Presentations don't have to be hard

You don't have to be a PowerPoint expert to create great presentations. With a few basic principles and some simple tips and tricks, you can elevate any presentation from basic and boring to unique and engaging.

In our **Basics of Presentation Design** eBook, you'll discover the essentials of creating amazing slides in less time, the techniques to turn bullet points into stories, and the tools to improve every presentation that comes across your desk.

Here's what you'll learn

▶ **Presentation Design** will cover what makes slides so unique, how to get started with content, and the basics of laying out a slide.

▶ **Templates** gives you a step-by-step breakdown of how to build a template, so you can set every presentation up for success.

▶ **Color** covers how to think about color in presentations, as well as ways to use colors effectively.

▶ **Motion** is an introduction to all things animation in PowerPoint, including slide transitions and easy ways to get started with using animations.

▶ **Storytelling** will give you tools to turn ordinary content into clear narratives that grab attention, and some story structures to make it easy to craft new slides.

▶ **Typography** goes deep on the ins-and-outs of choosing and using fonts.

▶ **Images** explains the different types of images used in presentations, and best practices for finding, choosing, and using images on your slides.

Table of contents

1. Presentation Design

2. Storytelling

3. Templates

4. Typography

5. Color

6. Images

7. Motion

Presentation Design 101

What makes presentation design different from other types of design comes down to a single word: **slides**

Slides are the heart and soul of a presentation, and while they may seem straightforward, they actually are a unique format, with their own conventions, expectations, and techniques.

Basic principles that make presentations unique

Welcome to the first part of our guide covering Presentation Design 101, an exploration of the basic principles that make presentations unique and how you can use them to give better presentations.

If you want to get better at building presentations, you need to start with the basics. So, let's dive into the world of slides, and learn what makes them so special, and some of the ways you can get more out of every slide in your presentation.

What makes a slide effective

Let's start with the most basic question you can ask about presentation design: what makes a slide "good"? Is it an eye-catching design? Sharp, insightful copy? Carefully chosen photography?

It can be those things, but the best measure of a slide's effectiveness is how well it conveys your information. And the best way to ensure your slides are getting the point across is to have your content and design working together to tell your story.
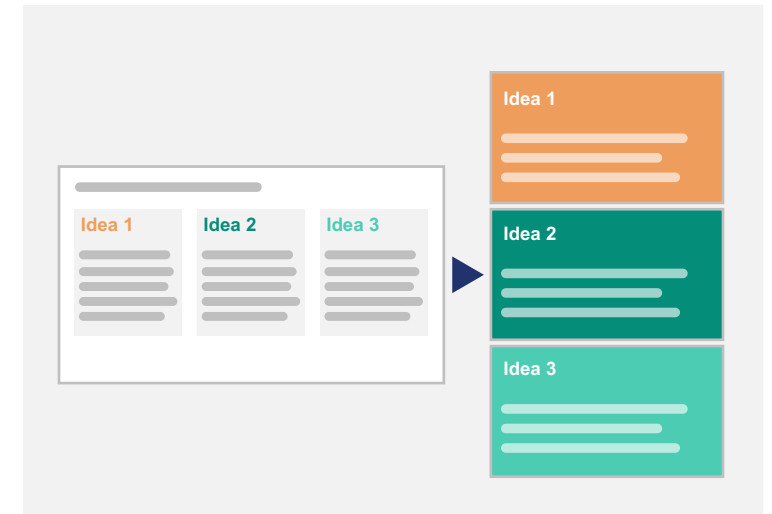
Content principles

A presentation is a tool for conveying information. That information, or your content, should be the first thing you consider, and will dictate what your slides look like and the approach you take to creating them.

▶ **Here are a few ways to think about creating clear, effective content for your presentations:**

Start with an outline

Creating an outline will help you to organize your thoughts and start to structure the flow of your presentation. You can identify the key idea you want to cover on each slide, and then start to piece together the supporting material you'll use.

One idea per slide

A presentation is a tool for conveying information. That information, or your content, should be the first thing you consider, and will dictate what your slides look like and the approach you take to creating them.

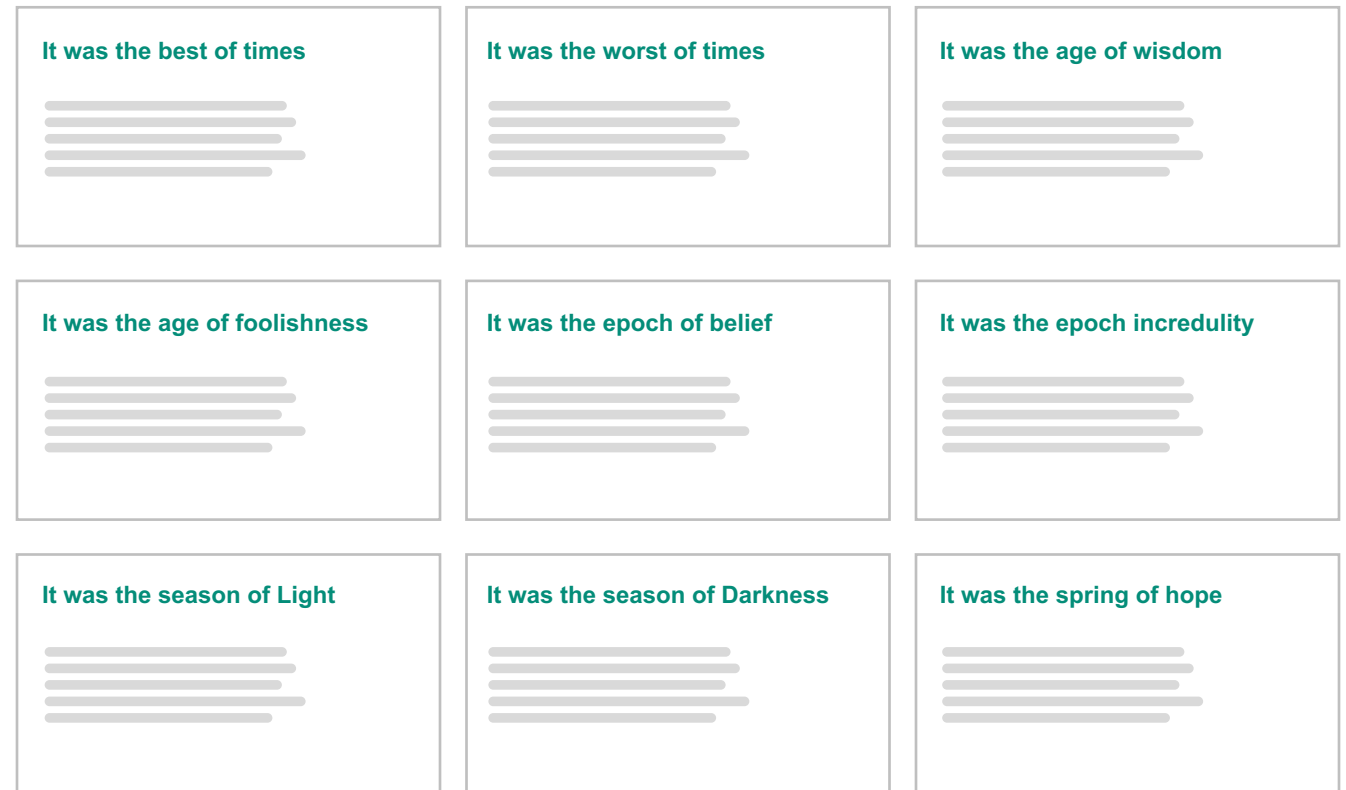# Content principles

Use headlines, not titles

The standard practice in PowerPoint is to rely on slide titles that describe what's on the slide: Agenda, Results, Strategy, etc. While these aren't exactly wrong, relying on basic descriptive titles does miss a big opportunity to tell a richer, more engaging story. There are two basic ways to tell a story in a headline.

First, all of the headlines across your slides can tell a continuous story.

With this approach, the presentation becomes a story as you lead your audience from start to finish across multiple slides.

Second, each slide can be self contained.

In this approach, you'll still use story-driven headlines, but they won't need to connect directly to the other slides. This can be helpful when you have a lot of different types of content, for example if you were collecting materials from multiple presenters into one presentation.

It was the best of times

It was the worst of times

It was the age of wisdom

It was the age of foolishness

It was the epoch of belief

It was the epoch incredulity

It was the season of Light

It was the season of Darkness
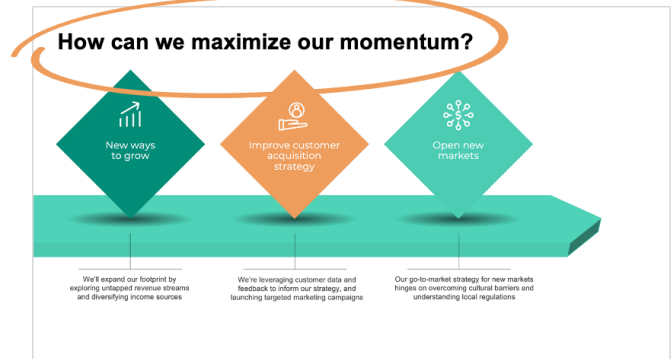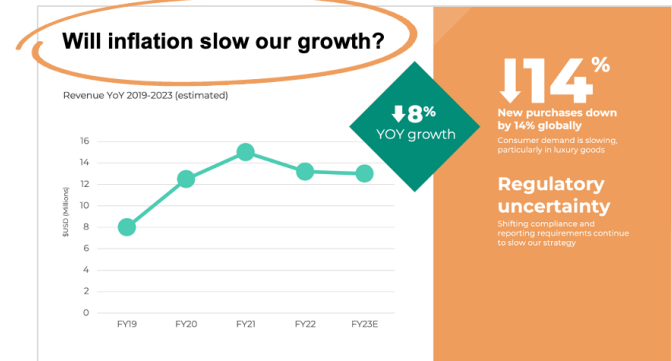
It was the spring of hope

Content principles

▶ **Here are two examples of the difference between basic descriptive titles and story-driven headlines:**

As you can see, it's not a huge difference, but it communicates much more information and starts to tell a clearer story than the originals.

Content principles

Techniques

There are a handful of simple yet effective ways to structure your content, so if you're not sure where to start or prefer to have a plan, you can try these as starting points for developing tight, clear content.

5x5 Rule

7x7 Rule

5x5 Rule

With the 5x5 rule, your goal is to keep slides to a maximum of 5 bullet points, with only 5 words per bullet.

For every slide, no more than 5 bullet points with no more than 5 words per bullet point.

7x7 Rule

Similar to the 5x5, the 7x7 rule limits you to 7 lines of text per slide, and 7 words per line.

For every slide, use no more than seven lines of text — or seven bullet points — and no more than seven words per line. Slide titles aren't included in the count.
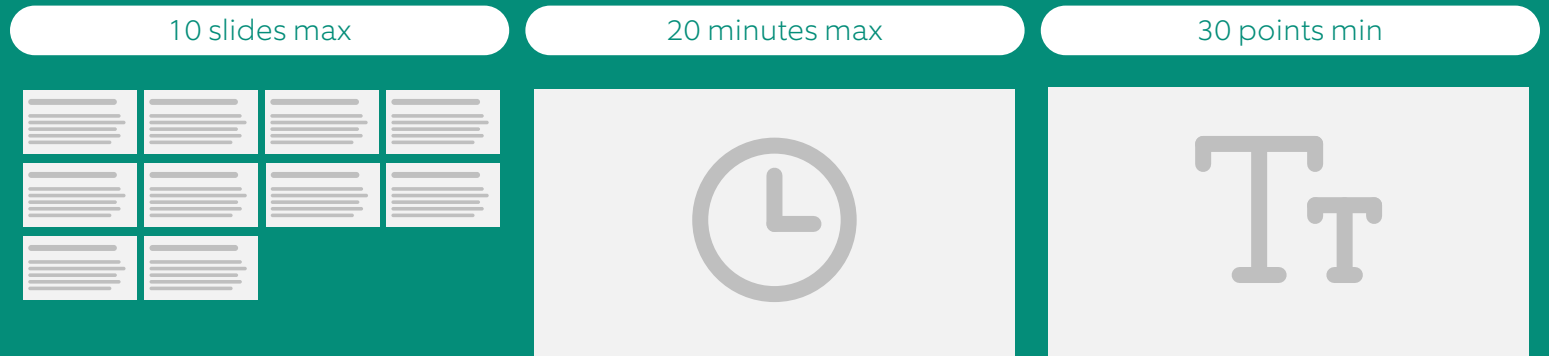
Content principles

Techniques

10/20/30 Rule

This rule covers your presentation as a whole, not just the individual slides. With this approach, you keep the entire presentation to just 10 slides, with a run time of 20 minutes and a minimum font size of 30 points.

This is an aggressive approach that will challenge you to think hard about what you really want to say, and how much time you really need to say it. You might not actually use this when presenting, but it's a powerful exercise for forcing you to take a closer look at your content.

10 slides max

20 minutes max

30 points min

Content principles

Techniques

Adjusting your content to the setting

While all of these rules are useful, they can't be applied universally, at least not without a bit of extra consideration for the type of presentation you are giving. Depending on how you're presenting, you should tailor the amount and type of content to suit that particular setting.

