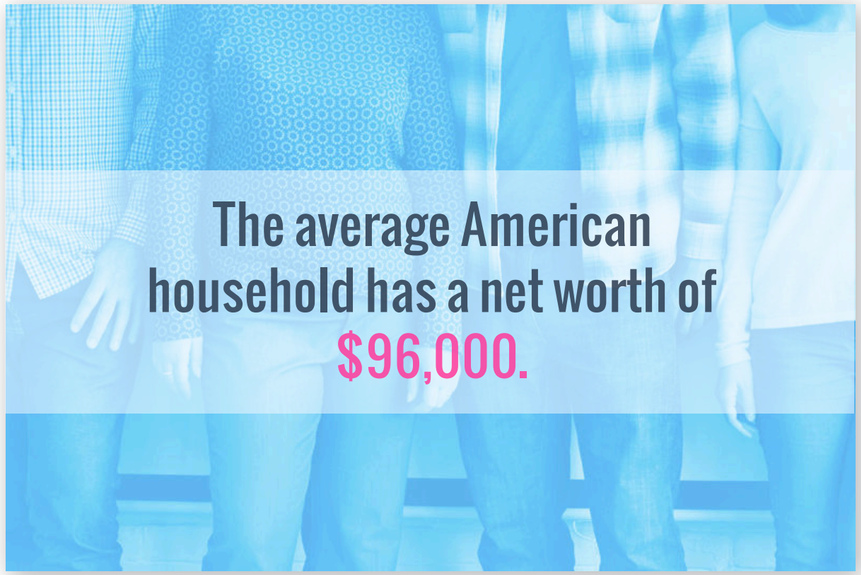
Another technique for seamlessly combining text with images is to use a layered effect, as is done here. See how the text here is weaved into the image so that the two look “married” rather than forced together.

Source

In fact, the placement of text can in itself send a message. For instance, designers often tilt text to create a sense of energy and dynamism, as in this example.

Use Overlays and Shapes

Another trick to help keep your text readable is to use overlays. These can come in a variety of styles, such as rectangles, circles or any other geometric shape with a degree of transparency to let some of your background come through. You can also use solid shapes to frame your text, without interfering with any meaningful visual elements in the background.



Ditch the bullet points.

Start creating stunning visual presentations.

Try It for Free

How to Choose the Perfect Colors

1 THE MEANING OF COLORS

Colors speak volumes all on their own. Color is so powerful, in fact, that it can improve learning by up to 75 percent and increase comprehension on a subject by up to 73 percent. While warm colors communicate energy, optimism and enthusiasm, cool colors send a message of dependability, professionalism and peace.

Within these categories, each color is associated with an emotion or concept, depending on the cultural context (while red can mean passion and love in the West, in China, it is associated with prosperity).

According to Smashing Magazine, some of the most common associations made in the West include:

power sophistication mystery death	hope simplicity cleanliness goodness purity	love passion romance danger energy
intellect friendliness warmth caution cowardice	peace sincerity confidence integrity tranquility	authority maturity security stability
life growth nature money freshness	innovation creativity thinking ideas	royalty luxury wisdom dignity

2 HOW TO COMBINE COLORS

Now that we've gone through the basics of the color wheel, we can go through the process for creating different color combinations. To do this, we must first learn the different classifications of colors, depending on their placement on the color wheel.

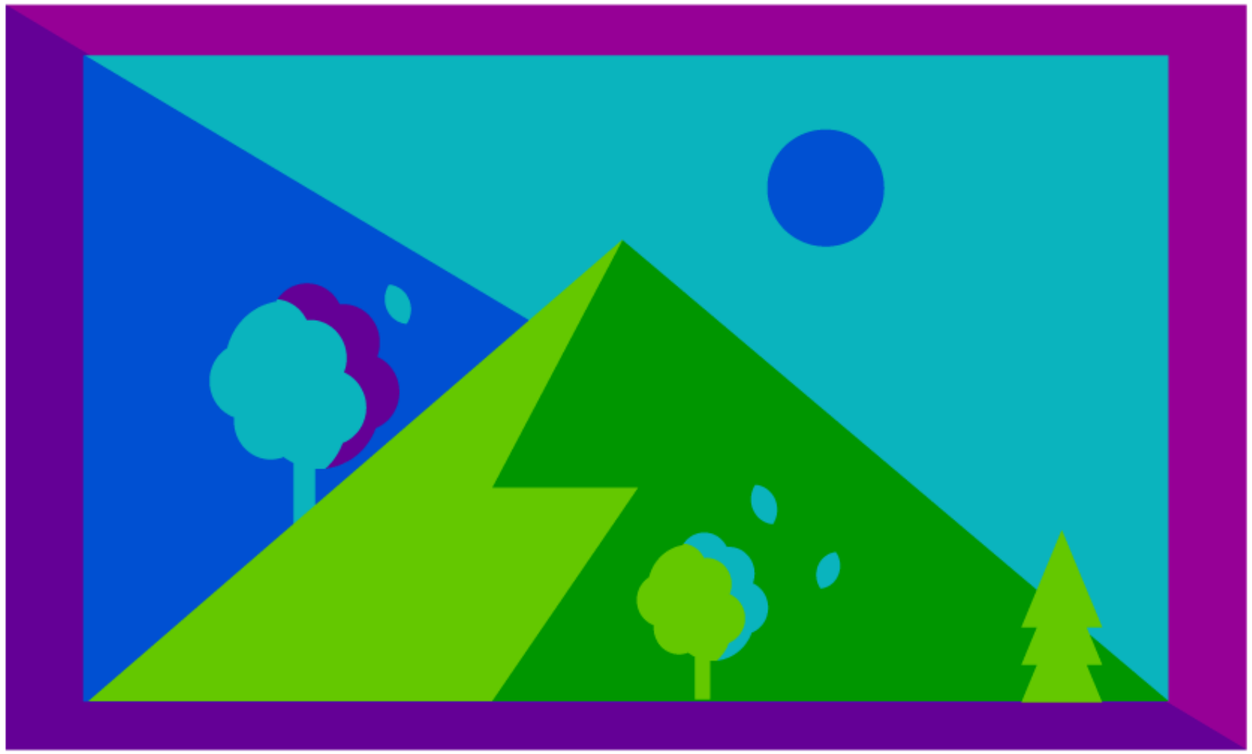
Warm Colors

For example, the warm colors on the wheel are the reds, oranges and yellows:

Source

Cool Colors

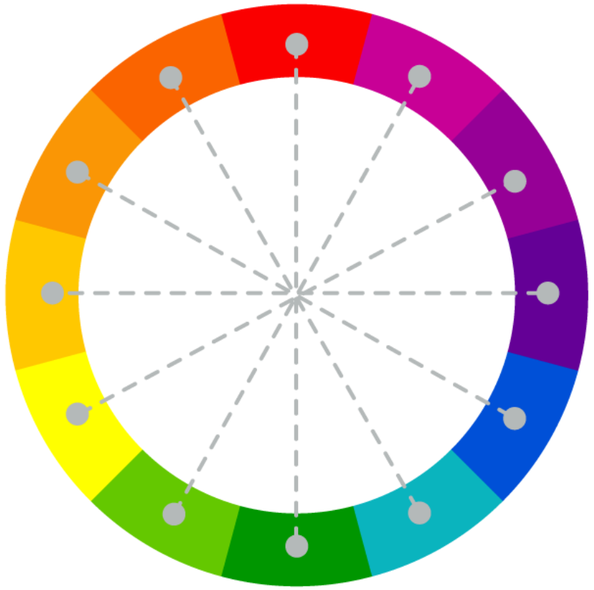
On the opposite side are the cool colors: the greens, blues and violets:

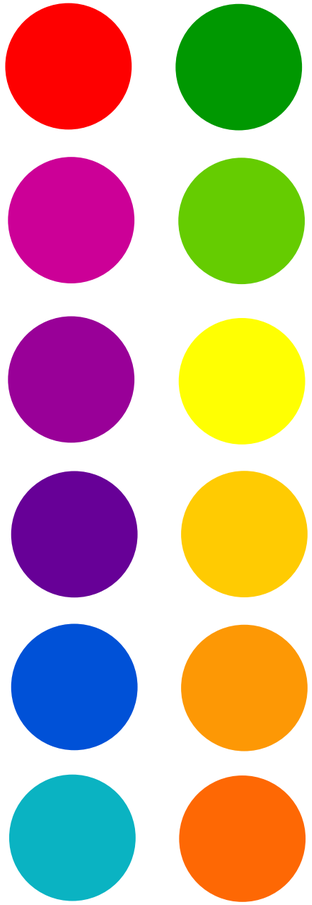


Source

Complementary Colors

To create complementary color combinations, you must select two colors that sit opposite each other—such as a warm color like orange and a cool color like blue:



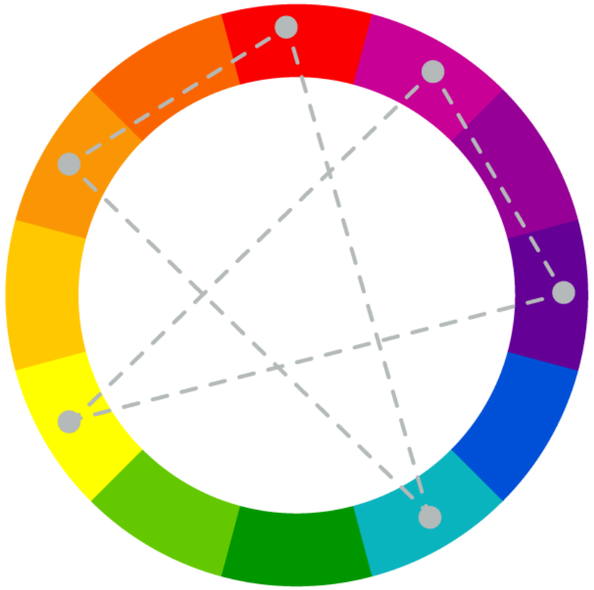


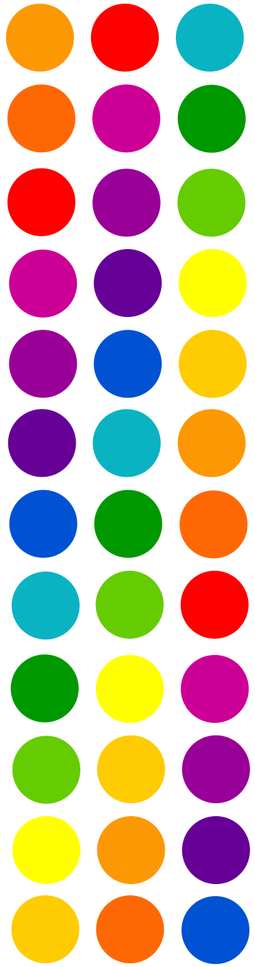
Examples of Complementary Colors

Source

Split Complementary Colors

To create complementary color combinations, you must select two colors that sit opposite each other, such as a warm color like orange and a cool color like blue:



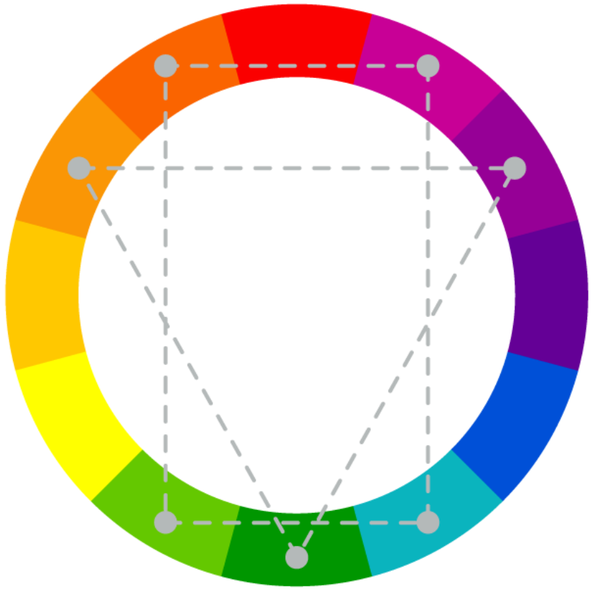


Examples of Split Complementary Colors

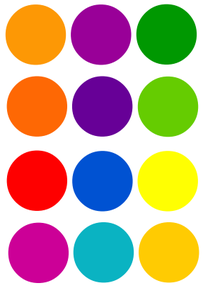
Source

Triads and Tetradic Color Combinations

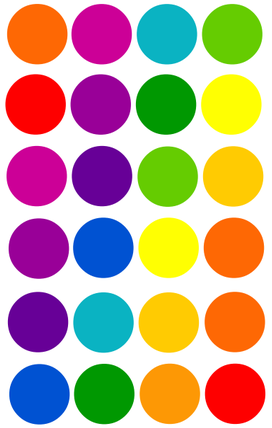
These color schemes use geometric shapes to choose and combine three or four different hues from the color wheel:



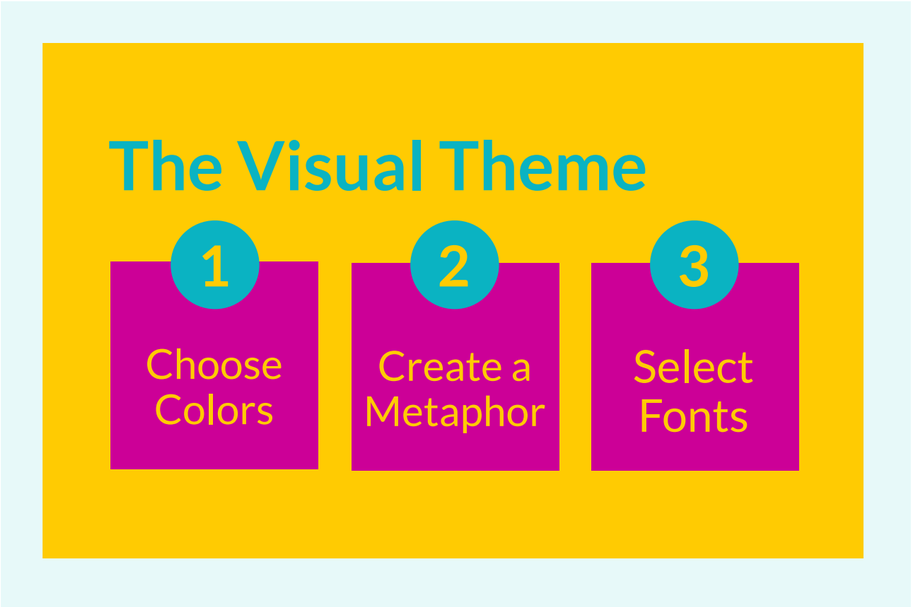
Triads



Tetradic



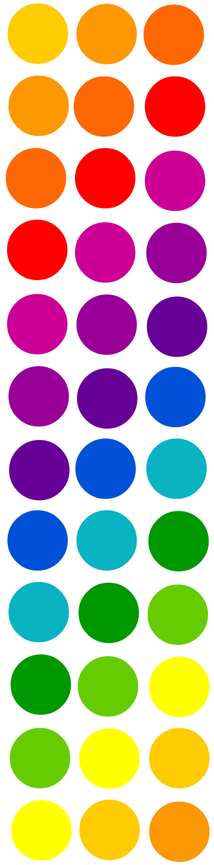
Examples of Triad Colors



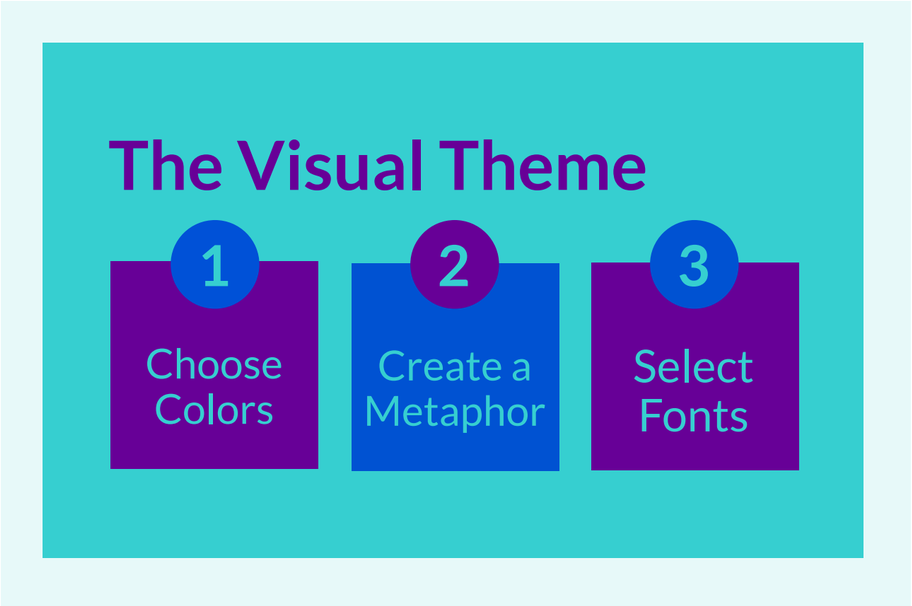
Source

Analogous Colors

These colors sit next to each other on the color wheel:



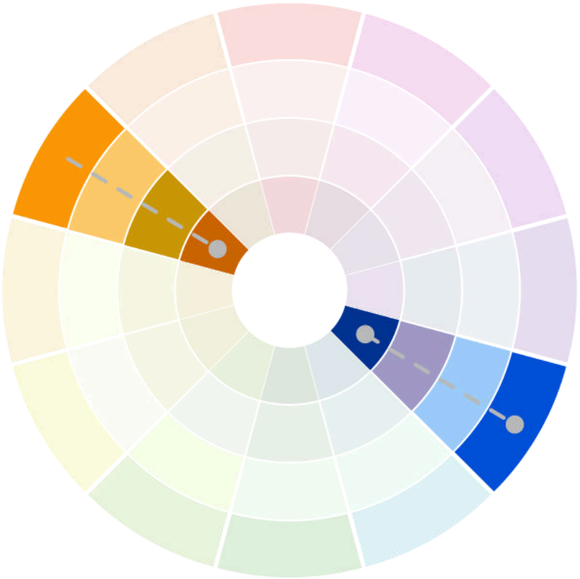
Examples of Analogous Colors



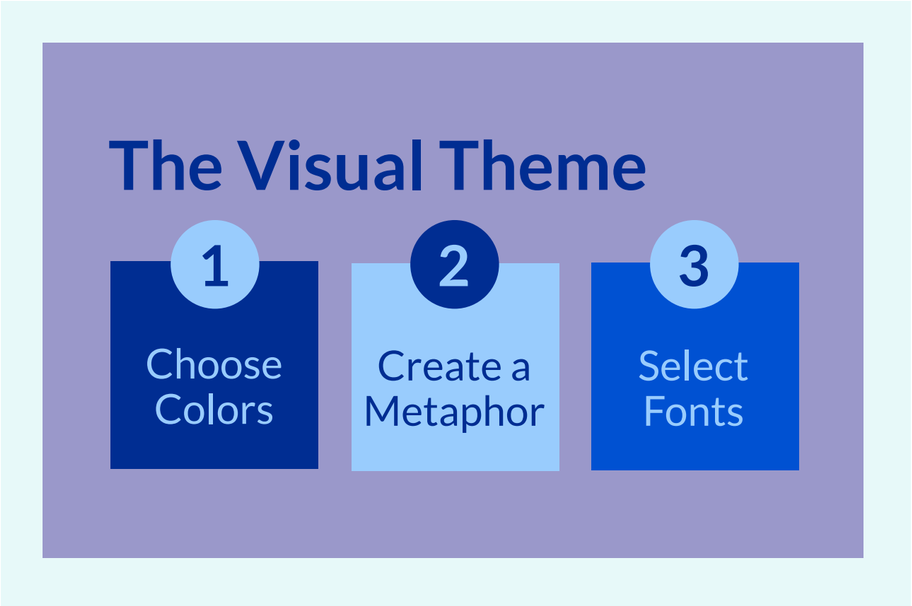
Source

Monochromatic Colors:

This type of color combination is made up of different tints, tones and shades of the same hue:



Examples of Monochromatic Colors

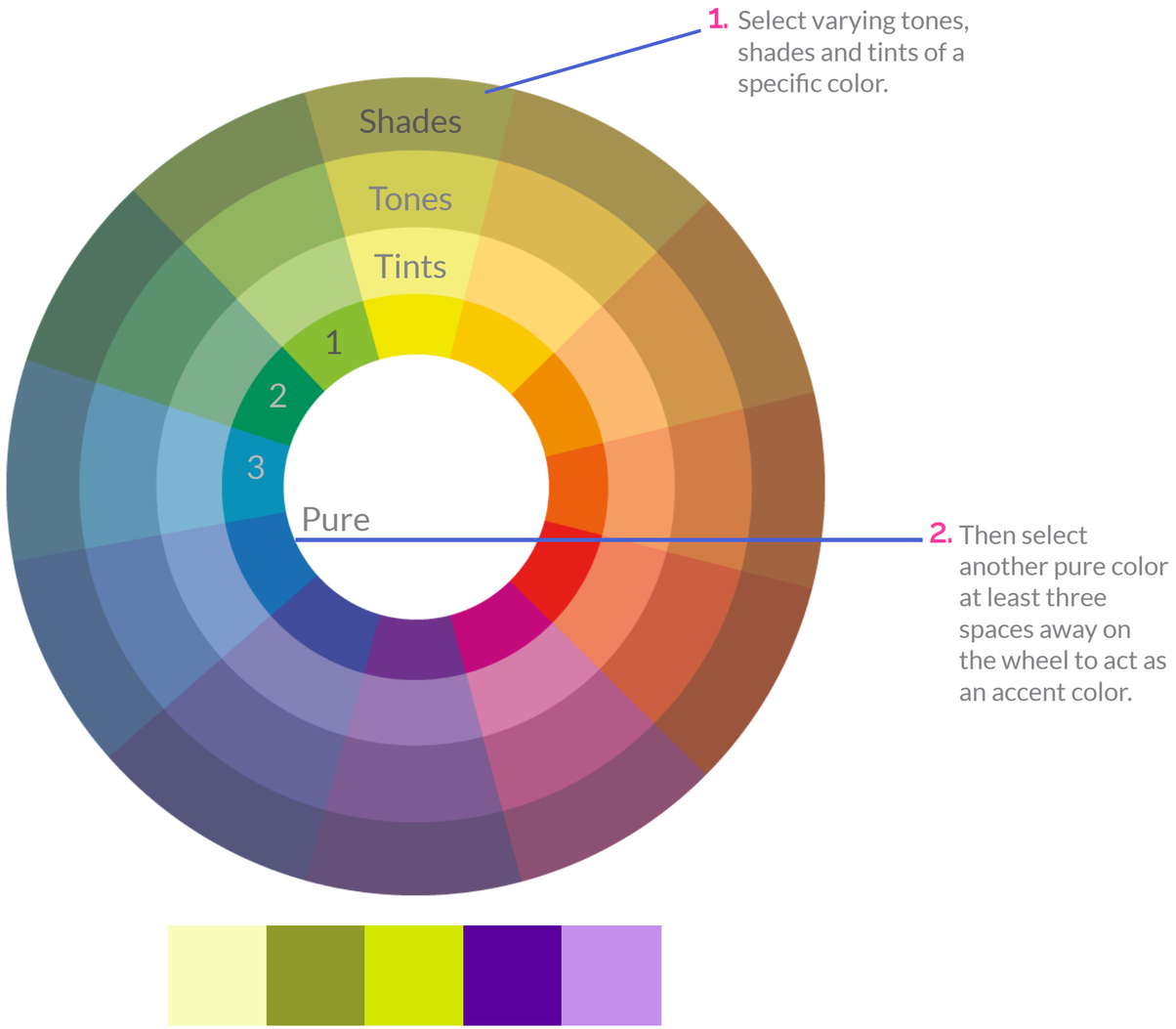


Source

2 HOW TO CHOOSE THE IDEAL COLOR SCHEME

It's important to create **high contrast** to achieve the highest impact possible. Contrast is not simply about choosing different colors but selecting those that will create the most visual interest when placed side by side.
An easy but effective way to create your own high-contrast color scheme is to select varying tones, shades and tints of a specific color (not the pure hue) and then select another pure color at least three spaces away on the wheel to act as an accent color.

If you're interested in learning more about how to create your own color schemes, you can read more about it here.



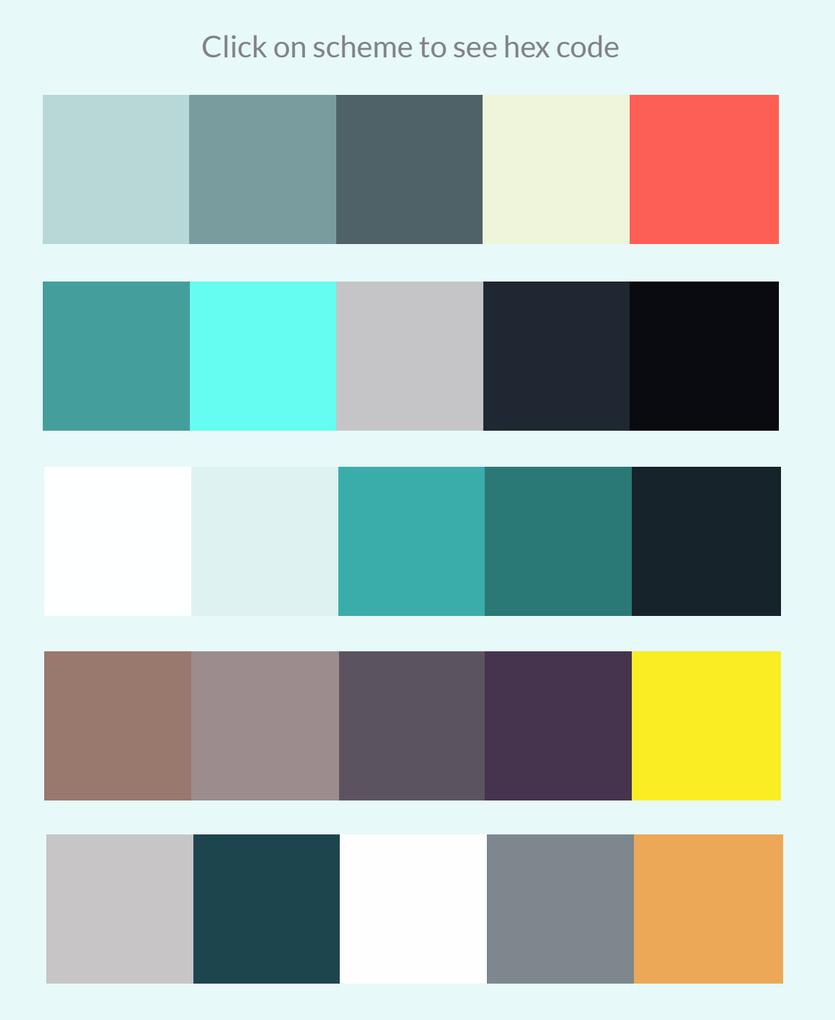
Source

Color Scheme Tools

If you don't have time to create your own color schemes, there are plenty of free color scheme generators such as:

- Adobe Color CC
- Coolors.co
- Paletton

Here are a few color schemes automatically generated by these tools:



Keep It Simple

You've probably heard this before, but when it comes to design, less is usually more. Try to keep it simple and don't use too many colors. In general, three to four colors is sufficient for a presentation.

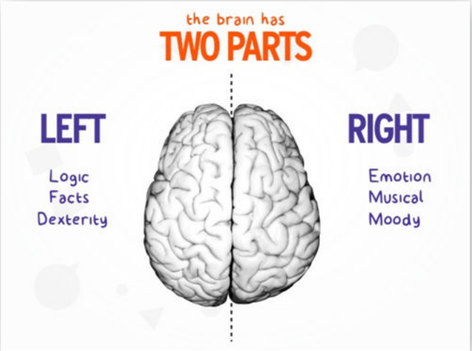
The 60-30-10 Rule

An easy way to create a balanced slide deck is to stick to the 60-30-10 rule.