We define three main types of presentation: Keynote or large room, hybrid/virtual, and leave behind. These three categories represent the main ways people present, and each one needs a slightly different approach to content. Here are a few ways to think about editing your content for each type of presentation:

| Keynote	Hybrid	Leave behind
Visual	Scannable	Informative
Simple	Concise	Detailed
Light	Approachable	Comprehensive

Design principles

Effective slides all have one thing in common: the visuals support the story

Beautiful slides can be a great asset in a presentation, but if they're not adding to your story, they're actually getting in the way. Using your visuals to support and enhance your content is called visual storytelling, and it's all about making every element on a slide work for you.

While you don't need to be a professional designer to create aesthetically pleasing presentations, it does help to understand a few of the basic principles of design. These concepts will help you to understand how different elements work either alone or together on your slide and serve as a strong basis for evaluating layouts.
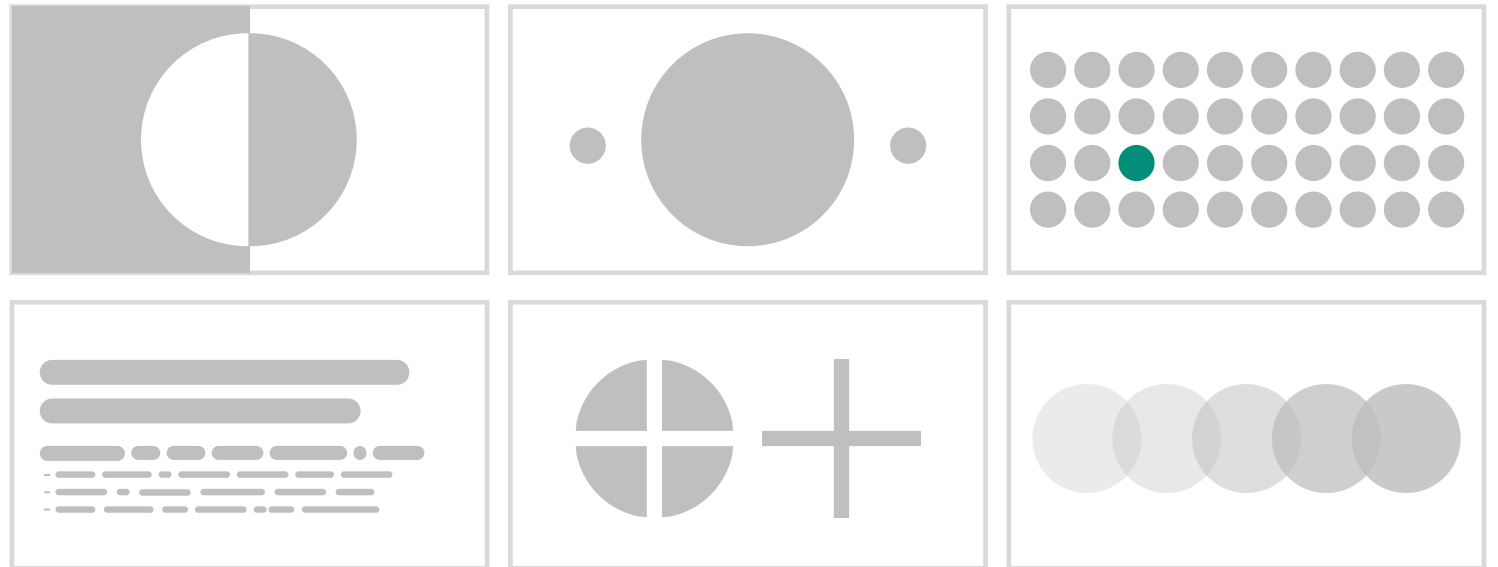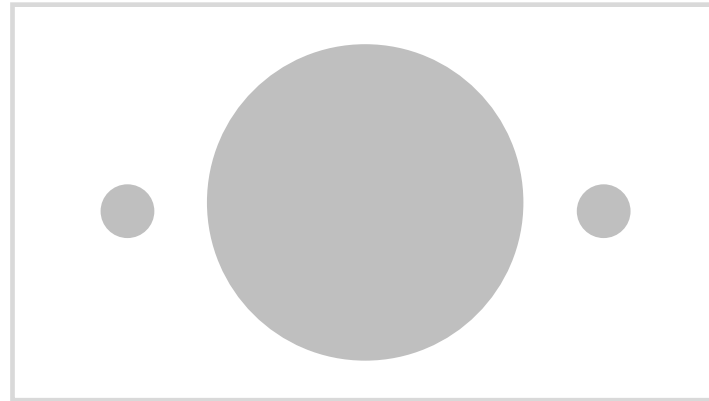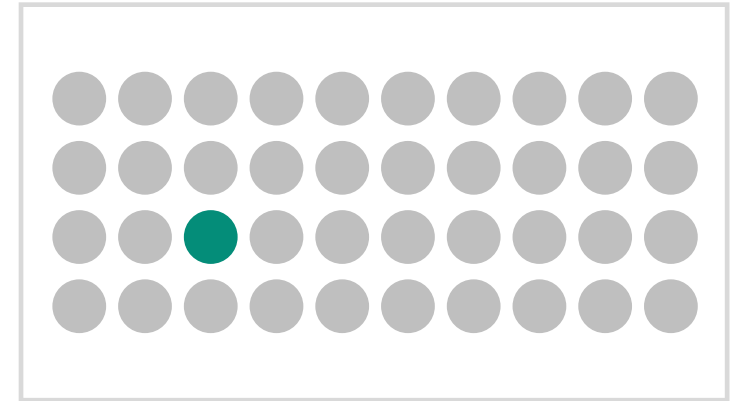
Design principles
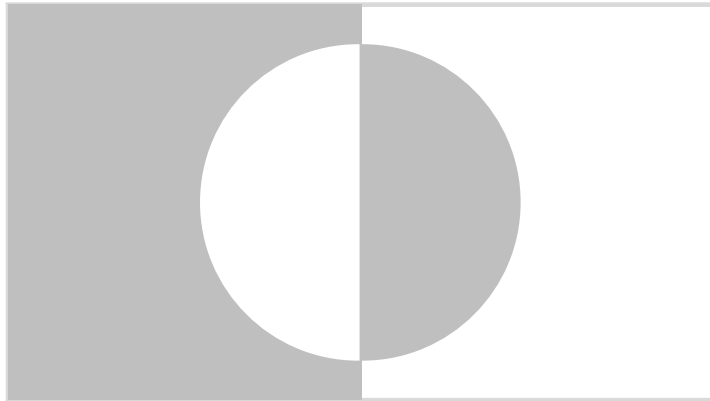
Contrast

Contrast is the difference between various elements within a design that makes them stand out from each other.

Proportion

Proportion refers to the size of elements in relation to one another. Larger elements tend to be seen as more important while smaller ones are less so.

Emphasis

Emphasis causes certain parts of a design to stand out compared to other elements. Conversely, it can also be used to minimize how much an element stands out (such as fine print). In this example, we're using color to emphasize one element on the slide.

Design principles

Hierarchy

Hierarchy uses principle elements such as size, placement, color, or emphasis, to give visual cues about which elements are of primary importance, secondary, and so on.
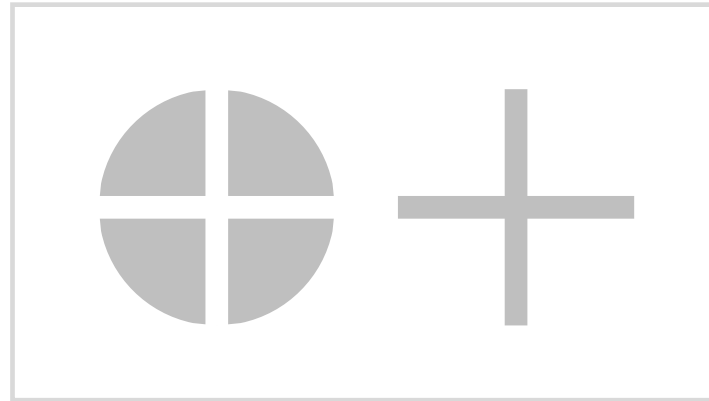
Negative space

With negative space, you are creating a design element out of unused space, rather than designing an object. This way, your element is created out of the background.

Negative space is similar to, but different from, white space. White space refers to the area of a design that is left unfilled by elements. In other words, it's all the space you don't use. White space is an important concept for creating balanced and scannable layouts.

Movement

Movement is the way a person's eyes travel across a design. The most important element should lead to the next most important and so on. Much like hierarchy, this can be done via positioning, emphasis and other design principles.

Design principles

Scannability

When a slide is **"scannable,"** it's easy for the audience to understand the content at a glance. That means a clear, story-driven headline, visuals that support the content, and a layout that's easy to follow.

A scannable slide illustrates the tight relationship between content and design, and shows why it's so important for the two areas to work in harmony.

Will inflation slow our growth?

Revenue YoY 2019-2023 (estimated)

↓8%
YOY growth

↓14%
New purchases down by 14% globally
Consumer demand is slowing, particularly in luxury goods

Regulatory uncertainty
Shifting compliance and reporting requirements continue to slow our strategy

$USD (Millions)

16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0

FY19   FY20   FY21   FY22   FY23E

Design principles
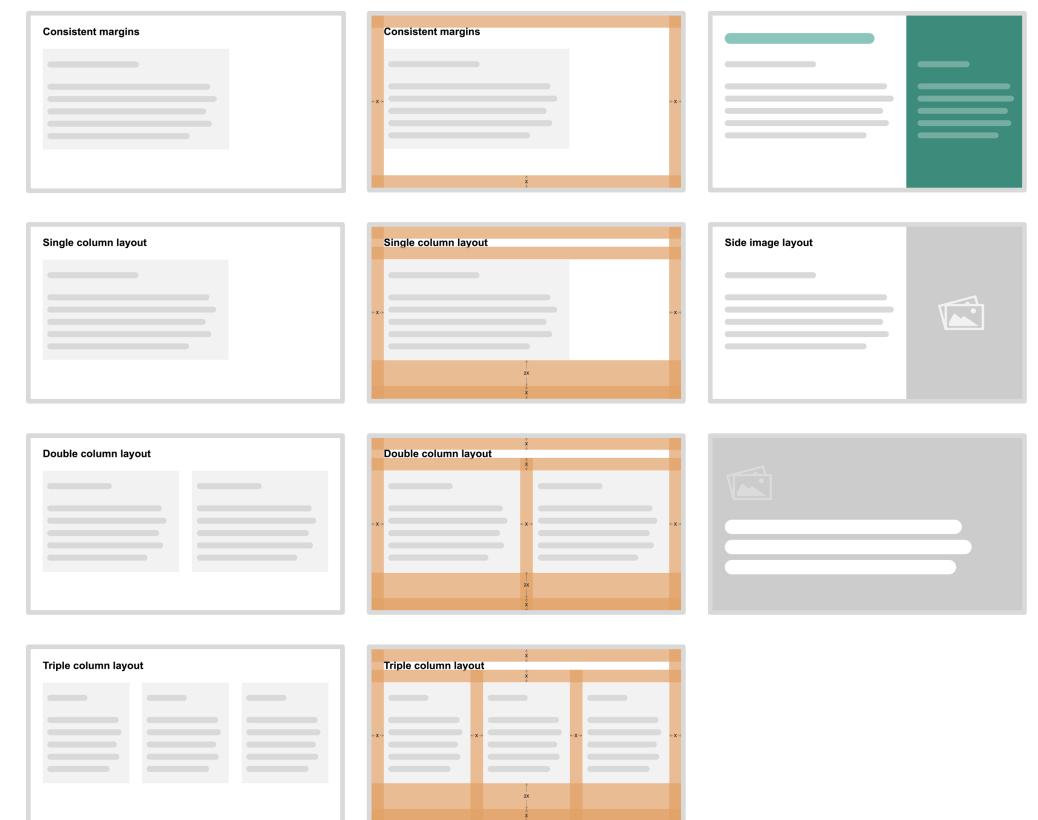
Consistency and layouts

A good slide is built on a foundation of consistency. By taking the time to ensure things like margins, placement of headers and logos, and use of typefaces and colors are all consistent, you can help ensure that the audience stays focused on your content.

▶ Here are some examples of good (and bad) layouts, focused on consistency:

BAD
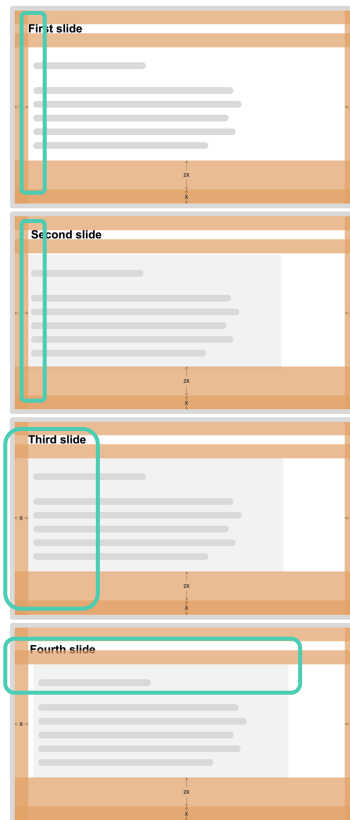
GOOD

Design principles

Visual pacing

No matter how well edited or laid-out your content is, the audience won't connect if they aren't engaged. Our next rule is to use visual pacing to vary the look of your slides.

The reason is that if all of your slides look the same, your audience will quickly lose interest in them. By using different background colors, typography and photography to set visual pacing, you create small changes that stimulate the eye and maintain engagement, as opposed to a series of identical slides that all bleed together.

This is a delicate balance between visual interest and overdesign. Your goal isn't to make every slide totally unique. Instead, you should create a few slide types, and vary those according to your content.
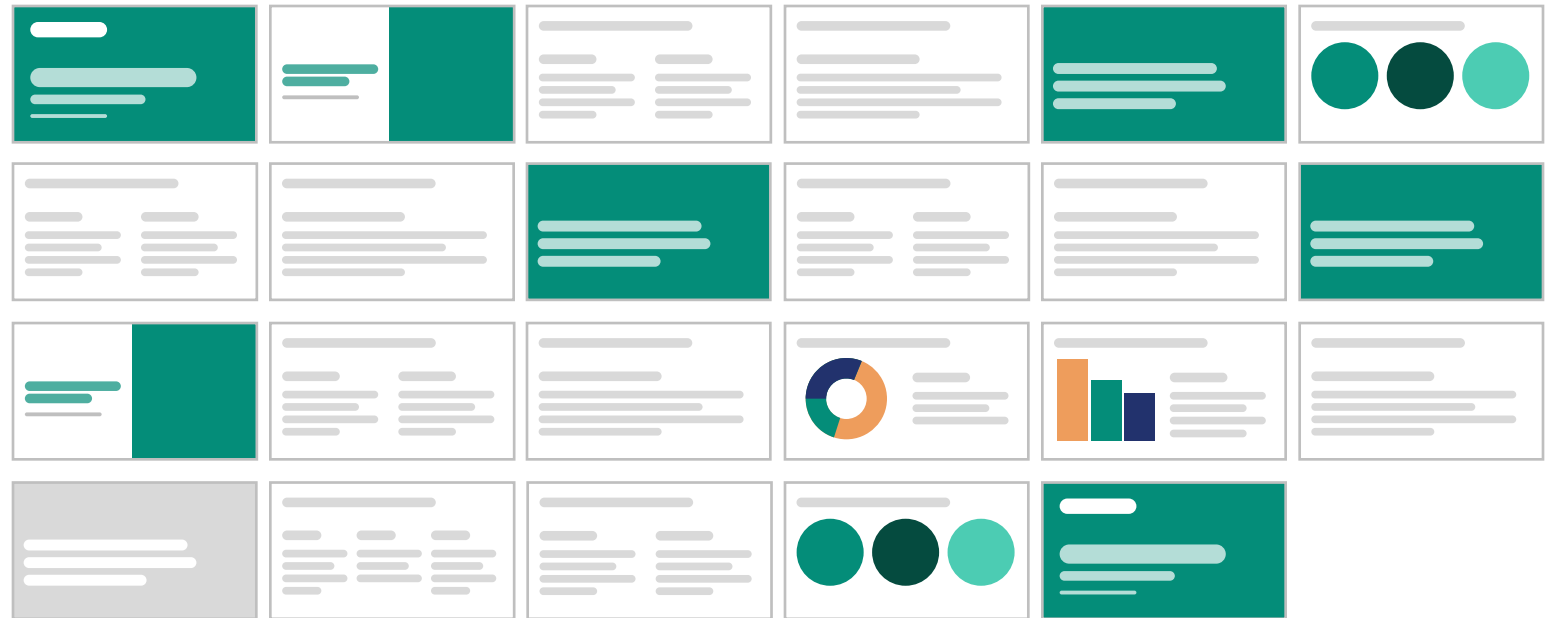
Design principles

Here's an example of how visual pacing would look across a presentation. Note how the color scheme and slide layouts are consistent, and how certain types are repeated. This creates enough variety to keep the audience interested, but doesn't reinvent the wheel each time.

Best practices

We've given you a quick education on the basics of presentation design, but it's not all theory and ideas. There are also some best practices that our presentation designers use to improve slides.
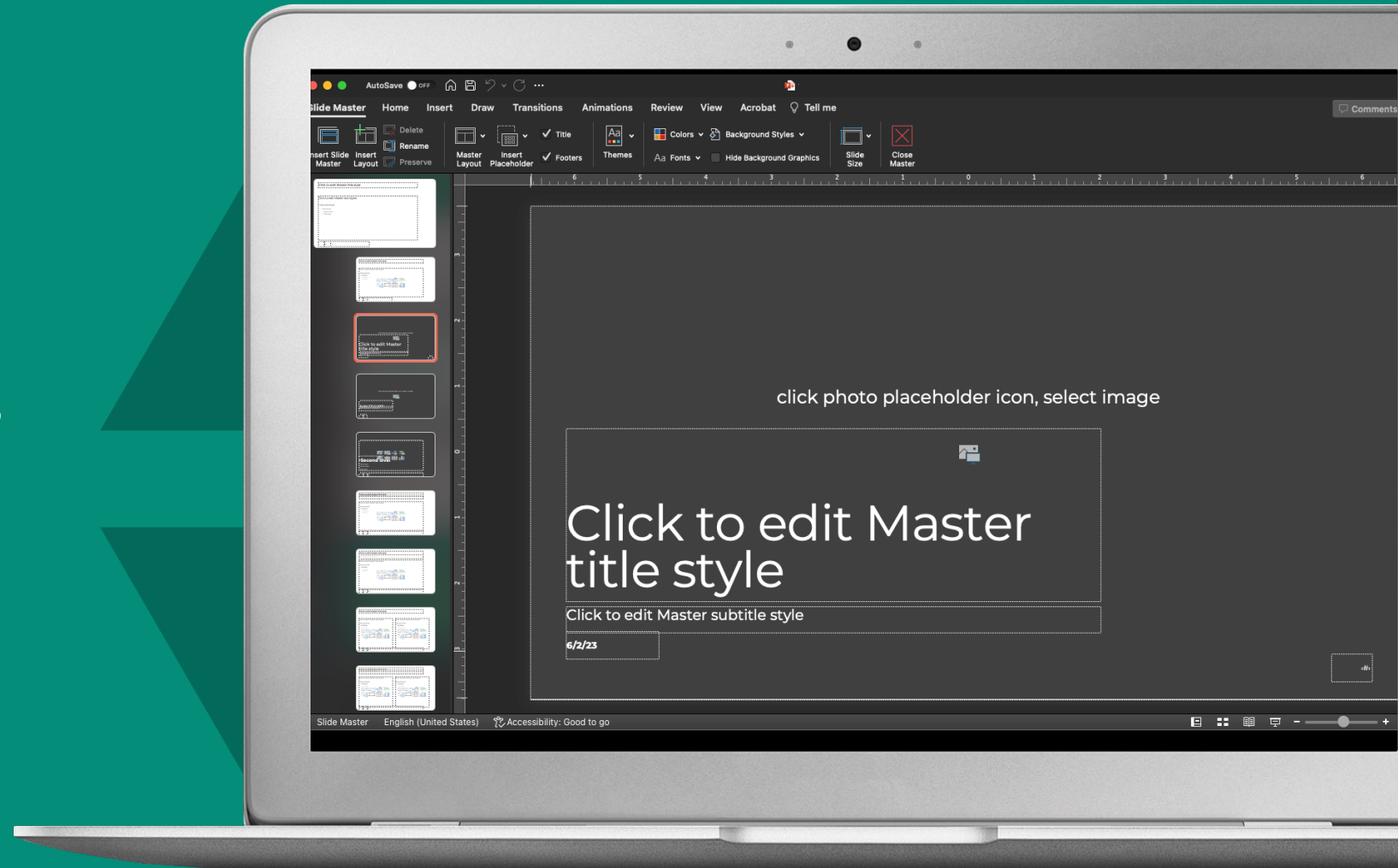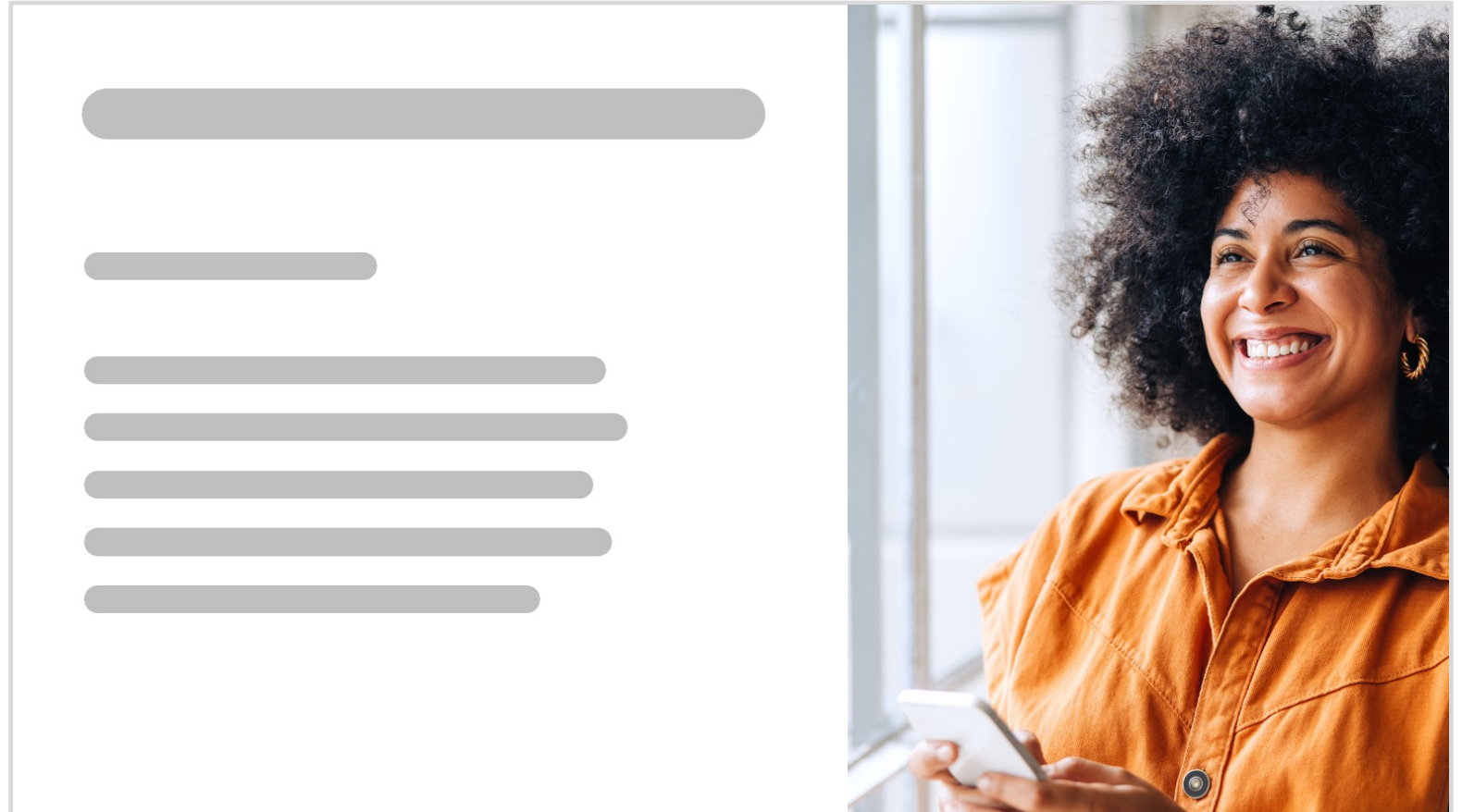
Best practices

Using pictures

Adding in a photo can help illustrate a point or add visual interest. Adding a photo with people in it can humanize a presentation.

But pictures don't always improve a slide. If they are low quality (pixelated, poorly composed, etc.), don't match the content, or there are just too many of them on a slide, the result is often worse than a slide with no images.

Our best practice is to pick one good image per slide.

Best practices

Keep animation simple

Animation can add excitement and even help reinforce learning, but it can also be distracting. Our best practice is to stick to simple fades (or no animation at all) whenever possible.

Using Fade transitions

Much like with animation, transitions work best when they are simple. Our best practice is to use a simple fade transition between slides. It's one of the easiest ways to add polish to a presentation.

Don't use too many colors

Color is a powerful tool in presentation design, but overusing it is a quick way to turn your presentation into a circus. Your brand likely has an established color palette you should follow, but even then, our best practice is to stick to two (or three max) colors, with any others used sparingly as accents.
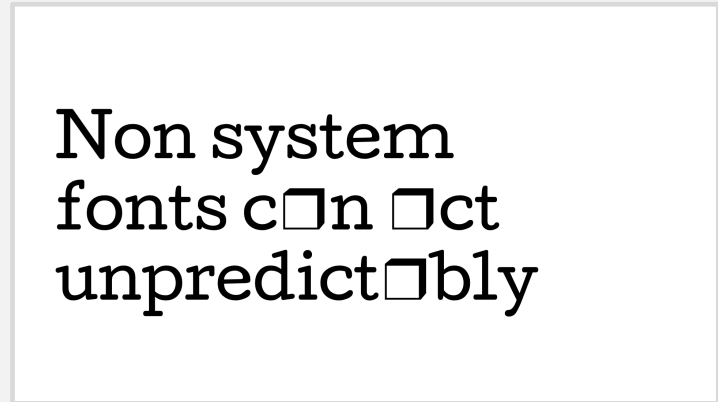
Best practices

Don't overuse fonts/typefaces

Some presentation creators make the mistake of thinking that using multiple fonts will add visual variety to a slide. Instead, it just makes slides feel cluttered and inconsistent.
Our best practice is to **stick to a single typeface, ideally a system font, to maintain clarity and readability of your presentation.**

Headline

Subhead goes here

Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium doloremque laudantium, totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt explicabo. Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit

Fact #1

Fact #2

TAKEAWAY GOES HERE!