This means that if you've chosen three colors, as recommended previously, then you should devote 60 percent of the space to the primary color, 30 percent to the secondary and 10 percent to the accent color.

Spread Content Out

Another simple rule is to spread your content out into bite-sized morsels throughout your presentation so that it is as easy to digest as possible.
Long gone are the days when you used to create presentations with 10 or 15 slides. Nowadays, engaging presentations that can be viewed in less than 3 minutes consist of 50 to 60 slides. Why? Because the lower the slide count, the more information you've probably crammed into each slide. On the other hand, the higher the slide count, the more visuals and the less words you've probably used to explain each concept.



Source

How to Create Your Own Palettes

One designer's secret for finding just the right color scheme for your presentation is to use one of the color scheme tools listed here to create vivid color palettes from your favorite photos.

All you have to do is upload an image with a color scheme that evokes the emotions you're going for and then save the hex color codes generated by the tool.

For example, we chose this image because of the way the colors convey calmness and warmth:

The tool Coolors then generated this color scheme for us:

And this is how it looks on a slide:

Adjusting the Color of Your Images

Sometimes stock photography suffers from a lack of contrast or unnatural lighting. If you feel the subject of the photo doesn't have enough "pop," you can play with the contrast and color to add visual interest and improve your image. This is also a great way to make the overall presentation style cohesive by matching the levels of color and contrast.

BEFORE

AFTER

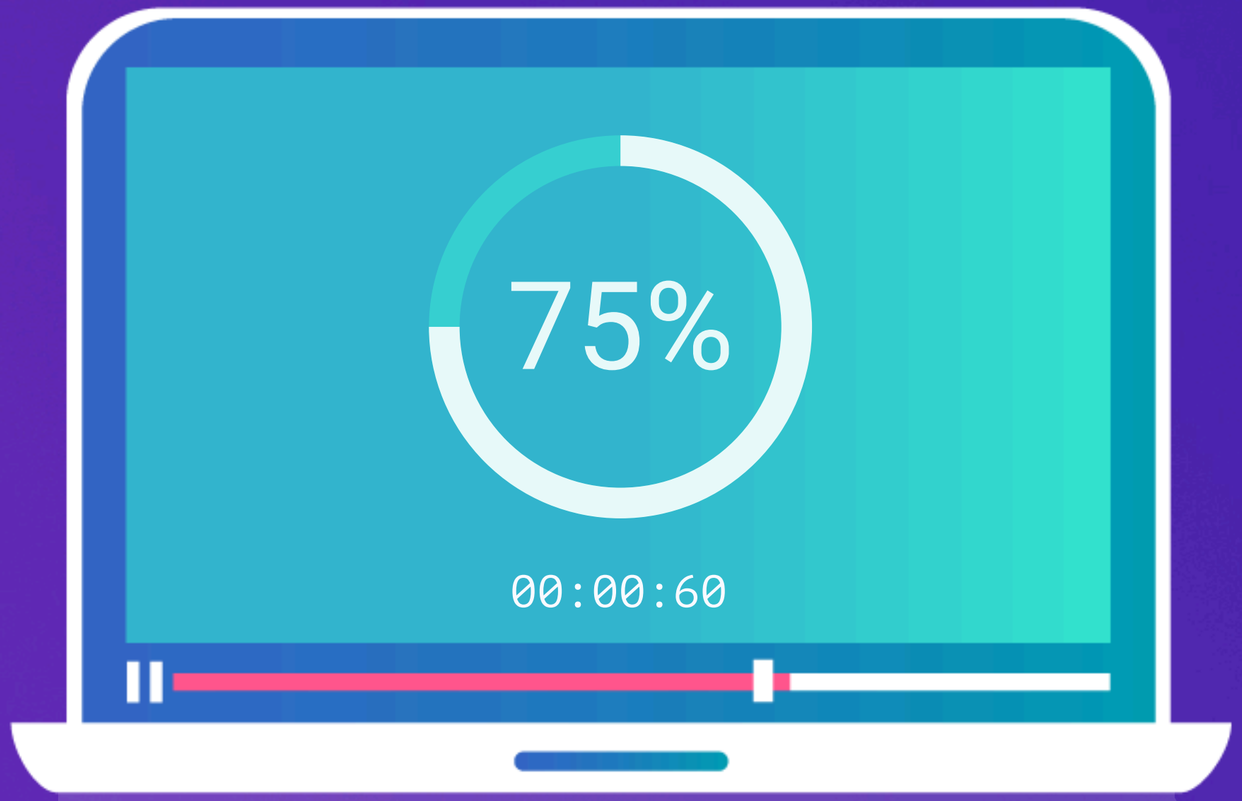
How to Use Video in Your Presentation

1 KEEP YOUR CLIPS SHORT

Video used sparingly and wisely in your slide deck can go a long way in creating just the right mood for your presentation or driving your point home. Consider how the legendary Steve Jobs used video in almost every presentation.

But to keep your audience engaged, make sure your clips are between 30 and 60 seconds long, as 75% of viewers will watch a video of up to one minute in its entirety.

Also, avoid making the common mistake of leaving your presentation in order to open your video in a separate window. Instead, seamlessly incorporate your video into your slide deck by embedding it into the presentation, which you can easily do in newer online presentation tools such as Visme.



2 USE AUTHENTIC VIDEOS

According to keynote speaker Carmine Gallo, authentic videos used in marketing, sales or business presentations are often more effective than highly polished corporate videos.

For example, you can use a video that shows how a real customer engages with your product. Or, instead of just displaying quotes on slides, you can use snippets from various interviews to help your audience connect with your message.

Example of an authentic video showing a customer interacting with a product.

Here are a few options for using video in presentations:

- Testimonials
- Case Studies
- Interviews
- Event videos
- Corporate culture videos
- Behind-the-scene videos

Example of a behind-the-scenes video showing how a brand's products are made.

3 HOW TO USE FULL-SCREEN VIDEO

As with images, videos are the most impactful when viewed in full-screen mode. Instead of using only a fraction of the space on your slide for your video, why not extend your video slightly beyond the margins of your slide so that your audience can fully appreciate it?

In a recent keynote presentation, marketing guru Seth Godin filled the entire space of a slide with this video to humorously make the point that it pays off to work smarter, not harder.

You can also use video backgrounds in the form of cinemagraphs, which are still images with a subtle and repeating movement. But be careful not to overdo it—any movement should reinforce your message, not distract from it.

For example, you can use these eye-catching cinemagraphs with very subtle movement to keep your audience engaged and draw their attention to your message or create just the right mood for your presentation.

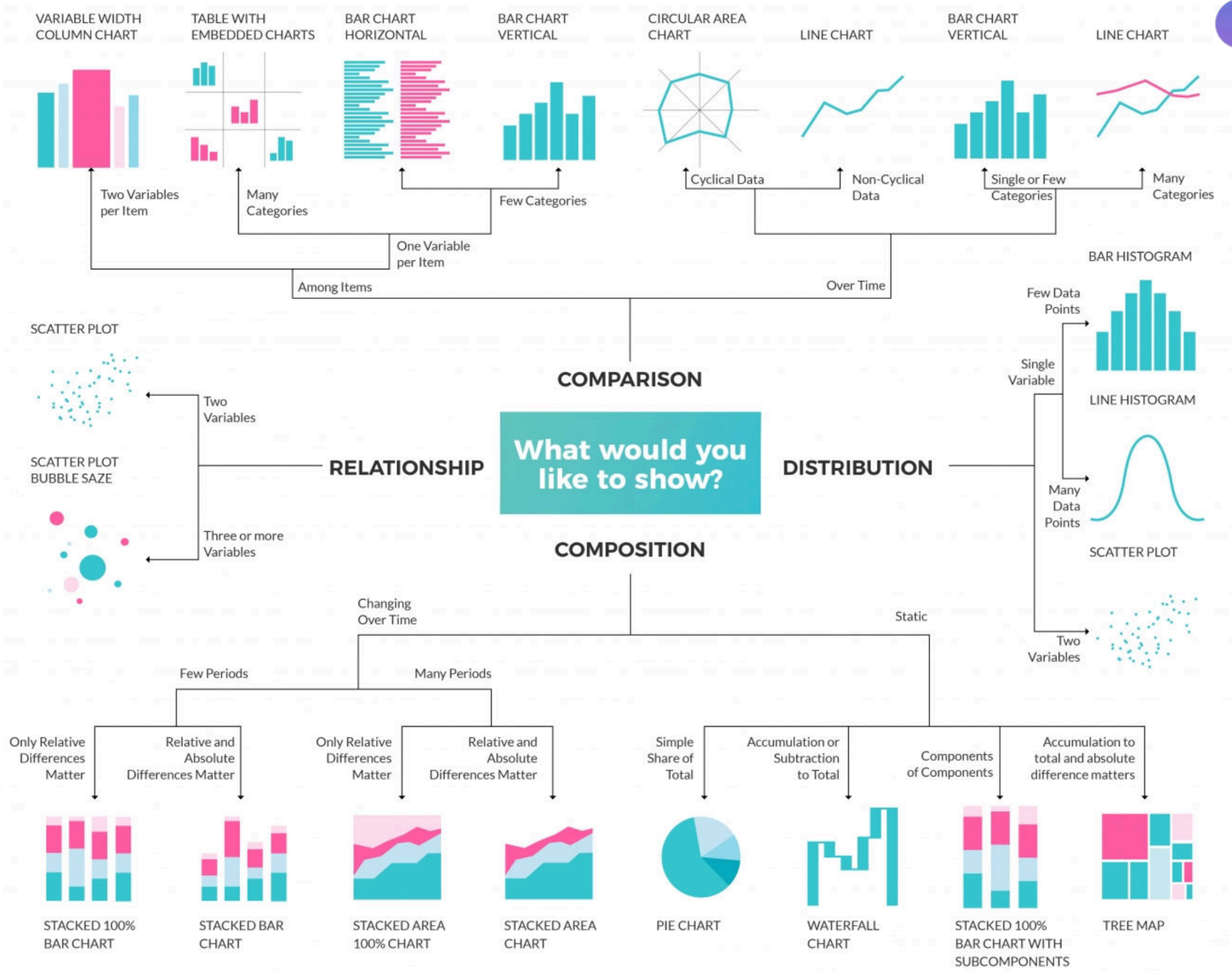
You can create your own cinemagraphs with online tools such as Flixel or Plotagraph.

How to Create Effective Charts

The process of creating effective and persuasive charts is a dense topic all on its own and can fill an entire book, but in this section, we'll cover the basics to get you started.

Similar to the steps followed in the first part of this book to find the key message of your presentation, you should first put your ideas down on paper before rushing to choose the type of chart you think would work best.

Once you've defined what you want your audience to know, you can match some of these keywords to different types of charts, summarized in this handy cheat sheet.



Source

Make Your Key Point Stand Out

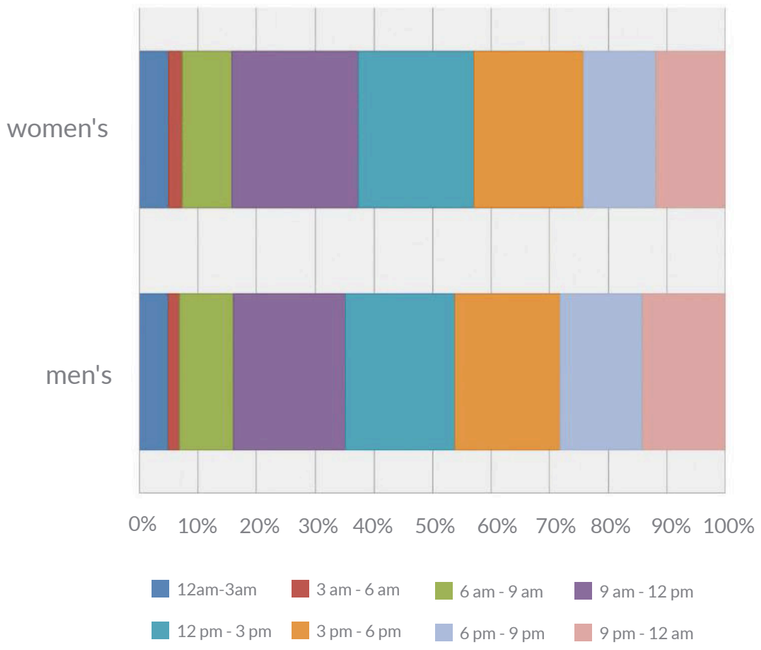
Any seasoned communicator will tell you that the key to getting a message across is to first figure out what you want to say and then convey that in a clear and concise manner. The same goes for charts and graphs.

Randy Krum, author of the book Cool Infographics, advises to "use color to highlight the insight." For each element in your chart, ask yourself: "Do I need this to communicate my key message?" If the answer is no, then consider eliminating it.

1 Ask yourself, "Can this be summarized?" If certain details are not essential, then consider summarizing certain elements by grouping them into broader categories.

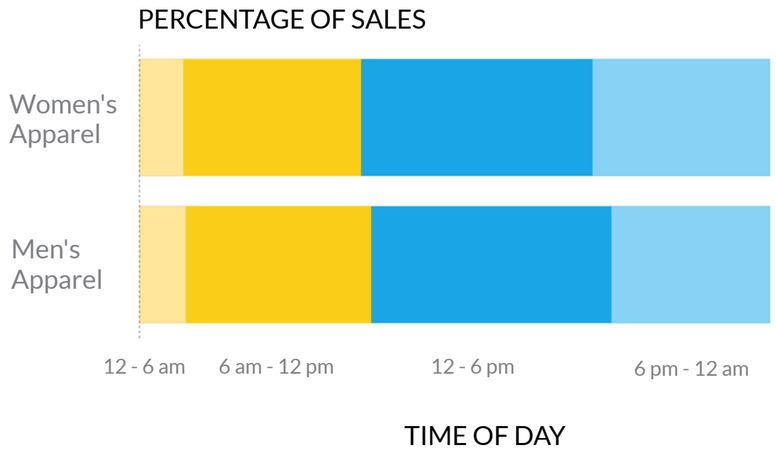
BEFORE

When do people buy on our website?