▲

One type face (Arial in this example) often creates a more professional look

Non system fonts c☐n ☐ct unpredict☐bly

▲

Non-System fonts can result in unpredictable substitutions. System fonts (like Arial, Calibri, or Georgia) ensure compatibility when sharing with others

Summary

Learning the basics of presentation design and slide layouts doesn't have to be complicated. With these key ideas, you can see immediate changes to the overall clarity and design of your presentations.

- One idea per slide
- Tell a story with headlines
- Follow content and design principles
- Consistent placement
- Consistent margins
- Keep audiences engaged with visual pacing

- Pick 1 good image per slide
- Use animation sparingly
- Add Fade transitions between slides
- Don't overuse colors or fonts

Conclusion

Despite the ubiquity of PowerPoint in business, the basics of slide and presentation design are often misunderstood (or never taught at all). But it doesn't take a lot of time or education to learn skills that will make your slides clearer, your stories stronger, and your presentations more effective.

Looking for more information about presentation design and beyond? Check out our resources for expert advice and tested strategies.

- Storytelling
- PowerPoint design
- PowerPoint tips and tricks

Storytelling 101

The word **"storytelling"** can be both blatantly overused and frustratingly vague. But those things don't also mean that it's not a valuable addition to your presentation toolkit.

Introduction to Presentation Storytelling

Storytelling is all about the flow and structure of your presentations. It's about adding context to information and organizing your slides in a way that adds up to a larger point. Most of all, it's about creating presentations that more effectively communicate your information while doing it in less time. And in our experience, storytelling is one of the most effective yet misunderstood tools that a presenter can use.

So, let's dive into Storytelling 101, and learn more about what it is and how you can use it to enhance your presentations.

Why storytelling matters

One of the reasons that PowerPoint became such a successful model for creating presentations is that using slides makes it easy for creators to organize their content. You have an Agenda slide, a Features slide, a Results slide, etc. It's all very neat and clean and makes it easy for people to swap slides or rebuild existing presentations for new audiences.

But there's a problem with this approach. When you design each slide as its own self-contained idea, what you end up with is not a clear story with a defined arc. Instead, the result is a series of one-off slides, with no flow, transitions, or narrative.

When you think about it this way, it's easy to see how and why most presentations don't tell a story. It's not because stories are hard to tell, but rather that the medium itself doesn't encourage the sort of flow that a story requires.
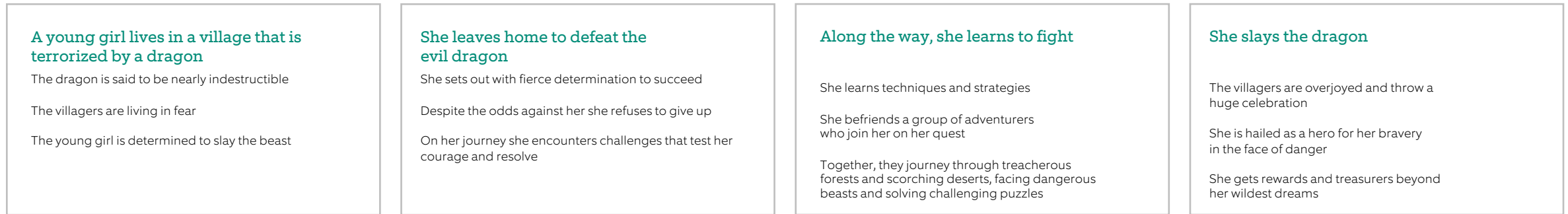
With presentation storytelling, you think about the presentation as a whole and not just the individual slides. You need to look at the order of your ideas, how the content on each slide fits with the others, as well as how each individual slide works on its own.
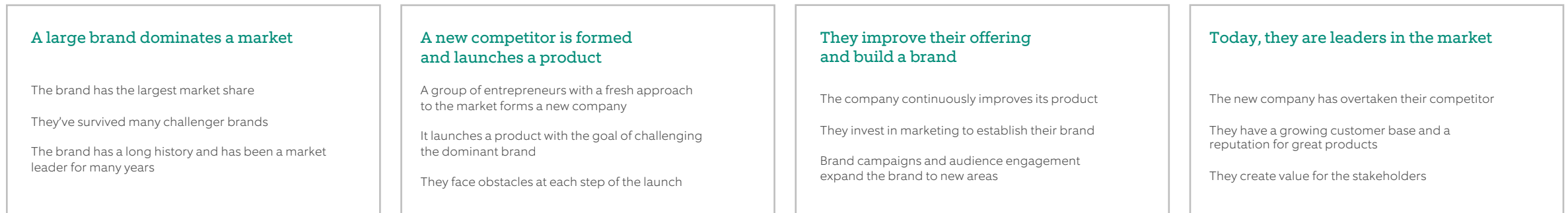
How do I get started with Presentation Storytelling?

While there are some specific techniques and frameworks you can apply to add storytelling to your presentations (we'll cover those in a bit), the simplest way to approach it is to think about showing what will change as a result of your presentation.
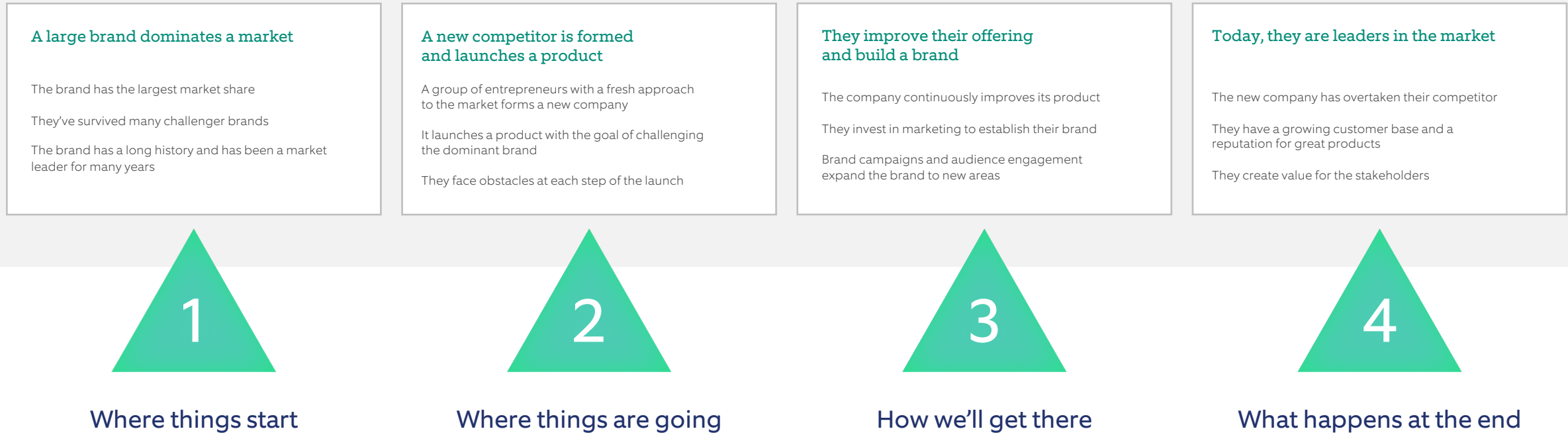
▶ At its most basic level, a story describes change. For example, here's a very simple version of the Hero's Journey:

A young girl lives in a village that is terrorized by a dragon	**She leaves home to defeat the evil dragon**	**Along the way, she learns to fight**	**She slays the dragon**
The dragon is said to be nearly indestructible	She sets out with fierce determination to succeed	She learns techniques and strategies	The villagers are overjoyed and throw a huge celebration
The villagers are living in fear	Despite the odds against her she refuses to give up	She befriends a group of adventurers who join her on her quest	She is hailed as a hero for her bravery in the face of danger
The young girl is determined to slay the beast	On her journey she encounters challenges that test her courage and resolve	Together, they journey through treacherous forests and scorching deserts, facing dangerous beasts and solving challenging puzzles	She gets rewards and treasurers beyond her wildest dreams

▶ Now, let's look at that same arc in professional setting:

A large brand dominates a market	**A new competitor is formed and launches a product**	**They improve their offering and build a brand**	**Today, they are leaders in the market**
The brand has the largest market share	A group of entrepreneurs with a fresh approach to the market forms a new company	The company continuously improves its product	The new company has overtaken their competitor
They've survived many challenger brands	It launches a product with the goal of challenging the dominant brand	They invest in marketing to establish their brand	They have a growing customer base and a reputation for great products
The brand has a long history and has been a market leader for many years	They face obstacles at each step of the launch	Brand campaigns and audience engagement expand the brand to new areas	They create value for the stakeholders

In both examples, we see the same arc

A large brand dominates a market

The brand has the largest market share

They've survived many challenger brands

The brand has a long history and has been a market leader for many years

A new competitor is formed and launches a product

A group of entrepreneurs with a fresh approach to the market forms a new company

It launches a product with the goal of challenging the dominant brand

They face obstacles at each step of the launch

They improve their offering and build a brand

The company continuously improves its product

They invest in marketing to establish their brand

Brand campaigns and audience engagement expand the brand to new areas

Today, they are leaders in the market

The new company has overtaken their competitor

They have a growing customer base and a reputation for great products

They create value for the stakeholders

1

Where things start

2

Where things are going

3

How we'll get there

4

What happens at the end

At a high level, this is essentially what presentation storytelling means:
organizing your content to tell a larger story than what's on the individual slides.

What are some specific techniques I can use to improve my storytelling?

The big truth about presentations is that each one is unique. That means no framework, no matter how comprehensive or well-designed, is going to work for every story you want to tell. That said, there are some great techniques you can apply and a few specific tactics that we've found to be useful tools for crafting stories.

How can we maximize our momentum?

New ways to grow

Improve customer acquisition strategy

Open new markets

We'll expand our footprint by exploring untapped revenue streams and diversifying income sources

We're leveraging customer data and feedback to inform our strategy, and launching targeted marketing campaigns

Our go-to-market strategy for new markets hinges on overcoming cultural barriers and understanding local regulations

What are some specific techniques I can use to improve my storytelling?

Before we get into specifics, let's go over some best practices for writing presentations. Regardless of the technique you use, or the brilliance of your idea, these two tips are a great place to start for any presentation writer.

BEFORE	AFTER
A young girl lives in a village that is terrorized by a dragon The dragon is said to be nearly indestructible, with scales as hard as steel and breath that can melt metal The villagers are living in fear and despair, as the dragon regularly comes to the village to demand tribute in the form of gold and livestock The young girl is determined to put an end to the dragon's reign of terror and decides to embark on a quest to slay the beast	**A girl's village is terrorized by a dragon** The dragon is said to be nearly indestructible The villagers are living in fear The young girl is determined to slay the beast

BEFORE	AFTER
Results The new company has successfully established itself as a leader in the market by challenging the dominant brand They have a growing customer base and a reputation for quality and innovation Their products are highly sought after, and they continue to expand their product offerings and grow their brand	**Today, they are leaders in the market** The new company has overtaken their competitor They have a growing customer base and a reputation for great products They create value for the stakeholders

▶ ## First, streamline your content.

Even if you have a clear story, it can get lost in the mix if every slide is crammed with bullets and icons. There's an idea in learning and development that says "slides are for sharing ideas, not teaching them." Your goal on a given slide is not to try and force your audience to recall every line you added to the slide – instead, it's to gently guide them to the big idea you want to convey.

Focus on conveying your key message and leave the rest for a follow up document.

▶ ## Second, write benefit-driven headlines.

The traditional slide title is, to be honest, bad. If you've ever sat through a presentation that led with nothing but basic descriptions that just tell the audience what is on the slide, you'll understand. Titles don't convey a key message, they don't highlight a takeaway, and they don't help to advance your story.

Instead, you can use your titles to highlight the benefit to the audience. Earlier in this document, we said that a story shows change. A benefit explains to the audience what will change as a result of choosing your brand. That means that using benefits is a simple way to add storytelling techniques to any piece of writing, even if you aren't connecting a larger narrative.

SCQA

SCQA, or Situation-Complication-Question-Answer, is a framework that's widely used in the consulting industry, and offers a clear, simple approach to structuring a story. Starting from your main idea, you can build out your presentation to follow this order, and the result will be a straightforward story that offers your audience an easy-to-understand outcome.

▶ **Here's an example:**
Say you are trying to pitch investors on your new shopping app.

SITUATION
Shopping for groceries is essential

COMPLICATION
People have less time to go shopping

QUESTION
What if we brought the groceries to them?

ANSWER
SHOPPR offers fast delivery for free

Using this framework, you've added context to your main idea, shown a benefit to choosing you, and framed your information as a story. Best of all, you can do it all without any boring slide titles.

The Reveal

A common form of narrative storytelling is to build up to the main point. Think of a great book or a favorite movie that leaves you on the edge of your seat until the last minute. In this framework, information is slowly shared across the entire work, and tension is built until the final moment.