AFTER

WHEN DO PEOPLE BUY ON OUR WEBSITE?

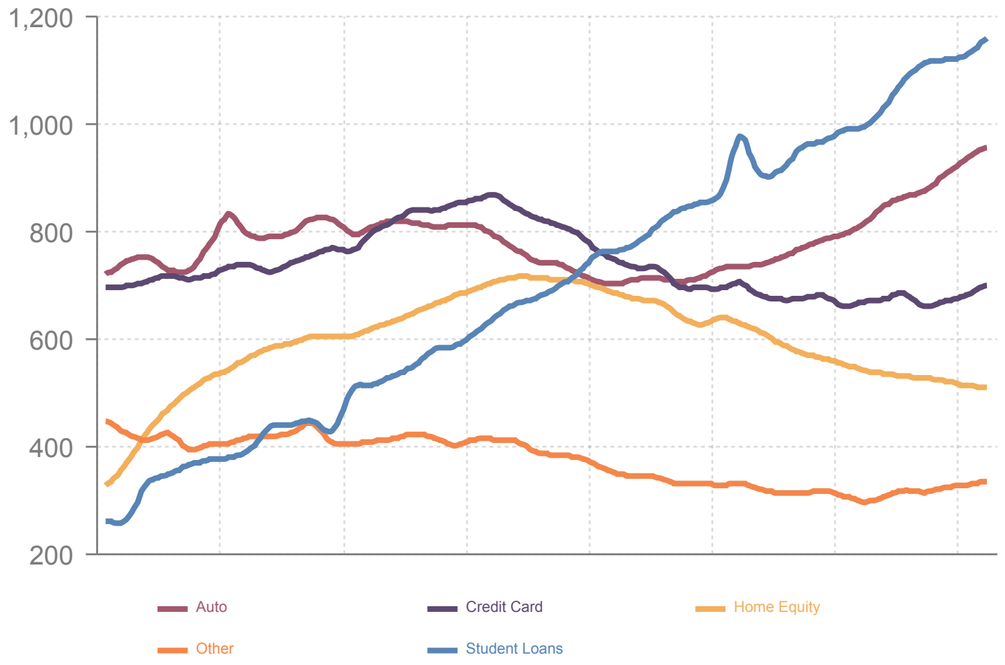


Source: Good Charts

2 Next, push all chart elements to the background by applying a light grey color. Then go through the most important of these elements, and use different design techniques to make them stand out, such as making the size bigger, making certain lines thicker, applying color, adding data explainers or labels, among others.

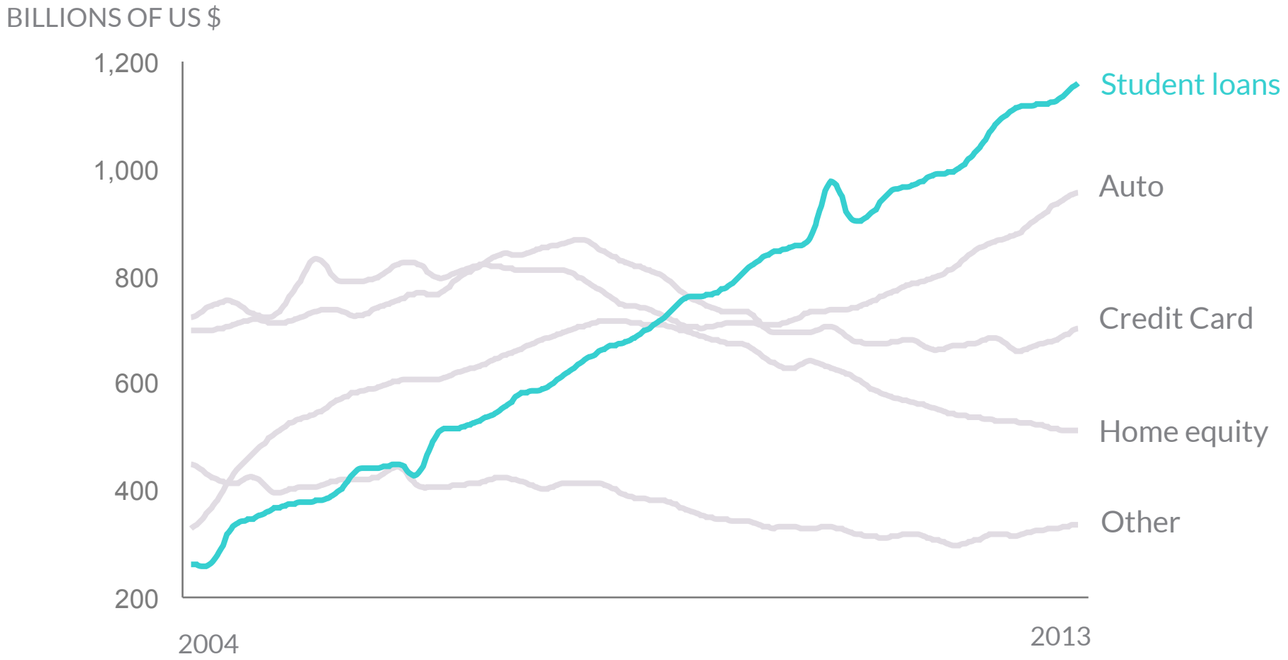
BEFORE

Non-Mortgage Debt Outstanding



AFTER

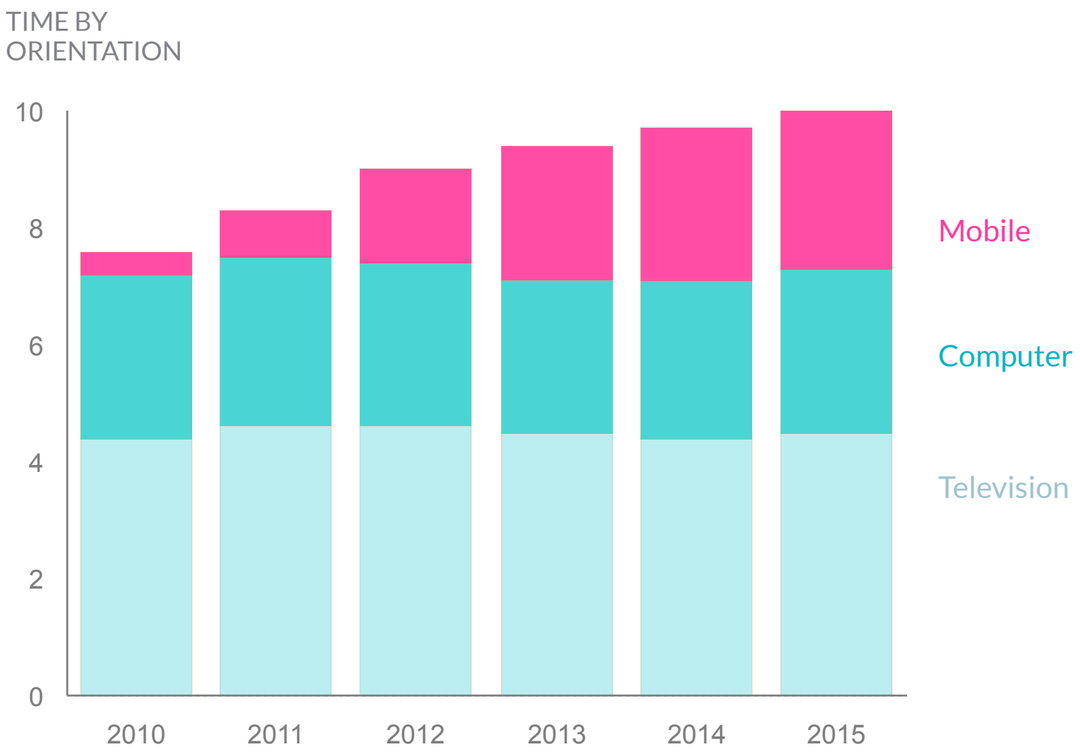
NON-MORTGAGE DEBT OUTSTANDING



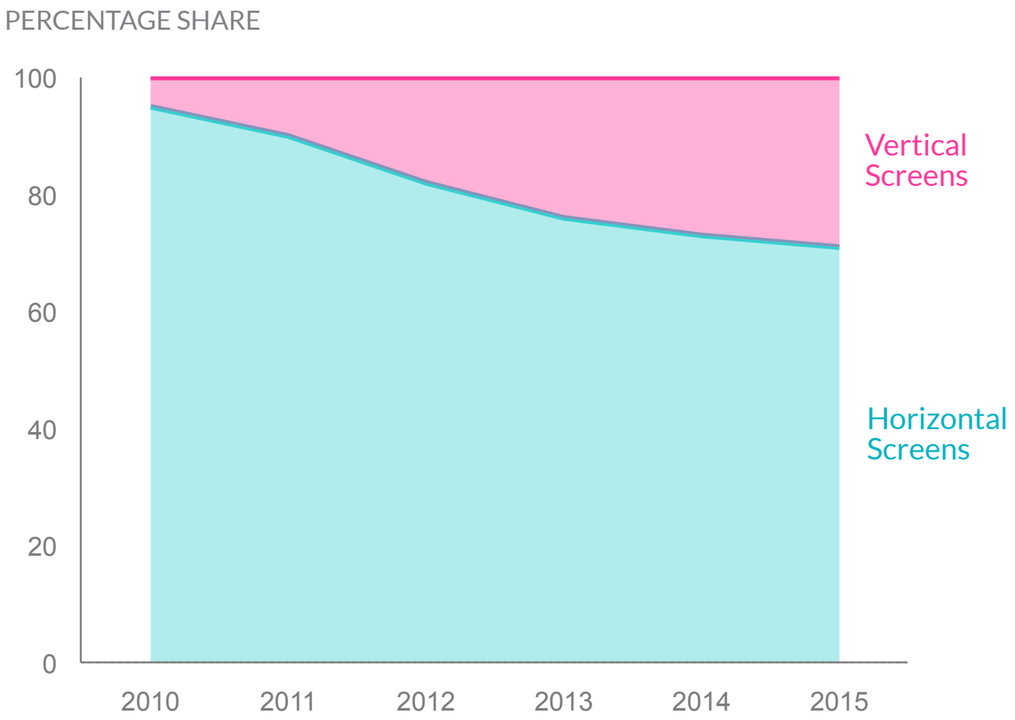
Source: Good Charts

3 Use only two to three colors to highlight the most important points. Use grey for the rest of information.

SCREEN TIME IN THE U.S.



TIME BY ORIENTATION

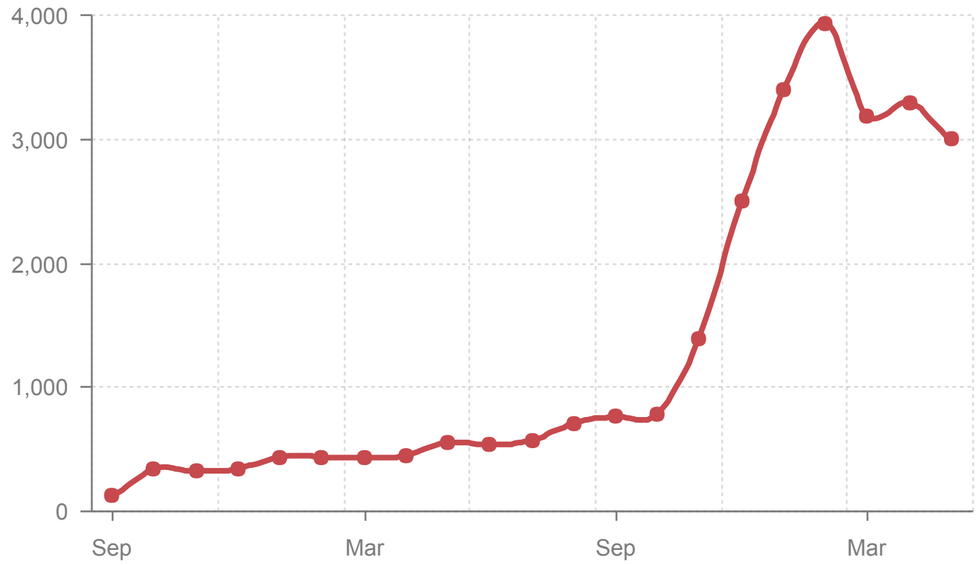


Source: Good Charts

4 When possible, do away with chart gridlines and borders.

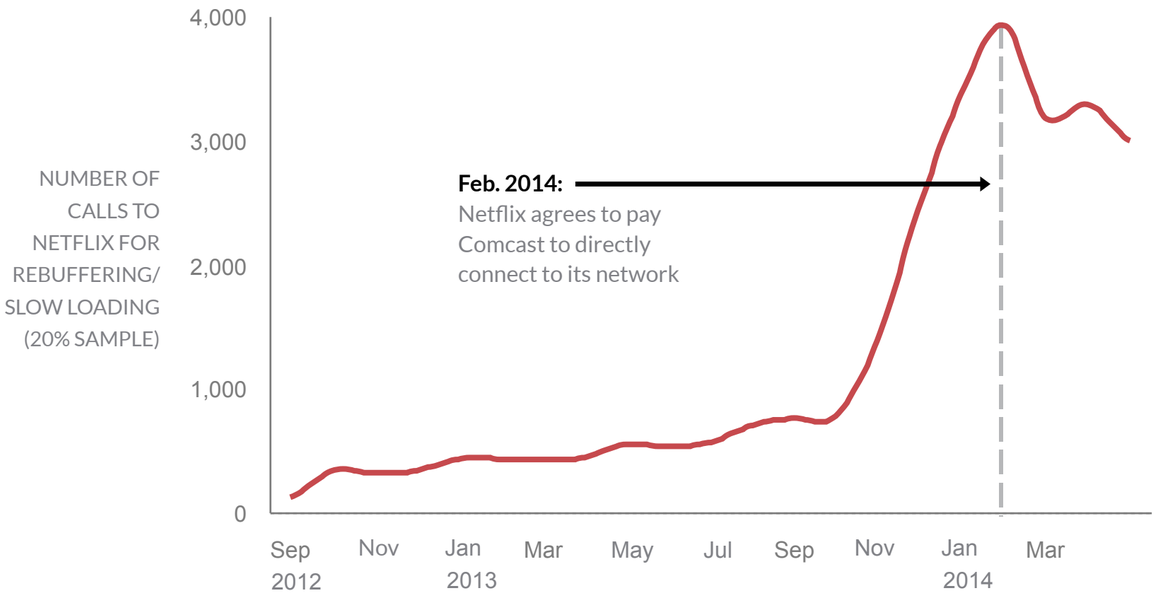
BEFORE

Slow Comcast Speeds Were Costing Netflix Customers



AFTER

SLOW COMCAST SPEEDS WERE COSTING NETFLIX CUSTOMERS

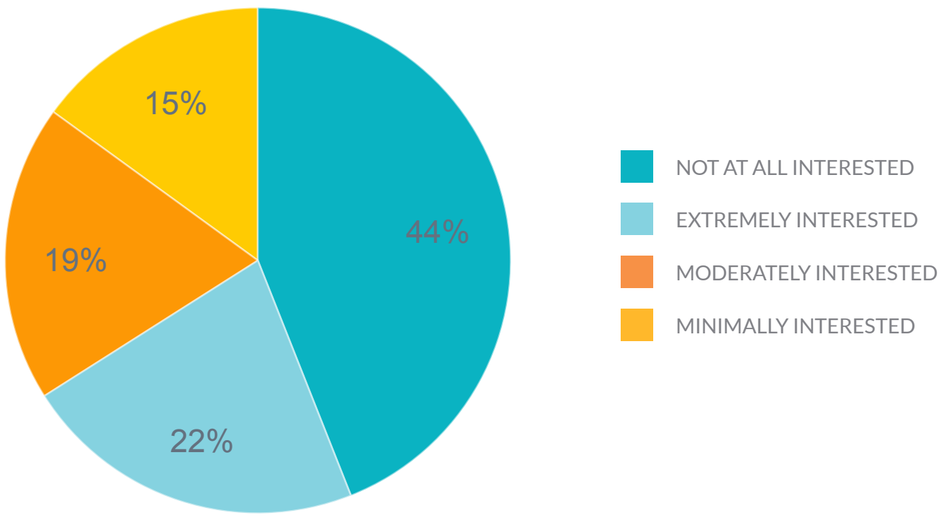


Source: Good Charts

5 In order to limit eye movement from one end of the chart to another, eliminate legends when possible and instead label segments, lines or bars directly.

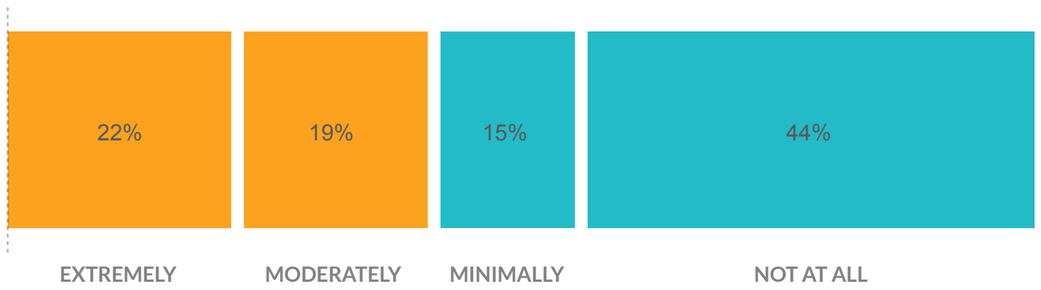
BEFORE

How Interested Are You In This Product?



AFTER

HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN THIS PRODUCT?



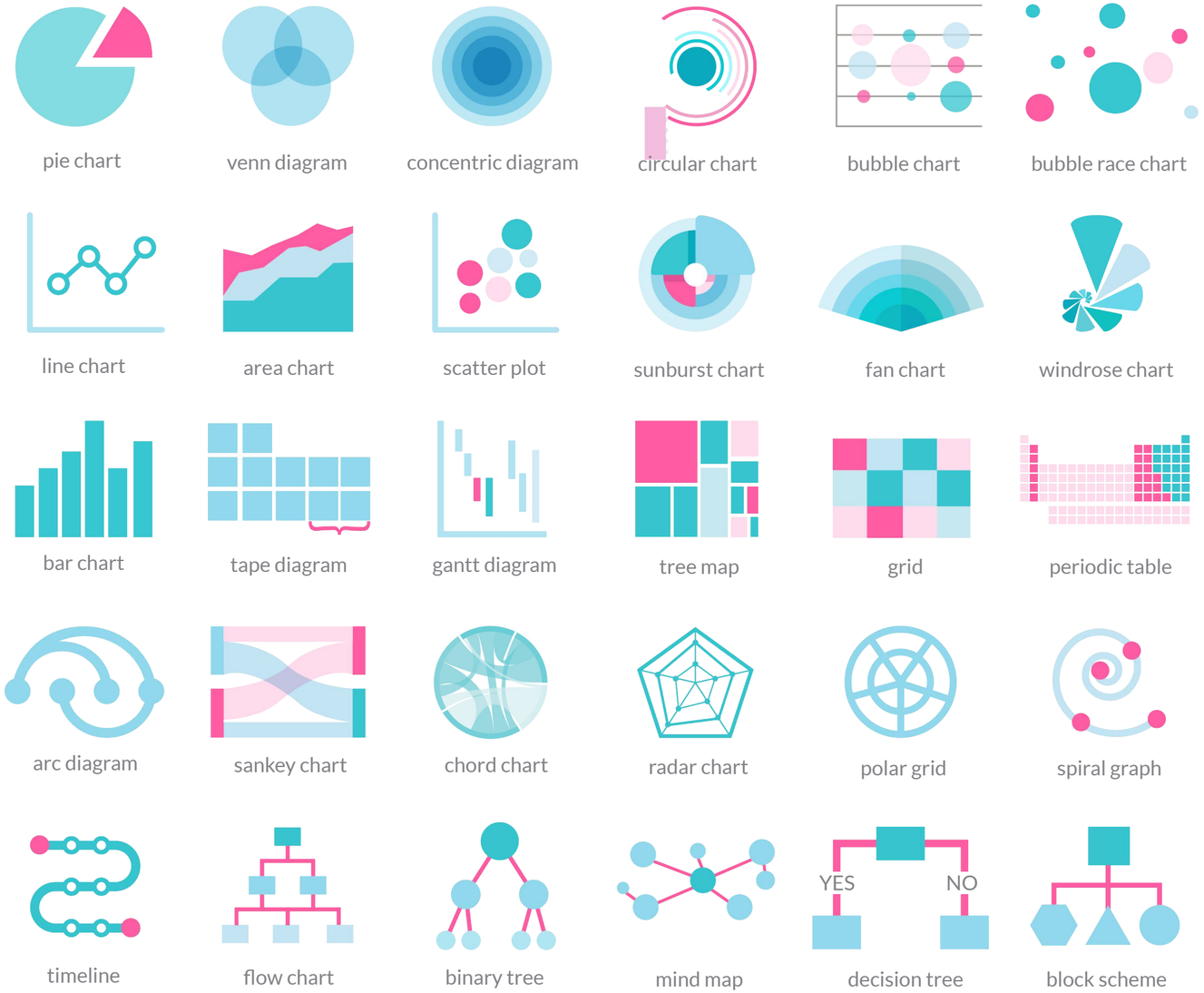
Source: Good Charts

Types of Diagrams

Charts and graphs with numerical data are not the only way to visualize information. You can also use conceptual diagrams to illustrate an idea or process.

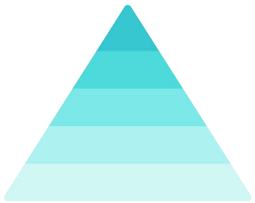
Here are four categories of diagrams you can browse through to inspire you in the process of creating your own visual slides.

CHARTS & DIAGRAMS

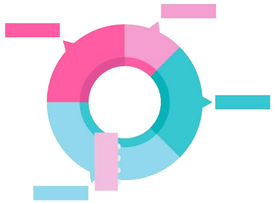


Source

ABSTRACT ANALOGIES

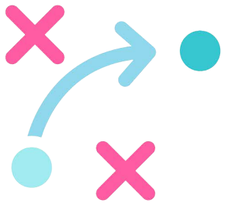

pyramid

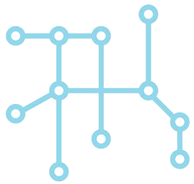
funnel


spoke wheel

cycle wheel

staircase

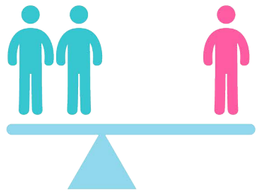

game strategy sketch


subway map

speedometer chart

gears

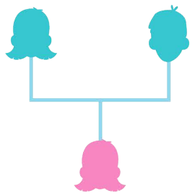
ferris wheel

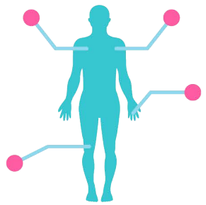

lever

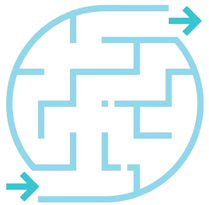
scales

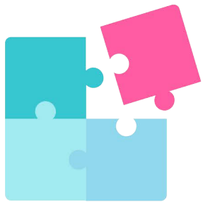
map

Ishikawa diagram


genealogy tree


anatomy


maze

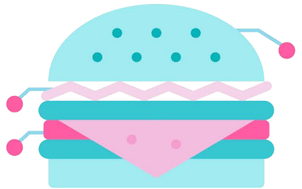

puzzle

ANALOGIES

iceberg

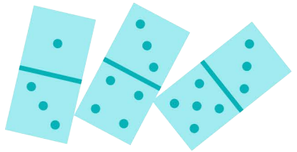
mountain

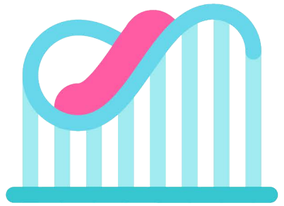
layers of the onion


sandwich

solar system

clock face

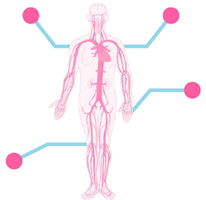

domino effect


roller coaster

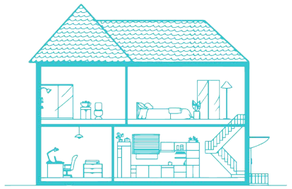
experiment

root

tree


circulatory system

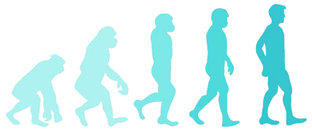
ALLEGORIES



life of a household

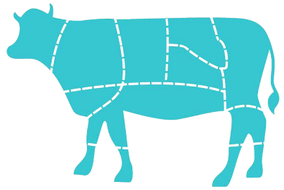
life of a city

marathon

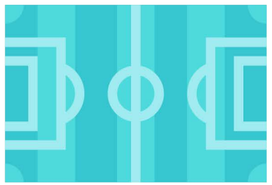


evolution

food chain



meat cuts



the playing field

factory

tool set

conveyor belt

road

the machine

Putting It All Together

Now that you have all the different visual elements you need to create your own visually captivating presentation, it's time to combine everything into one harmonious design.

While you probably don't have time to learn all the theory behind every design principle, you can take a few minutes to get a quick overview of the most important concepts, which you can apply to almost any design, not just presentations.

> Good design, when it's done well, becomes invisible. It's only when it's done poorly that we notice it.

Jared Spool

How to Create Visual Hierarchy

The goal of a good visual design is to orient viewers' eyes in a specific direction.

The first step to doing this is creating a visual entry point into your design using a focal point. Then, you can provide a path for your viewers' eyes to follow by applying other rules such as visual hierarchy principles, which are used to organize design elements in order of importance.

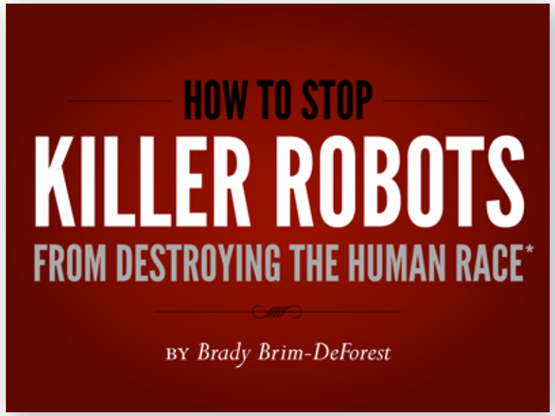
This slide, for instance, does just this by varying certain characteristics, such as size, contrast, color, typography and spacing. Even a viewer not trained in graphic design can tell that the focal point is the penguin, and that viewers' eyes are then drawn to the words "stand out," followed by the rest of the text.

Source

Here are some ways you can apply visual hierarchy principles to your design to reinforce the main points of your message and guide your viewers through a visual story in the form of a slide.

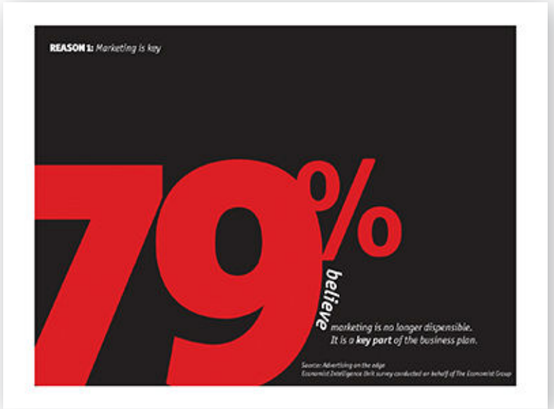
1 SIZE OBJECTS ACCORDING TO IMPORTANCE

One way to indicate the relative importance of elements is to adjust their scale. The most important elements are usually larger and more prominent than less important ones.
In an effective design, all elements shouldn't have the same visual weight; if so, they would all be competing for attention and the viewer wouldn't know where to look first.
This series of slides, for instance, uses oversized text to create a dramatic effect and quickly draw attention to the main message.