The buildup

SHOPPRR saves you 10 mins and 10% on every trip

It's a shopping revolution in the palm of your hands

It's not just another app...

A faster way to find what your family needs

A smarter way to shop for supplies

A better way to buy groceries

Today, we're launching something totally new...

The Back up

This style is more like a mystery that starts with the murder. You know what happened, but all the other details are a story to be unraveled slide by slide.

Work back from it

SHOPPRR saves you 10 mins and 10% on every trip

It's a better way to buy groceries

It's a smarter way to shop for supplies

It's a faster way to find what your family needs

It's a shopping revolution in the palm of your hands
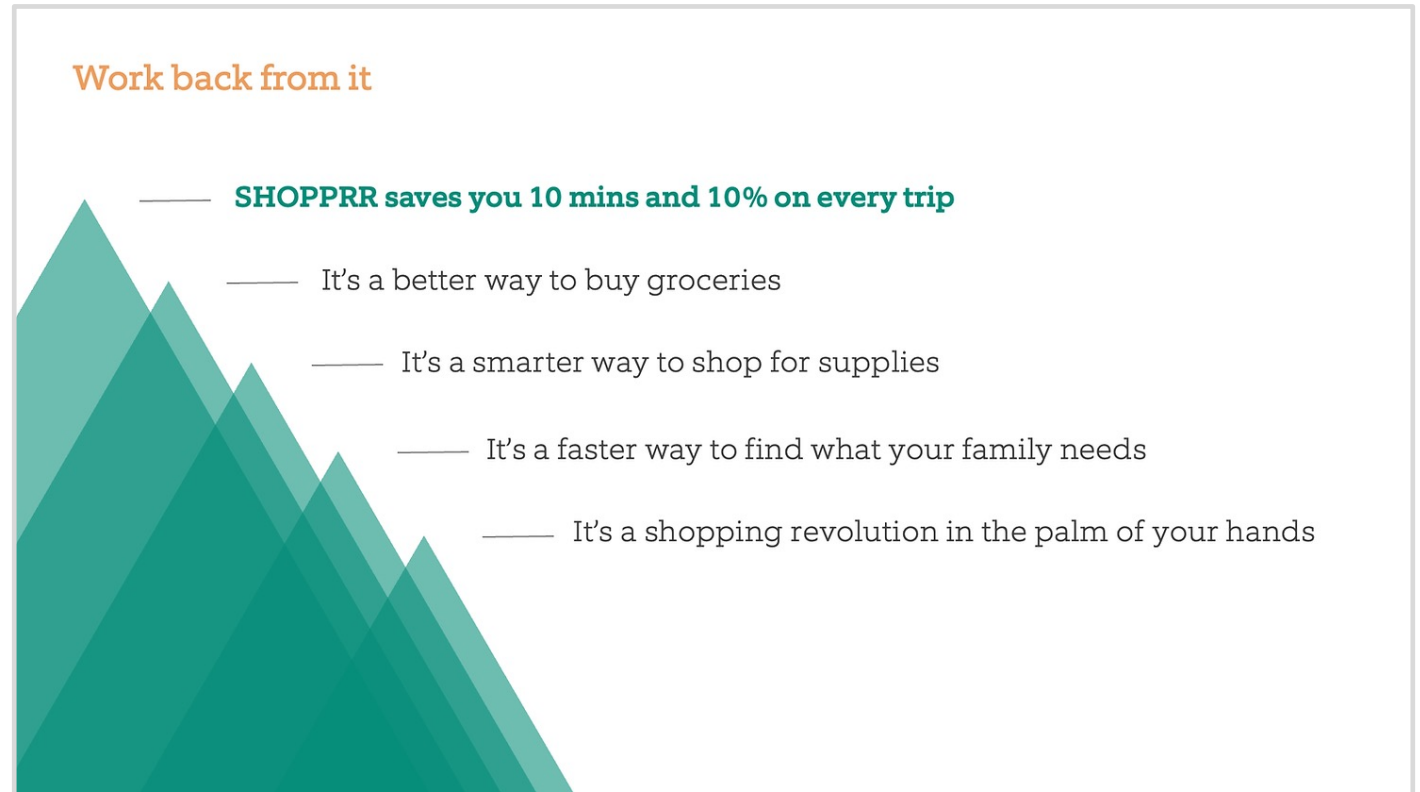
You'll notice that this approach uses the same headlines to tell two very different stories. By inverting the order, you can shift the emphasis to suit your unique story and style.

Macro/Micro/Atomic

With this technique, you organize your presentation through the lens of scale, and zoom in (or out) to get the full story.

For example, here are two ways that you might frame up a topic:

MACRO
Global context

MICRO
Industry trends

ATOMIC
Enterprise trajectory

MACRO
Corporate strategy

MICRO
Product strategy

ATOMIC
Activation tactics

This simple framework helps you look at an issue from multiple perspectives, and your story is how you navigate through them.

Conclusion

Storytelling is simpler than it seems, and can elevate the quality of your presentations as well as your professional communications in general. With a few basic techniques and the willingness to let go of your expectations about what a story is or what a slide needs to sound like, you can become a storytelling pro in no time.

Looking for more information about presentation storytelling and beyond? Check out our resources for expert advice and tested strategies.

- Storytelling
- PowerPoint design
- PowerPoint tips and tricks

Templates 101

Whether you are a big brand that creates lots of presentations or just someone who wants to simplify the process, a PowerPoint template is a powerful tool for streamlining and improving the way you make presentations.
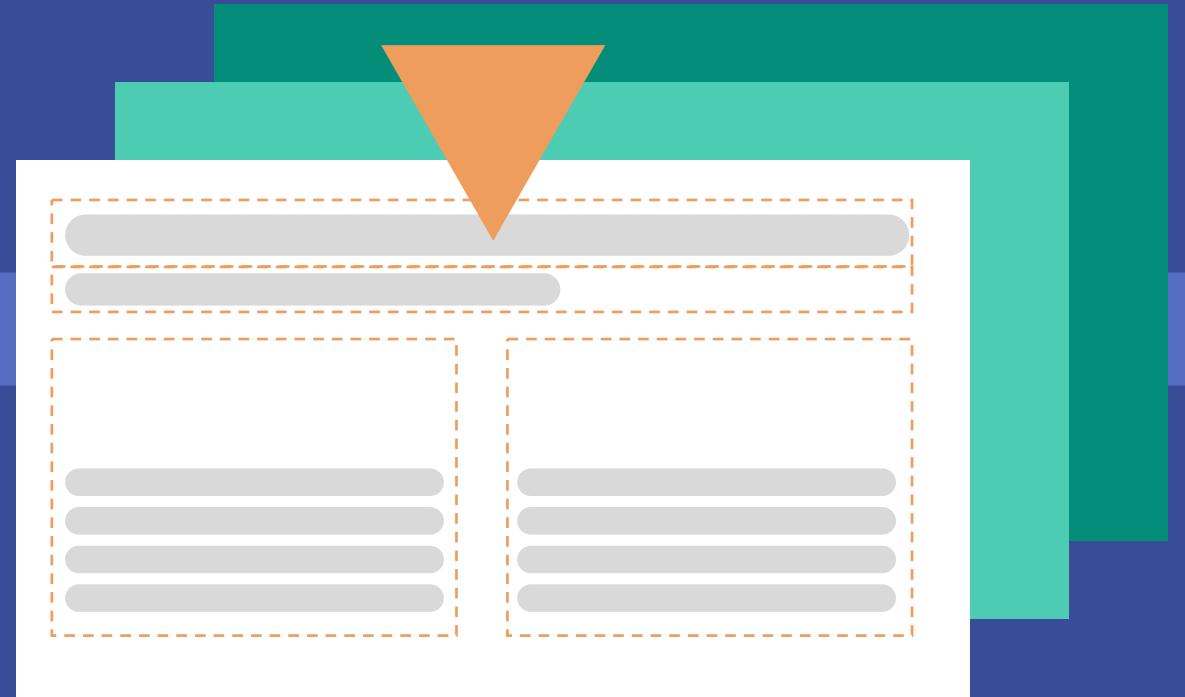
What is a PowerPoint template?

In this guide, we'll go over what a template is, why they are useful, and how to use them for your presentations.

PowerPoint templates are the foundation of great presentations.

Think of templates like a blueprint for your slides. A template lays out the basics – such as colors, fonts, backgrounds, and effects – across a variety of slide types, so you can easily create a well-designed and consistent presentation from scratch.

No more struggling to match brand colors or fussing with placement of logos. With a template, the basic layouts are completed in advance, so all you have to do is fill in your content.

What are the benefits of using a template?
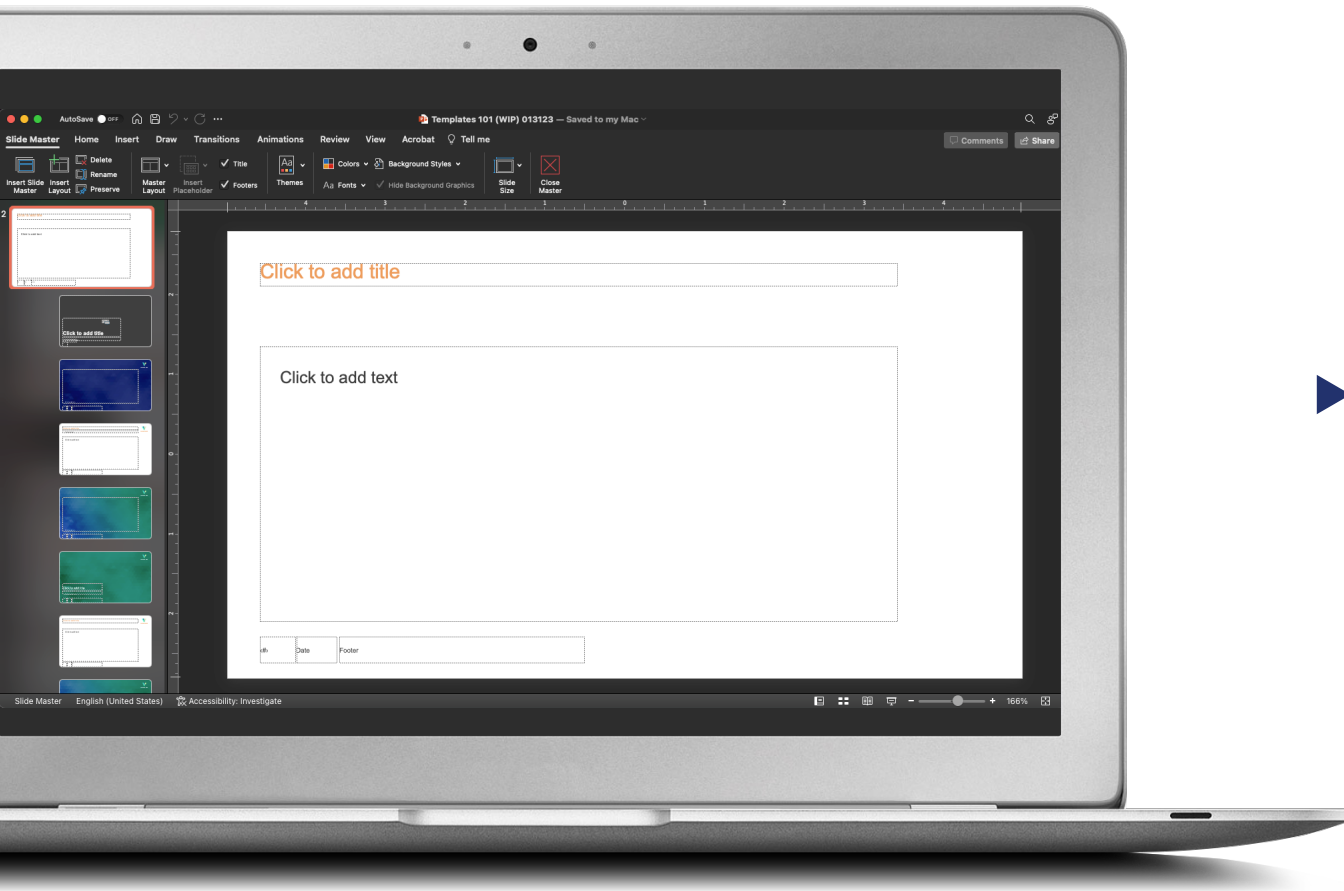
PowerPoint templates make it easy for one person, or an entire organization, to create customized and engaging presentations. They offer greater control over branding elements and consistency, and reduce the amount of time users need to spend incorporating essential elements, since they are already built into the template.

▶ **Templates can influence every aspect of your presentations:**

• How your fonts and colors display

• How your content shows up on screen

• How your content prints

With a well-designed template, you can ensure consistent presentations that look pleasing and promote your brand, without the extra time or expertise needed to create custom presentations from scratch.