Source

Source

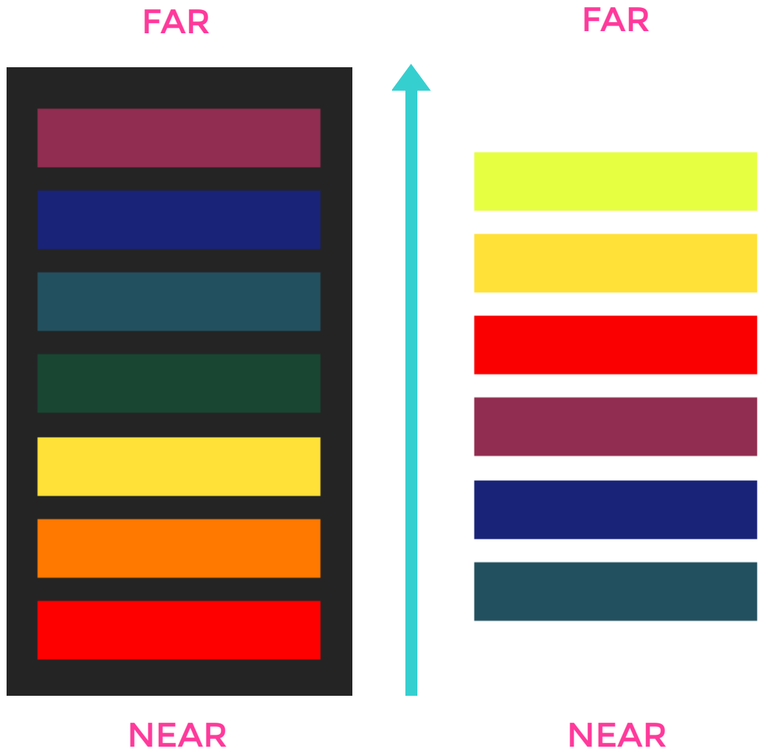


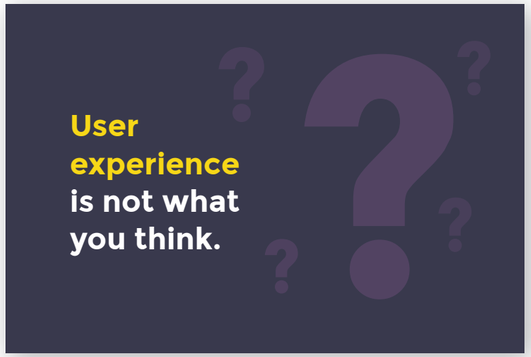
2 CREATE AN ILLUSION OF DEPTH

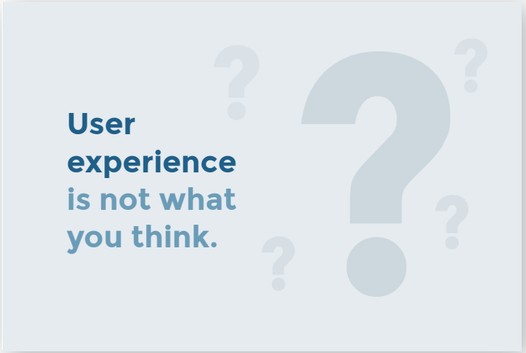
By creating an illusion of depth ranging from a few inches to several miles, you can make certain elements in your design really "pop." For example, you can blur the background image to make it clearly distinct from the foreground, thereby attracting attention to your text as the focal point of your slide.

Color choice can even suggest distance. Warmer colors, such as red and yellow, advance into the foreground of a design with a dark background, while cool colors such as blue or green usually recede into the background. The opposite occurs with a design over a light background: Cool colors such as blue and green appear closer than warm colors.

Therefore, color choice can truly affect viewers' ability to identify a figure from the background within a design. Mixing warm and cool colors can create depth, just like perspective.





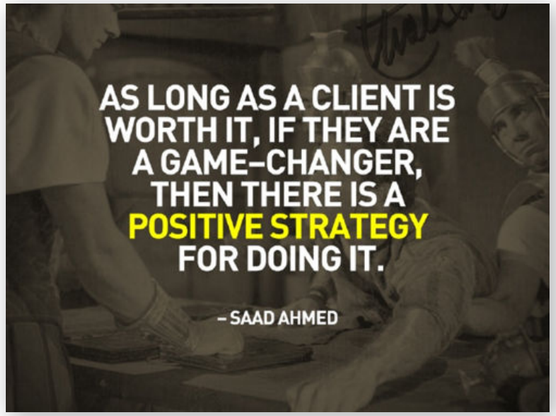


3 USE CONTRAST TO ATTRACT VIEWERS' EYES

Contrast is one of the most effective tools for making certain elements in your design stand out. As human beings, one of the first things our eyes notice is **difference**, whether this be a difference in color, shape, texture, size or position, among other things.

By nature, we tend to group similar objects together and differentiate between those that are dissimilar. Take, for example, these slides from real presentations. Our eyes are immediately drawn first to the object that stands out the most: the yellow words over a muted background. Our gaze then moves to the rest of the text, and finally to the elements in the background.

Source



In this slide deck, we see the same effect. Color is used to create contrast and thereby draw attention first to the the text in an eye-catching red color and then to the black-and-white image in the background.

Source

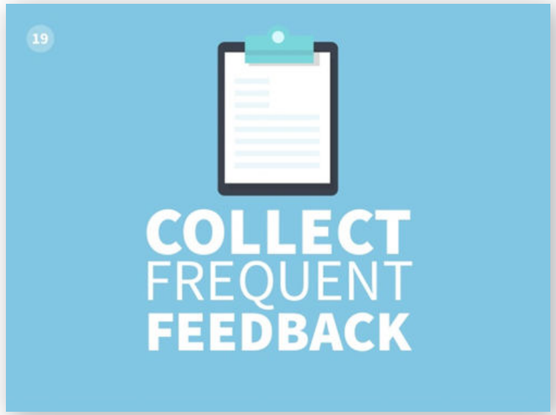
4 USE ALIGNMENT TO DIRECT THE EYES.

We've already covered how you can create direct viewers' eyes in a specific order by using leading lines. Now, we will go over how you can use alignment to do the same.

Alignment is part of the structure by which elements are placed in a design. It dictates that visual components, whether they be text or images, are not positioned arbitrarily throughout a composition. For example, a typical page of text is aligned to the left, so that objects share a left margin.

Simple visual designs most frequently align in the center of the frame, a format that provides balance and harmony. But not all designs have to be perfectly symmetrical to be aesthetically pleasing.

Source



Take a look at how this slide draws viewers' attention first to the woman and then to the left-aligned text, and then back to the woman. The left-aligned text helps to balance the design, which is visually heavy on the right side.

Most Western readers are accustomed to reading from the left to the right side of a page. Therefore, designs featuring text are often aligned to the left margin in the same fashion.

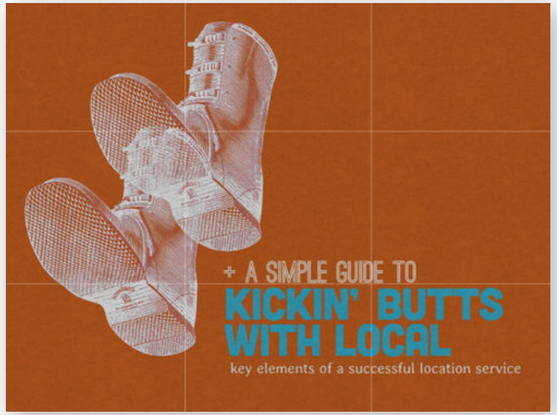
But right alignments are also employed to provide balance to a design that may be more visually heavy on the left side.

5 USE THE RULE OF THIRDS TO CREATE A FOCAL POINT.

Artists, photographers and graphic designers have long employed the **rule of thirds** to improve the overall balance of their compositions. The rule involves mentally dividing a composition into a grid composed of two horizontal and two vertical lines—or nine separate sections.

Important visual elements are placed along the lines, emphasizing the four points where the lines meet. Off-center compositions are generally considered more aesthetically-pleasing when compared to designs in which the main focal point is placed in the center of the frame.

Although not a principle that must be followed for each and every design, the rule of thirds is helpful for creating dynamic designs that are not completely centered and symmetrical.



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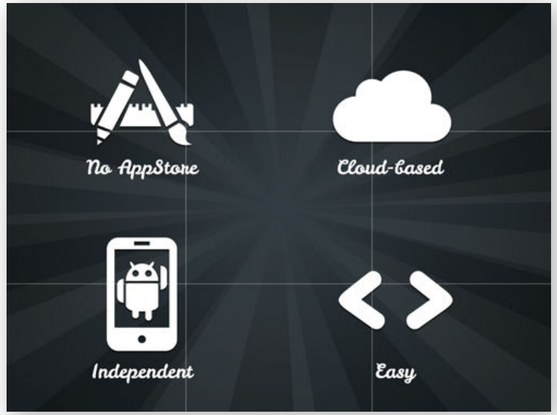
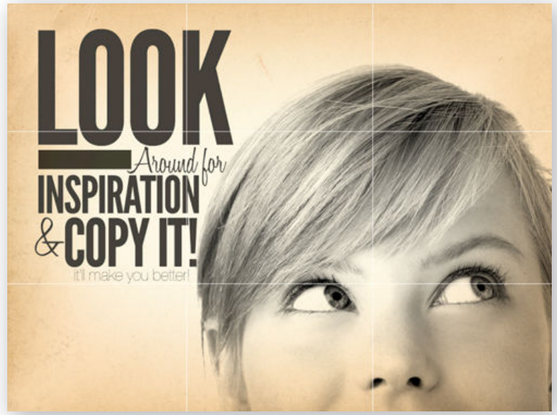


Source

Source



Source

6 USE NEGATIVE SPACE TO EMPHASIZE KEY ELEMENTS.

You've probably heard this before, but **negative space** (or white space) is just as important to your design as the positive elements. It has many functions within a visual: It lets the readers' eyes rest; it gives room for visual pathways that the eye can follow; it draws attention to the main elements of your design; and it makes your design look clean, sophisticated and efficient.

Take a look at how the use of negative space emphasizes the key elements in these slides.

Source

Source

Source

Source

How to Create a Coherent Design

Another characteristic of an effective design is that the individual elements that make it up are barely noticeable. Instead, what comes across loud and clear is the key message, communicated through words as well as dozens of small but deliberate design decisions.

Here are a few principles you can apply to make your designs more coherent and harmonious.

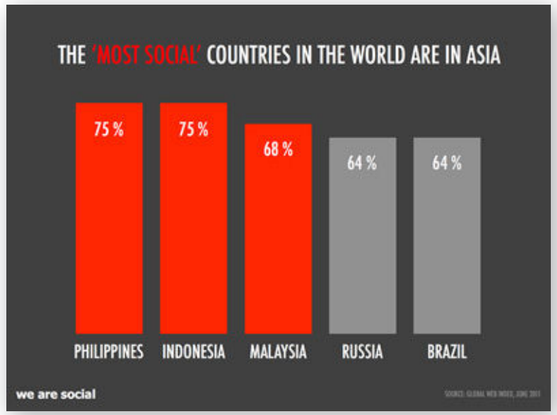
> The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
>
> *Aristotle*

1 CREATE ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN ELEMENTS.

You can easily tie the elements of a design together by making them similar. For example, if you have a slide with three different types of elements, you can visually relate them by using the same color for each type. Even if elements of the same color are not close to each other on the slide, viewers will unconsciously group them together.

For example, look at how the use of orange in the first slide at the top creates an association between the word "pretender" and half of the human figure. Or how the use of the color white in the slide next to it differentiates a series of circles from those below. In the two slides in the second row, the use of the color red creates an instant association between the key words and their graphical counterparts.

Source



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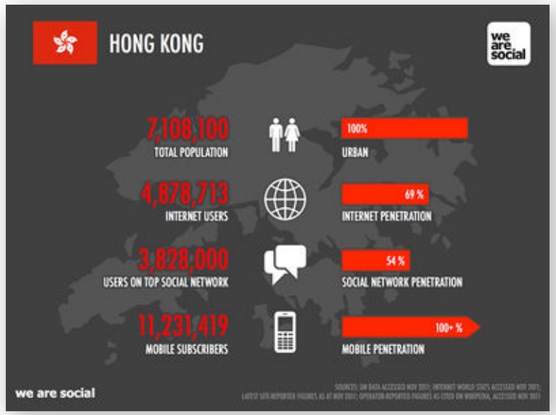


2 SUGGEST A VISUAL CONNECTION THROUGH CLOSURE.

Another mark of a good slide design is the efficient use of space. In order to eliminate unnecessary details, designers often apply the **Gestalt principle of closure**, which is an effect that allows us to see complete figures even when some information is missing.

Take, for example, this slide design. Although we can only see part of an image, the viewer automatically fills in the rest of the details to create a complete picture

So, instead of trying to fit complete pictures of objects into your slides, simply display enough of it to conjure up the right mental image in your viewers' minds.

All information provided

Too much information missing

Just enough information

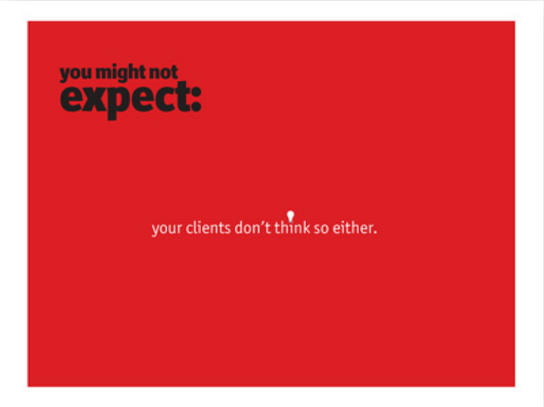
3 USE REPEATED ELEMENTS TO TIE YOUR DESIGN TOGETHER.

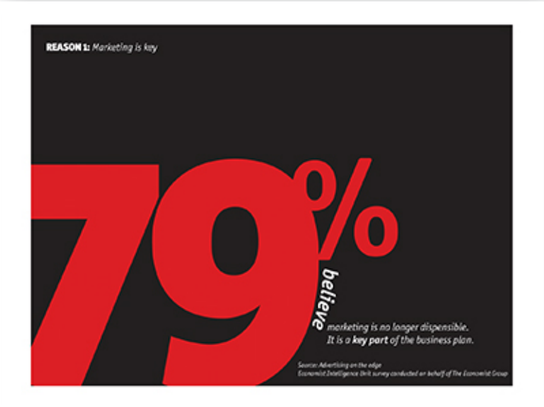
Another way to achieve a cohesive design is to repeat certain elements. This way, the viewer recognizes a visual pattern and knows what to expect next.

In this presentation design, for example, the same border style is seen on several slides, along with the same color overlays and style of icons.

Source

This doesn't mean, however, that a decorative element such as a shape must appear in the same color and the same exact position on each slide. For example, you can create visual interest by inverting the color scheme of the introductory slide for each section or varying the placement of decorative shapes.





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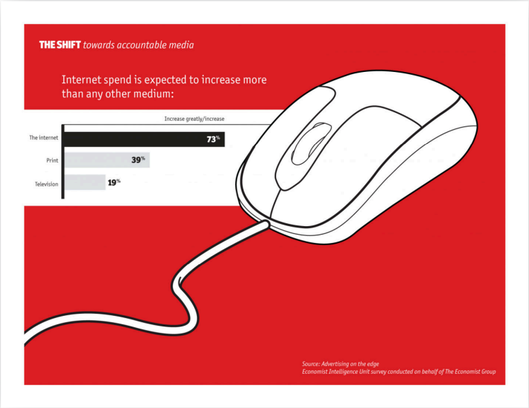
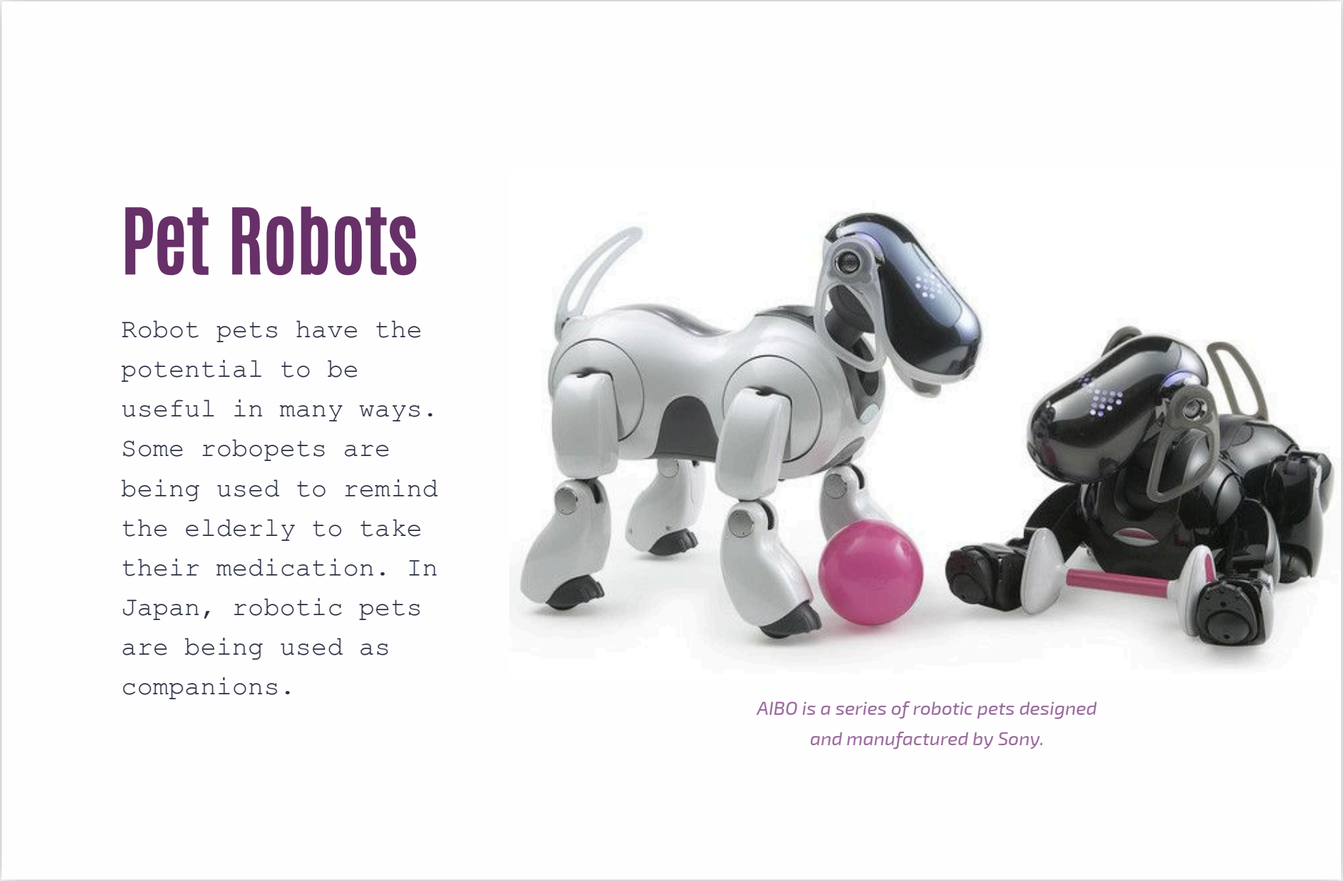


4 USE PROXIMITY TO GROUP SIMILAR ELEMENTS.

Another important part of the visual grammar of your slide deck is the proximity of elements. Make sure to associate related elements by placing them near each other. For example, an image and its caption should appear near each other. If not, viewers will not make the proper association.

BEFORE

AFTER



How to Use Transitions and Animation Effects

Now that we've covered the most important principles of slide design, you may have noticed that design is much more about aesthetics—it's about effectively communicating a message.

Just like you can't overload a slide deck with vibrant colors and pretty-looking pictures and expect it to get your point across, you also can't apply every animation effect available to you without a specific purpose.

Scientific research has shown that our eyes are naturally attracted by motion. Besides static objects that suddenly go into motion, the appearance of "new objects among a background of old objects" also captures viewers' attention.

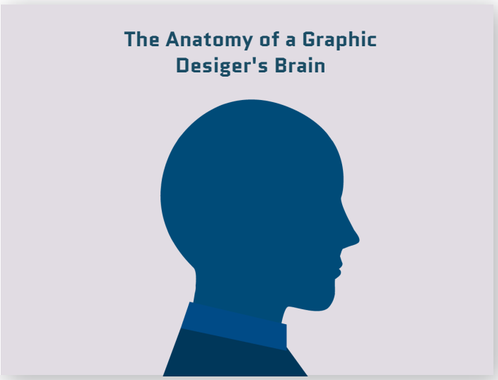
You can take this finding into consideration when creating slide builds, which allow you to convey complex information by bringing in bits of information, piece by piece.

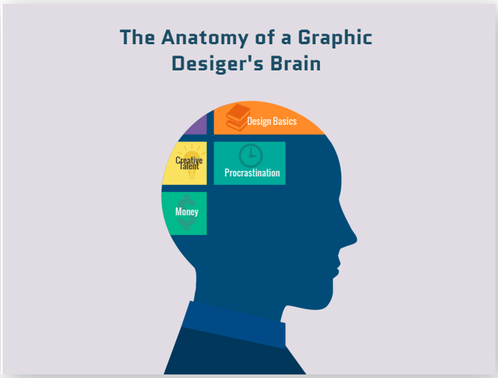
> Design is, literally, purposeful planning. Graphic design, then, is the form those plans will take.
>
> *Chip Kidd*

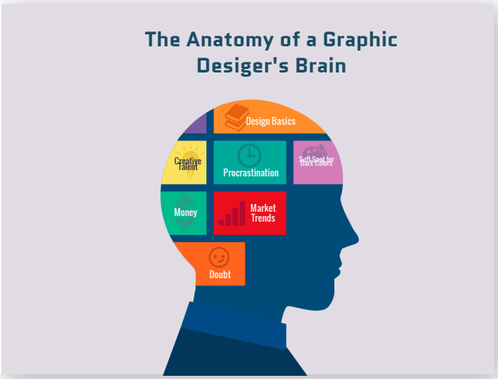
1 START WITH YOUR FINAL SLIDE AND WORK BACKWARDS.

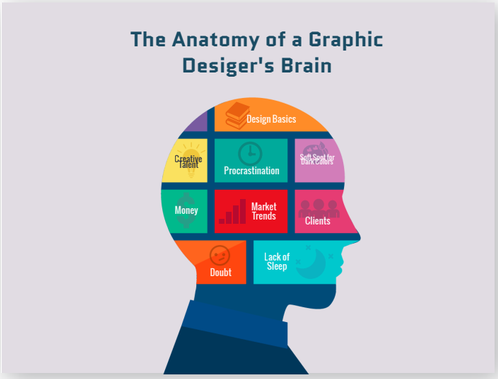
Instead of presenting a complex diagram all at once, forcing your audience to digest loads of information in one gulp, break it down into bite-sized pieces that can be presented in accordance with the pace of your verbal presentation.

Start by creating your final build image, diagram, illustration, chart or graph. Once you have all the elements in place, simply duplicate the slide as many times as is needed to create each step of the build and work backwards to eliminate the objects you don't want to appear for each step. This way, when your slides are viewed in the correct order, you can "build" your image right in front of your live audience.





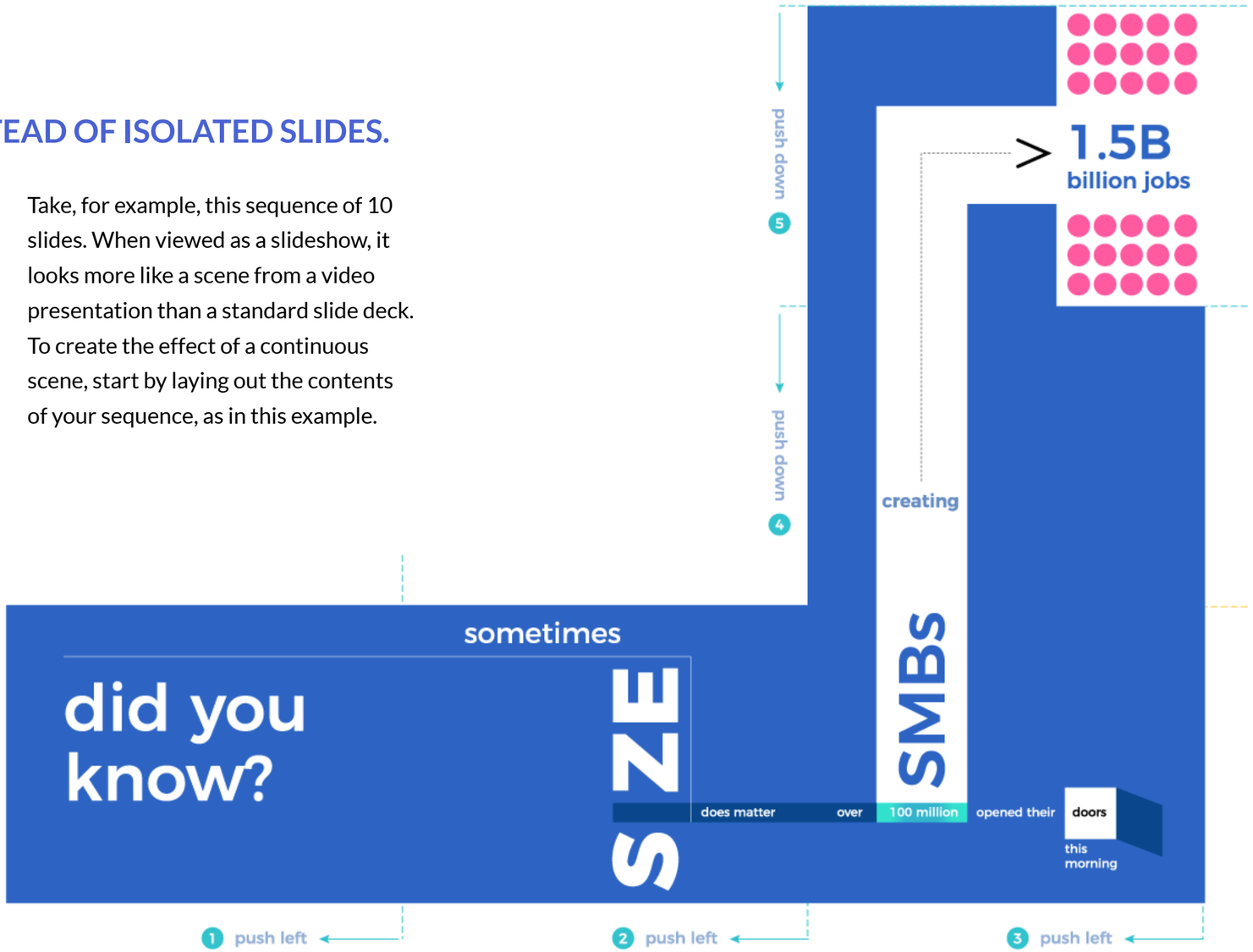




2 CREATE SCENES INSTEAD OF ISOLATED SLIDES.

Instead of thinking in terms of individual slides, why not create scenes instead? In her book Slide:ology, Nancy Duarte covers a technique which allows users to create scenes instead of slides, even with standard presentation tools.