How to make a PowerPoint template

Create a blank presentation

Open PowerPoint and select New > Blank Presentation
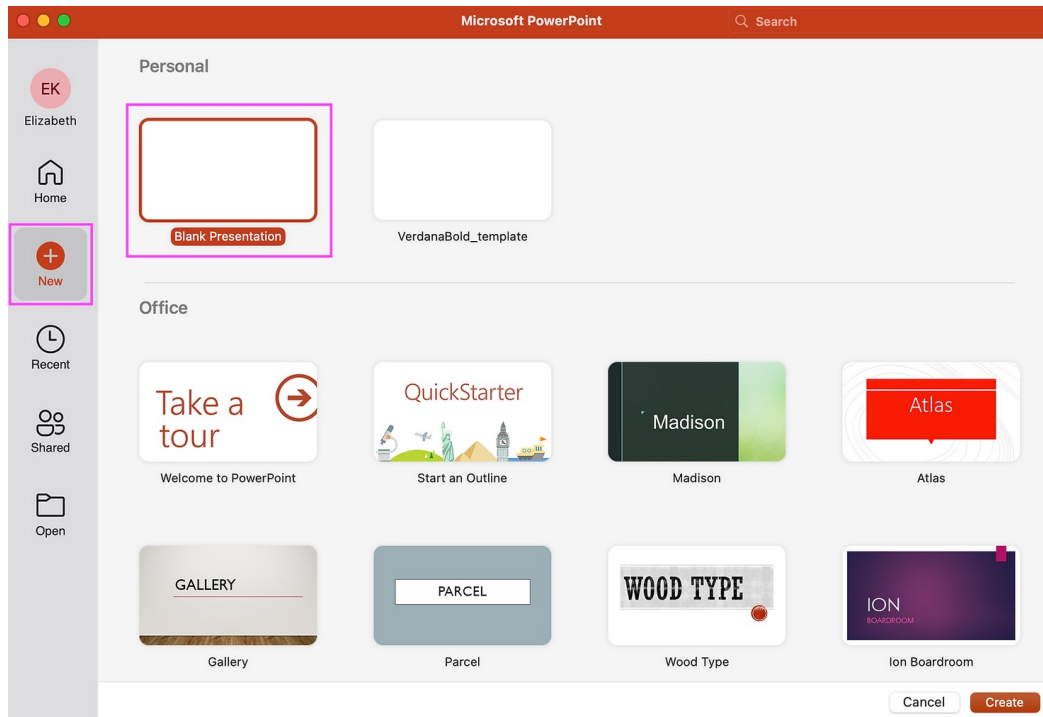
Select a slide size

In the Design tab, select Slide Size and choose a default size—Standard (4:3) or Widescreen (16:9). If you prefer a different size, you can create custom slide dimensions in Page Setup.

We recommend using the Widescreen size – 13.33"x7.5" (1280x720).
This is the standard HD format accessible to most modern computer screens.
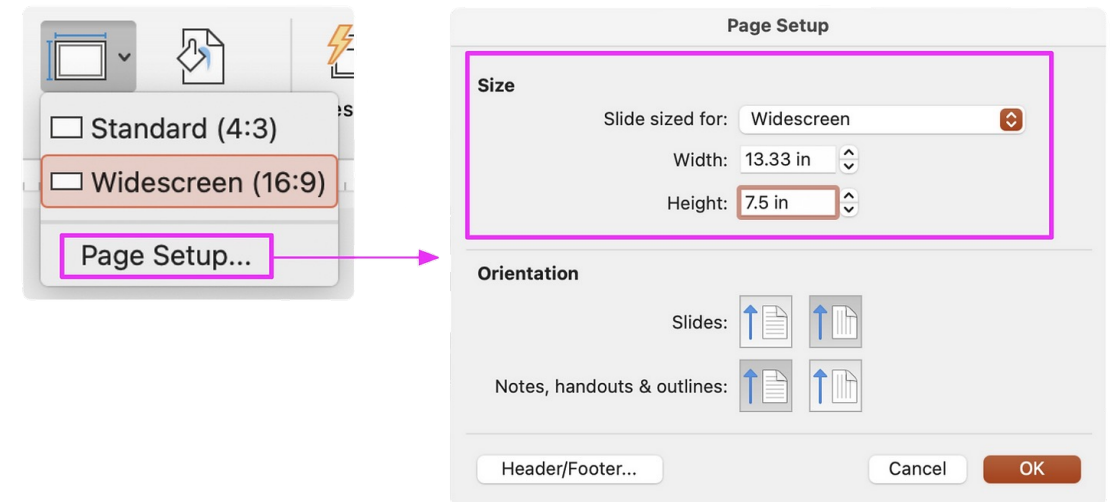
How to make a PowerPoint template

Choose your page orientation

Go to Page Setup > Orientation to set the orientation of your slides. The standard for most presentations is landscape.
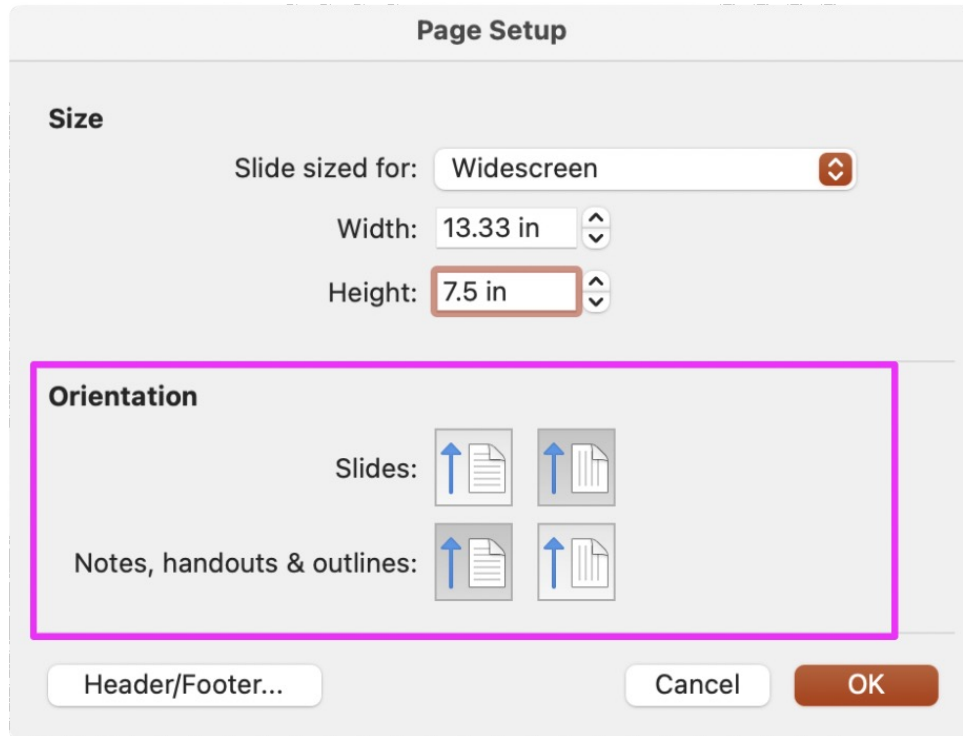
Set up your Slide Master

The Slide Master is the primary slide image, and it appears at the top of the list. A Slide Master sets the standard for the rest of your slides, and contains the basic settings you want to apply, like colors or logos.
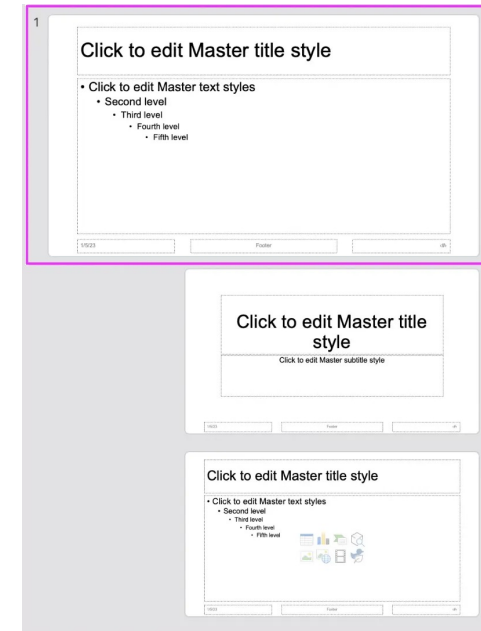
With a Slide Master, you can make one edit that is then applied to any associated layouts in your template. This gives you the flexibility to easily update a new logo across all slides with one change, for example.

Elements in the Slide Master are also safe from editing in Normal view (that is, the standard slide view). For example, if you set a logo in the master, people who are working in Normal view won't be able to move it. To edit that element, simply go back to the Slide Master view.

The Slide Master is a great place to include common elements that you know will need to be on each slide, like logos, footers, dates, slide numbers, or even things like title and body copy text boxes.

How to make a PowerPoint template

Set up your layouts
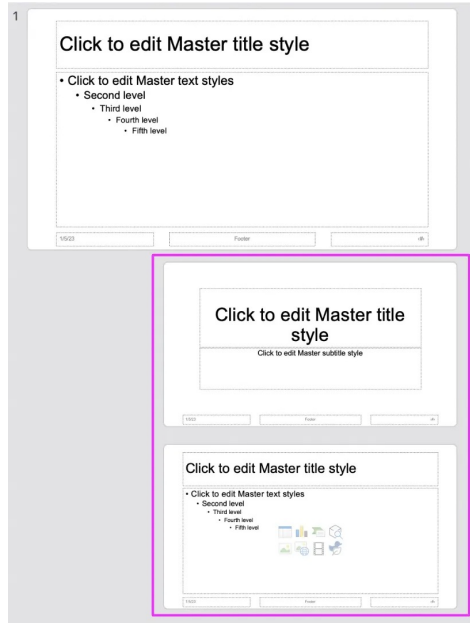
If your Slide Master is the foundation for your presentation, layouts are the rooms in the house. Each slide layout is set up differently — with different types of placeholders in different locations on each layout.

Think of layouts as versions of the Slide Master that have been customized for specific types of content. Some will be for text-heavy slides, others for large images, etc.

Create placeholders

Placeholders let you set spots for different types of content in your layouts. They can include text, images, charts and tables, videos, audio files, and more.
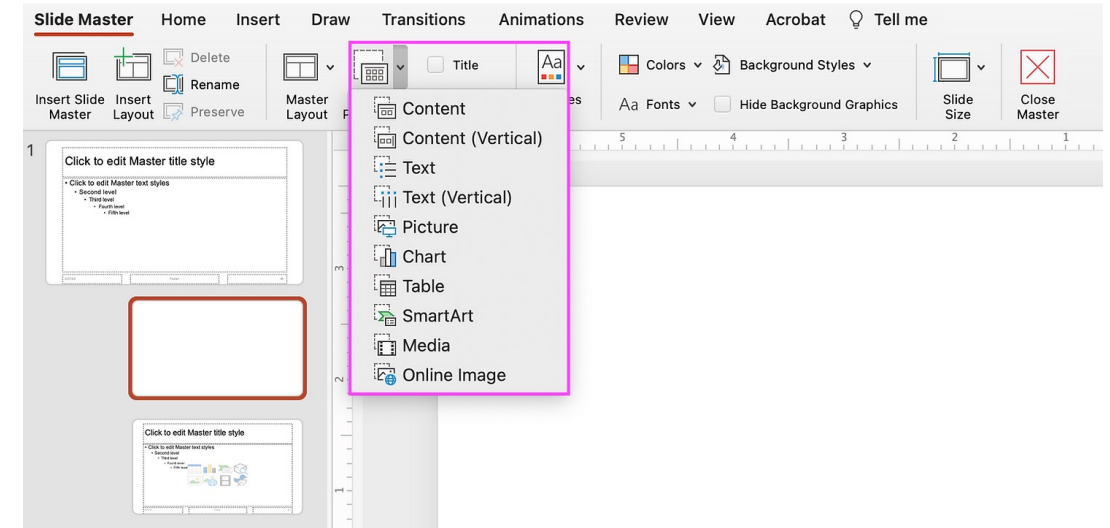
▶ **To add a placeholder, select the slide layout that you want to use, then:**

- Click Insert Placeholder, and select the type of content you want to use

- On the Slide Master or slide layout, click and drag to draw the placeholder size

How to make a PowerPoint template

Create a custom grid using guides

Using guides to create a grid is a simple and reliable way to align objects in your template (and on your slides in general). By placing your guides on the Slide Master, you can have them set in place and prevent users from accidentally moving them.
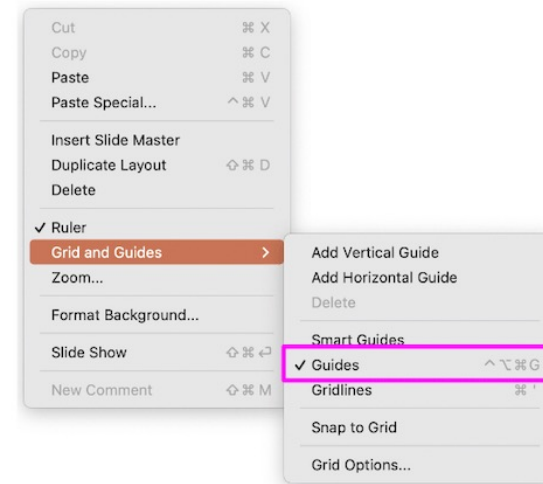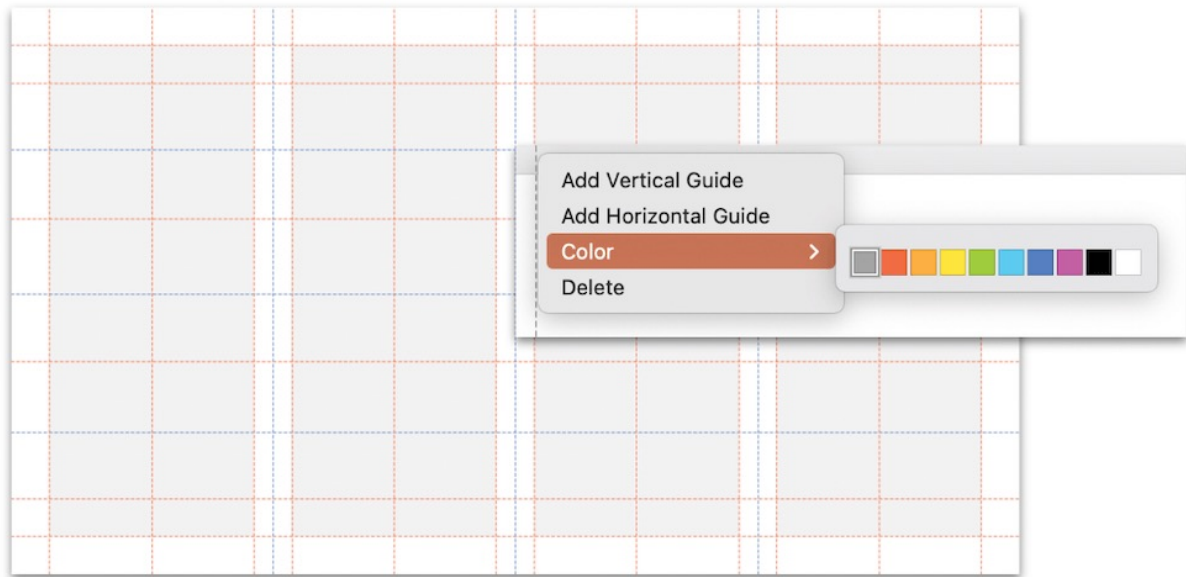
To turn guides on or off, right-click the slide background and choose Guides, or go to the View tab and select Guides.