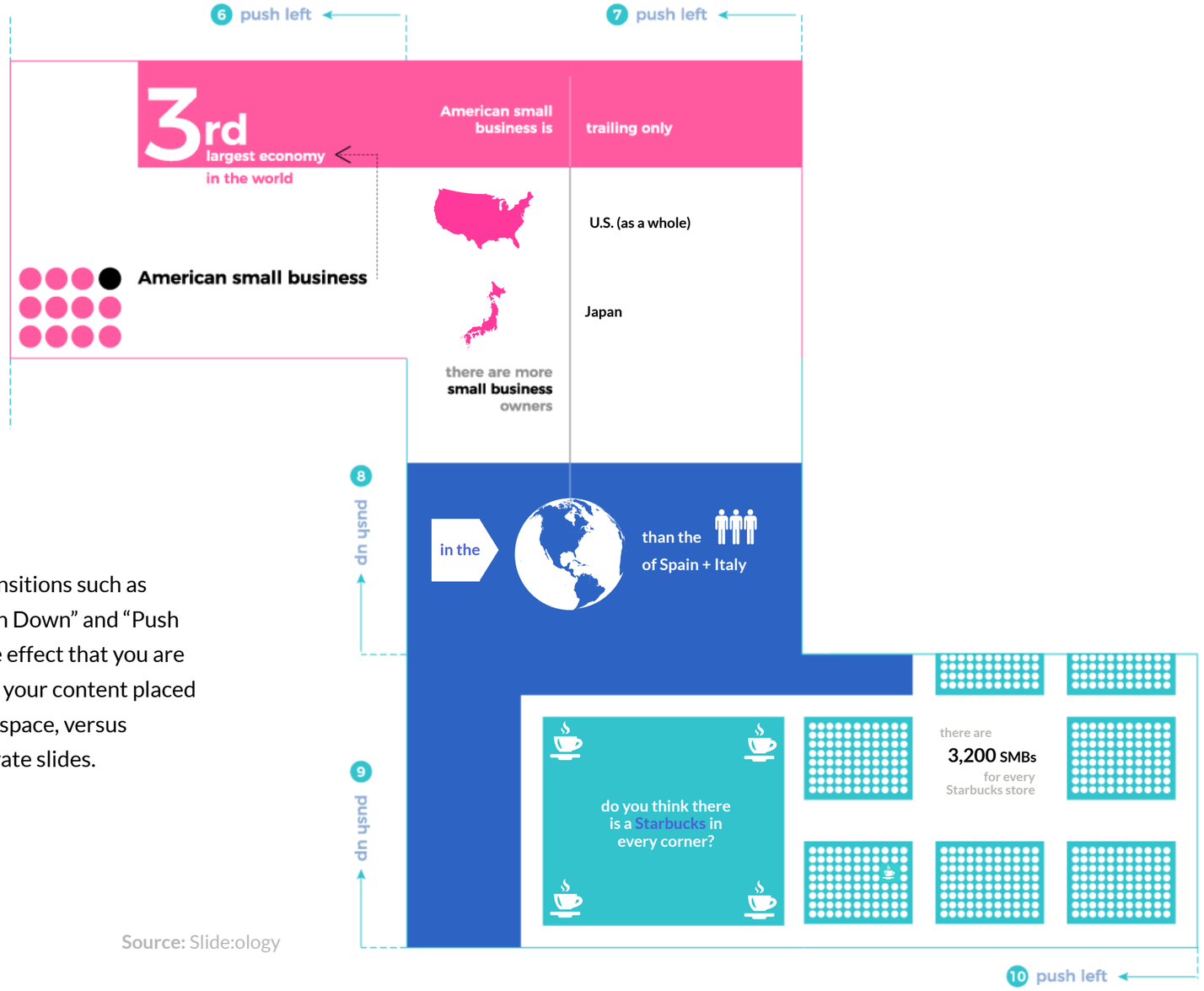
Take, for example, this sequence of 10 slides. When viewed as a slideshow, it looks more like a scene from a video presentation than a standard slide deck. To create the effect of a continuous scene, start by laying out the contents of your sequence, as in this example.



Source: Slide:ology

Then, eliminate all standard page elements at the top, bottom and sides of your slides, such as page numbers, decorative elements and headers and footers. This way, your sequence will look like a series of scenes seamlessly tied together.

Finally, apply transitions such as “Push Left,” “Push Down” and “Push Up” to create the effect that you are panning through your content placed across one large space, versus presenting separate slides.

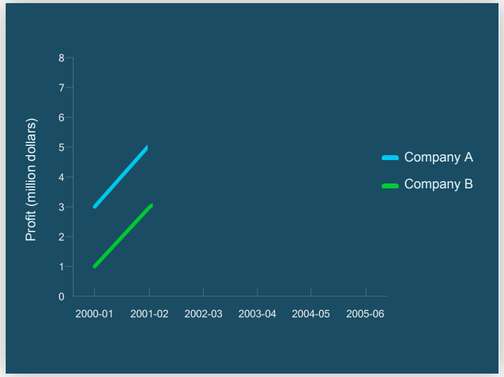


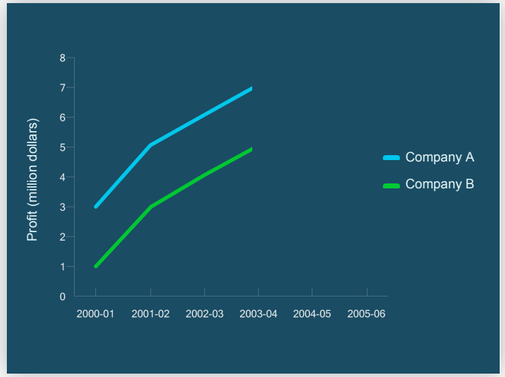
Source: Slide:ology

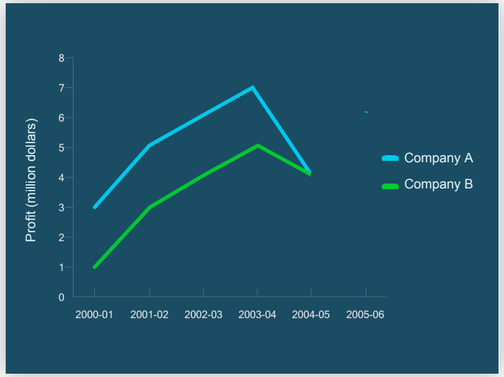
3 USE ANIMATION TO MAKE A POINT.

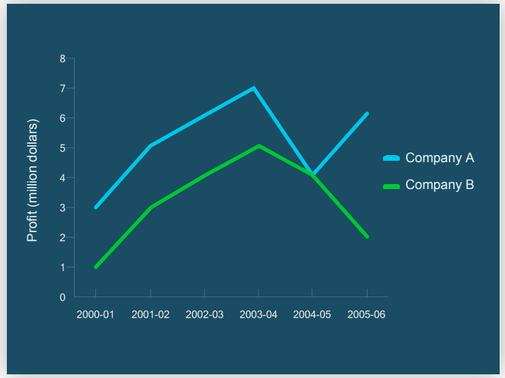
Since eyes are attracted by movement, you can also use builds and animation in your charts and graphs to tell a specific story.

Take, for example, this line graph comparing the profits of two companies over a span of six years. By bringing in each new point with subtle animation, such as a fade-in effect, you can build suspense and expectation for the conclusion of your story: Company A revamped their marketing strategy and, consequently, their profits soared, while Company B floundered.







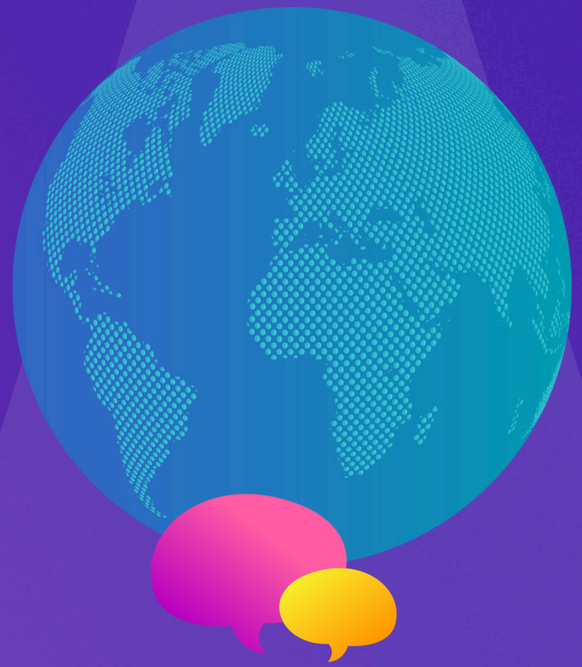


How to Deliver an Unforgettable Presentation

Academics and marketers alike have found that our brains are hardwired to process and store information in the form of stories. So, when we hear that “once upon a time” there was a certain character in such and such place, our minds are immediately transported to this imaginary scene.

In fact, according to professional speaker Akash Karia, stories are irresistible to the human mind because they activate our imaginations and so we have no choice but to follow the mental movies created in our heads. As a result, they are used by many TED presenters who are some of the most inspirational speakers in the world.

Here are several ways you can make your next presentation one your audience will never forget.



> A successful talk is a little miracle—people see the world differently afterward.

TED curator Chris Anderson

1 IMMERSE YOUR AUDIENCE IN A STORY.

A well-told story is something that will stick in your audience's mind for years to come.

Take this simple yet exceptional TED talk as an example. In it, a 12-year-old Masai boy from Kenya named Richard Turere transports his audience to another world by telling a story about his experiences in his homeland.

With basic words and slides with large, graphic images, Richard weaves a captivating tale of how he invented a system of lights that was able to protect his family's livestock from lion attacks.

The reason this presentation was so successful was that every word and image presented helped to create a clear mental picture of the problem Richard and his family faced.

Also, it clearly followed a golden rule of presentation-giving which is to use visuals that supplement your story rather than repeat what has already been said. Another way to immerse the audience in your story is to provide sensory details that will allow them to actually see, hear, feel, and smell the different stimuli in your storyworld.

According to Akash Karia, this will turn the presentation into a mental movie that the audience cannot help but engage in, as is done in this TED talk.

Richard Turere - My invention that made peace with lions

2 TELL A PERSONAL STORY.

Few things are as captivating as a personal story, especially those of triumph over extreme adversity.

In his insightful book *The Seven Basic Plots*, author Christopher Booker finds that there are seven basic story plots that have universal appeal. These include the story of the hero defeating a monster, the rags-to-riches tale, the quest for a treasure, and the voyage of a hero who comes back a changed person.

These plots are clearly seen in some of the most popular and moving presentations ever given. Take, for example, this gripping and harrowing tale of a woman's escape from her home land of North Korea. Or this woman's equally powerful story of domestic violence and how she found the courage to leave her abusive spouse.

Leslie Morgan - Why domestic violence victims don't leave

3 CREATE SUSPENSE.

Those who love to watch movies or read books know that a good story always has to have a conflict and a plot. These two elements are what make a good presentation into a roller coaster ride that keeps listeners/viewers at the edge of their seats, asking themselves, “What will happen next?”

There are several devices that can increase the level of suspense of your story. One way is to tell a story chronologically and build up to a climactic conclusion, as is done here in this story about a woman who was born without fibula bones and grew up to be an accomplished athlete, actress and model.

Another way is to plop the viewer/listener right in the middle of action and then go backwards in time to reveal how all of this occurred.

A good example of this is Zak Ibrahim’s story, which begins with the revelation that his father was involved in the World Trade Center bombing. He then goes back in time to tell events from his childhood and how he grew up to choose a different path from his father’s.

Zak Ibrahim - I am the son of a terrorist. Here's how I chose peace.

A third way is to begin by telling a predictable story and then surprise the audience by taking a completely different turn from what was expected.

For example, this TED talk begins with a presenter who leads his audience to believe he doesn't speak English, only to surprise them in order to make a point about how we construct identity.

Hetain Patel - Who am I? Think again

4 BRING CHARACTERS TO LIFE.

Characters are at the heart of any story. Their fortunes and misfortunes are what make people want to laugh, cry or rejoice.

The most successful stories, I found, were those that created three-dimensional characters who were easy to identify and, at the same time, had an uncommon characteristic.

In order to do this, you must provide enough detail to bring the character to life in the minds of those in the audience.

For example, in this presentation master storyteller Malcolm Gladwell creates a vivid picture of Howard by describing his physical appearance and mentioning his hobbies and obsessions.

Malcolm Gladwell - Choice, happiness and spaghetti sauce

5 SHOW. DON'T TELL.

Instead of telling your audience about a certain event in a story, try showing them by transporting them to a scene.

For example, in the introduction to this article, I could have simply told you that I had an introverted classmate who one day wowed the whole class with an awesome presentation. This, however, would not have had the same effect as using descriptions of setting and conversations to take you to the middle of a scene.

So, whenever you deliver a story, try scene-by-scene construction of events and use dialogue instead of narration, as seen in this presentation which won the 2014 World Championship of Public Speaking.

Dananjaya Hettiarachchi - World Champion of Public Speaking 2014

6 BUILD UP TO A S.T.A.R. MOMENT.

Similar to a climax, a S.T.A.R. moment is a "Something They'll Always Remember" event that is so dramatic that your audience will be talking about it weeks later.

According to presentation expert Nancy Duarte, this can come in the form of a dramatization, provocative images, or shocking statistics.

Bill Gates resorted to this technique in a 2009 TED talk when he made the case for increasing investment in eradicating malaria. He gave statistics to prove how serious the problem was and then shocked the room by opening a jar full of mosquitos, saying "There's no reason only poor people should have the experience."

Bill Gates - Mosquitos, malaria and education

7 END WITH A POSITIVE TAKEAWAY.

After analyzing 200 of the best TED talks, presentation expert Akash Karia found that the most effective presentations not only had a conflict and a climax, but also a positive resolution.

On the path to triumph, most characters in these stories received what he calls a “spark,” a key piece of wisdom or advice that helped them overcome their obstacles and change for the better.

This key takeaway message was then packaged into a short, memorable phrase or sound bite that could easily become viral on social media platforms like Twitter.

For example, in the previously mentioned talk on domestic abuse, the presenter concluded that instead of blaming victims, we should “recast survivors as wonderful, loveable people with full futures.”

Sources

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- Color Theory for Presentations: How to Choose the Perfect Colors for Your Designs by Visme
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