PowerPoint also lets you customize your guides. You can color code them using the 10 default colors, and you can adjust the spacing down to as little as 0.01".

How to make a PowerPoint template

Create a custom color palette

Color is a key aspect of a branded template, and adding your brand colors is a great way to ensure consistency across users.
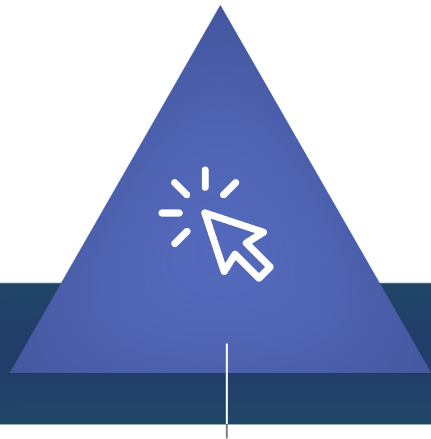
To create a custom color palette in your template, go to the Design tab, click the arrow under the colors section on the right, then click Customize Colors.
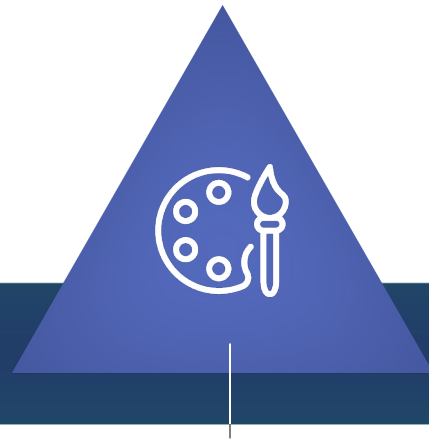
Next, click a color box to change its values. You can input an RGB or HEX value, or pick from a number of pre-selected color options.

You can customize up to 10 colors for your palette.
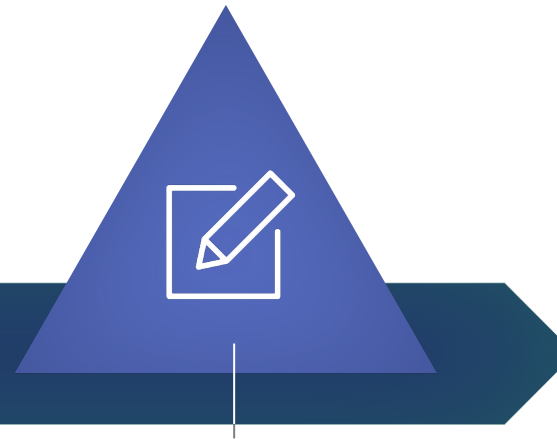
Once you close the Colors window, select the Name box, add a name for your custom palette, then hit Save. This will apply the theme color to your presentation.

Create Theme Colors

Click on the colored box to change a theme color

- Text/Background – Dark 1
- Text/Background – Light 1
- Text/Background – Dark 2
- Text/Background – Light 2
- Accent 1
- Accent 2
- Accent 3
- Accent 4
- Accent 5
- Accent 6
- Hyperlink
- Followed Hyperlink

Text   Text

Hyperlink   Hyperlink
Hyperlink   Hyperlink

Preview

Name: Custom 1

Cancel   Save
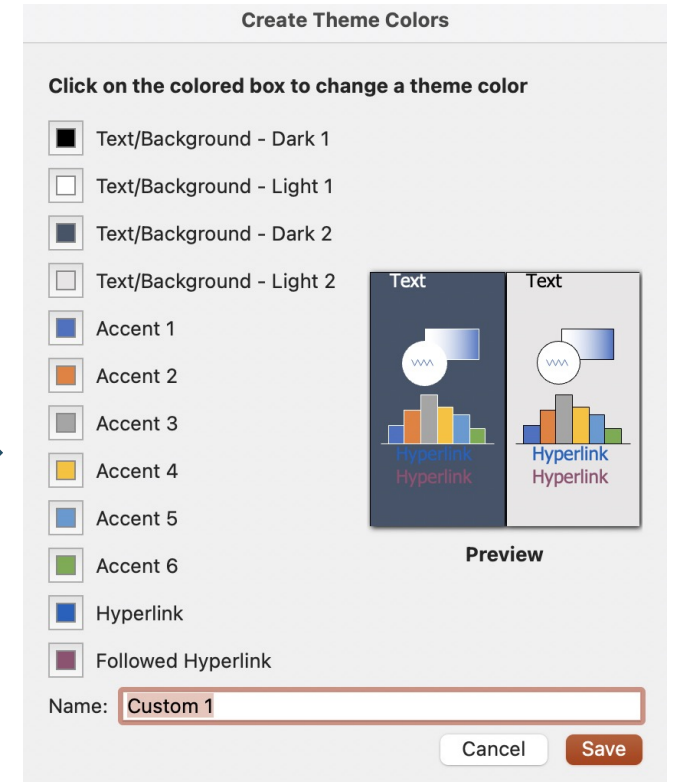
How to make a PowerPoint template

Theme colors

The primary theme color palette is customizable and consists of 4 text/background colors, 6 accent colors, and a hyperlink + followed hyperlink color.

The color shades below theme colors are default palettes within the tool and are not customizable.

Custom colors

It's possible to include up to 50 additional custom colors in the template. These colors appear in 5 rows of 10 colors each and can be named.

The colors labeled 'Standard Colors' in PowerPoint are default palettes within the tool and are not customizable.

Theme Colors

Custom Colors

VerdanaBold Teal 4

Standard Colors

How to make a PowerPoint template

Text/background colors

The four options here don't have to be dark and light, as the name suggests, but it's recommended as background and text colors (including for charts & chart labels).

Accent colors

These are the main colors you'll use in your presentation, and all Charts and SmartArt will be created using these colors by default.

Hyperlink color

Here you can choose a hyperlink color and a color for links that have been clicked. Note that the colors won't appear in the theme color menus.

■	Text/Background – Dark 1
□	Text/Background – Light 1
■	Text/Background – Dark 2
□	Text/Background – Light 2
■	Accent 1
■	Accent 2
■	Accent 3
■	Accent 4
■	Accent 5
■	Accent 6
■	Hyperlink
■	Followed Hyperlink

Text | **Text**

Hyperlink
Hyperlink

Hyperlink
Hyperlink

Preview

Name: VerdanaBold

Cancel   Save
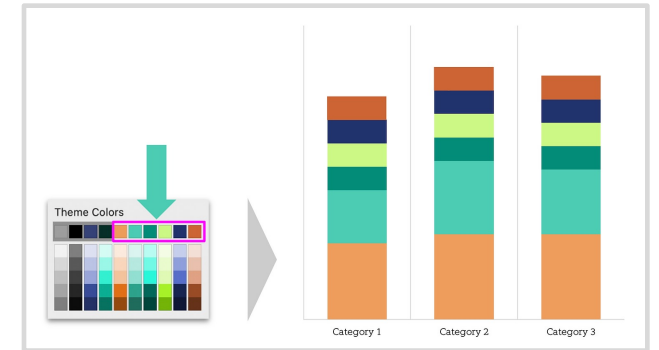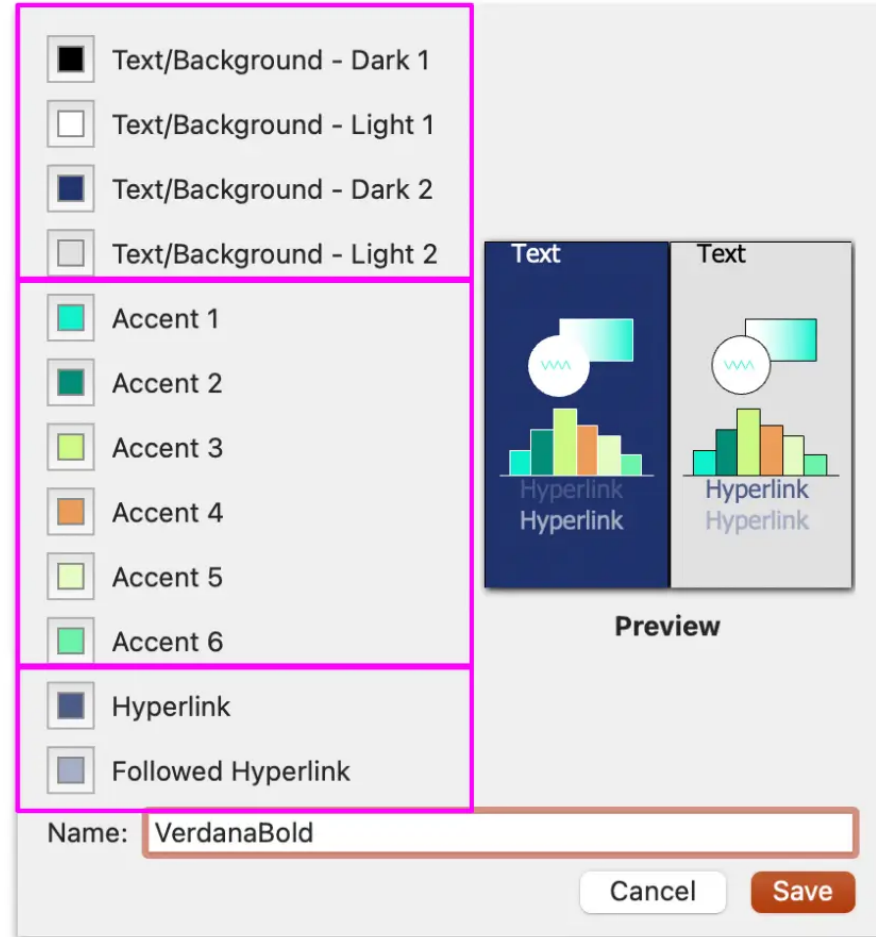
You can also set the accent colors to customize the colors of any charts or graphs used in your template. By default, PowerPoint will use the colors in boxes 5-10 in your list to fill out your data visualization.

Theme Colors

Category 1   Category 2   Category 3

How to make a PowerPoint template

Apply background styles

An important aspect of your template is backgrounds. To set a background on your slide master or layout, go to the Slide Master tab, click Background Styles, and choose your preferred background.
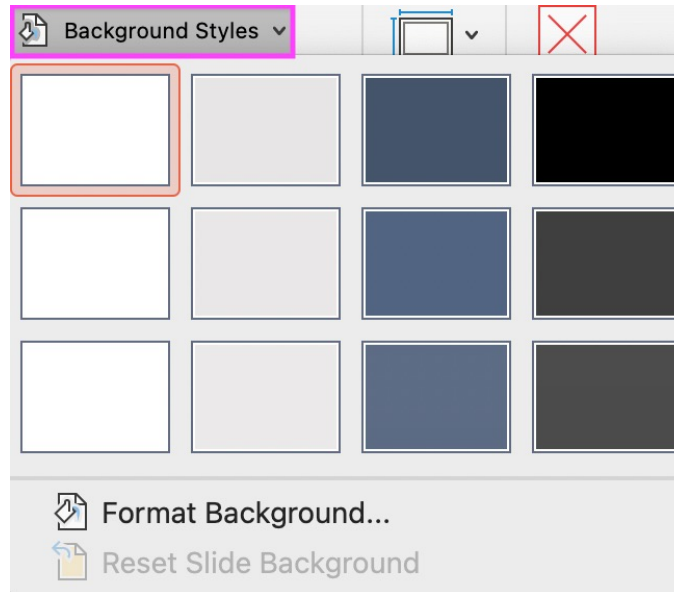
To make changes to the background of your slide master or slide layouts, on the Slide Master tab, click Background Styles, and choose a background.
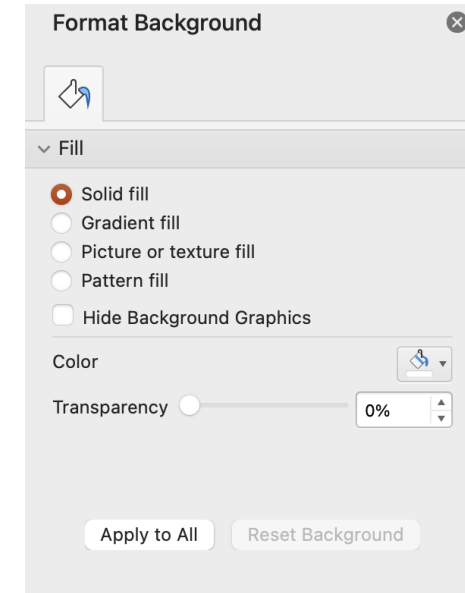
For more control over the background, you can adjust other options by clicking Format Background. Here, you can change colors, textures, patterns, or even images. You can also hide background graphics.

How to make a PowerPoint template

Theme fonts

Fonts are one of the most important parts of a template, particularly when it comes to brand consistency. When you change the font, it will update all of the text, both titles and bullets, in your presentation.

To set your fonts, select the Slide Master tab, click Fonts, and then Customize Fonts. You can choose your preferred combo from the drop-down menu.
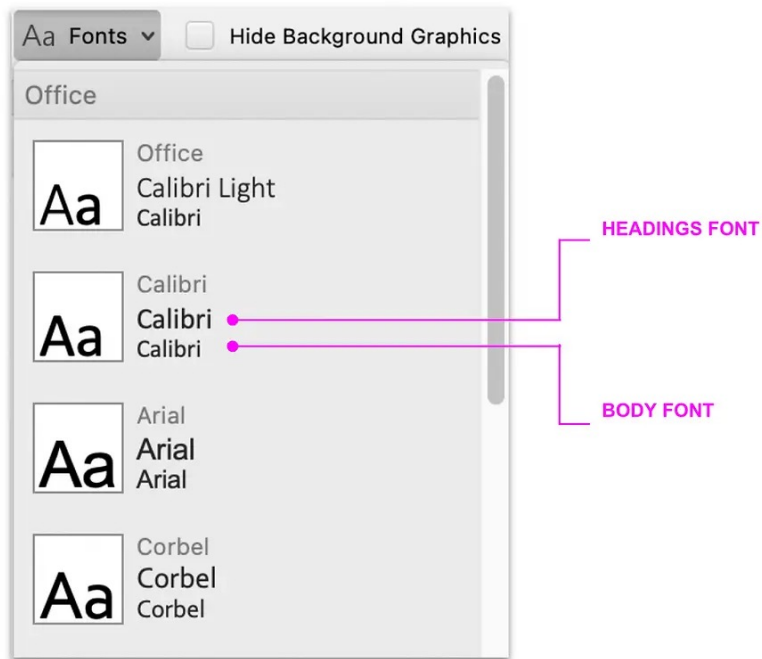
Embed custom fonts

If you want to use a custom font, for example one that is part of your brand guidelines but not a default PowerPoint option, you'll need to embed the font. To embed a font, follow this path:

PowerPoint > Preferences > Output and Sharing > Save > and under Font Embedding, select Embed fonts in the file.
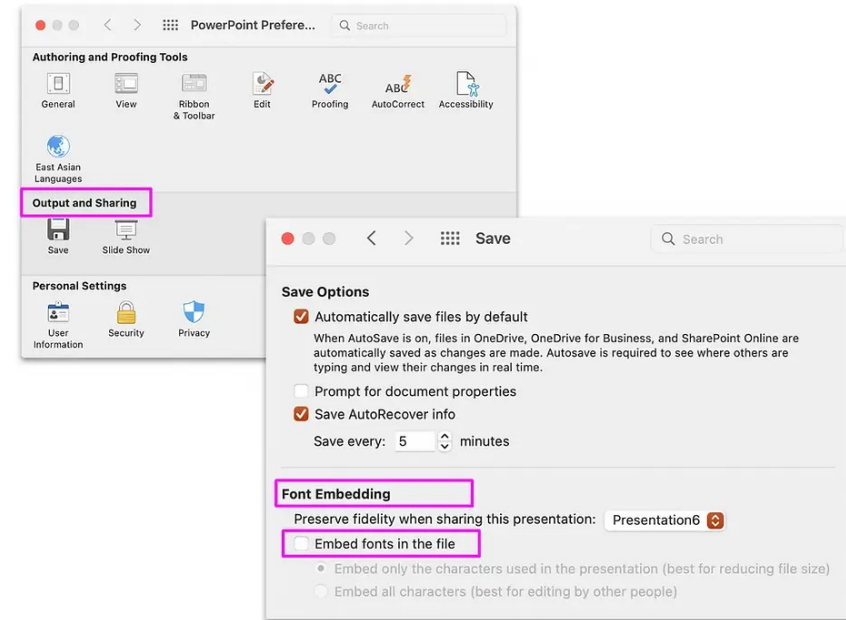
How to make a PowerPoint template

Remove unwanted fonts

You'll also want to make sure that there are no unnecessary fonts in your template. These won't hurt anything, but they will cause confusing error messages to pop up when you save.

To confirm that you don't have any unwanted fonts, go to Format > Replace Fonts. Scan through the dropdown list, and if you see any that you don't want included, you can select a font to replace it.
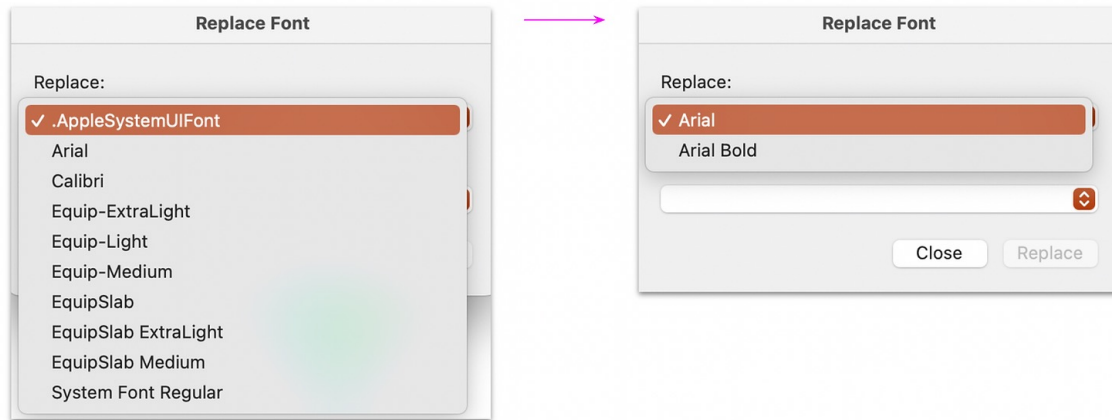
Saving your theme

Once you've selected the elements you want to include, you'll need to save your theme. Your theme includes the colors, fonts, and other visual elements that should be a part of your presentations. Note that each theme has its own slide master and related layouts.

Once you've made your selections, click the Theme drop down and choose Save Current Theme.
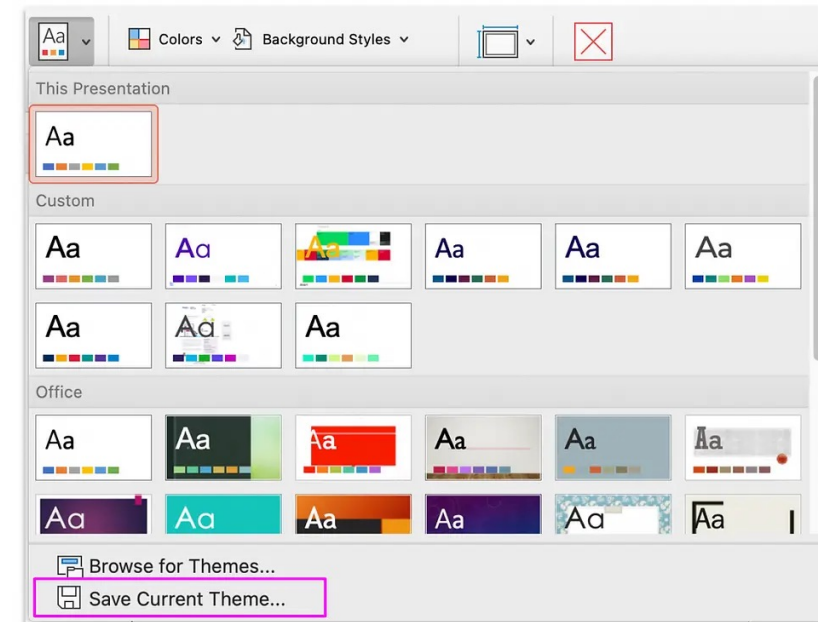
How to make a PowerPoint template

Saving your template

Now that you finished choosing the elements of your template, you'll need to save it for future use. Rather than the standard .pptx, a PowerPoint template is saved as a .pptx.

In the File menu, click Save As Template. From there, just name your template, choose a location to save it, and you're ready to go!

Once you are ready to use your template for a new presentation, just go to File > New from Template.
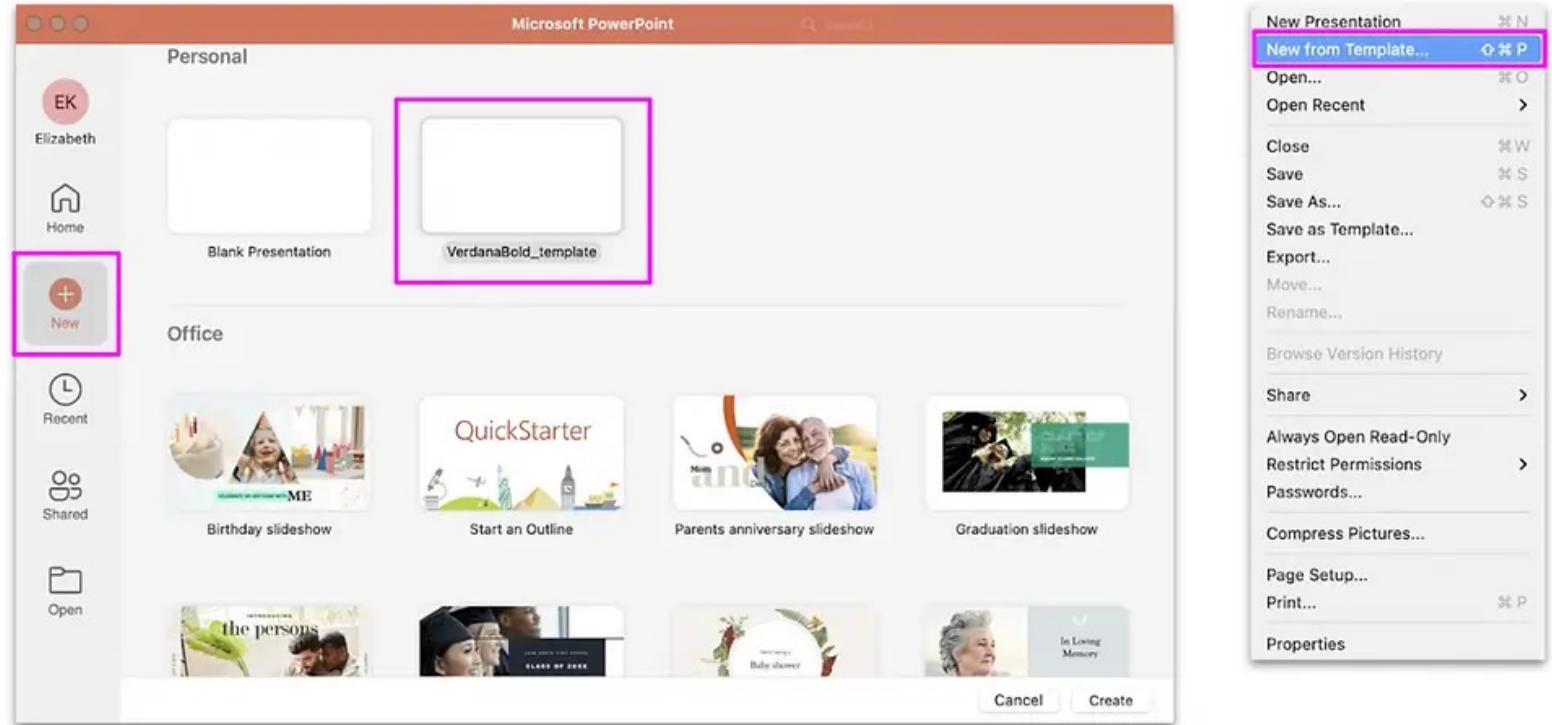
Template best practices

There's a lot going on in templates, but they are simpler to make and use than it might seem. Here are a few tips and tricks that will help you get started with building and using templates.
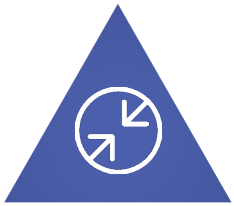
Keep file size small

Ideally your template should stay under 10MB, but at least keep them under 25MB to make it easy to share over email.

If your file is too large, you can compress the images to 150 ppi, or crop out any unused parts of pictures.
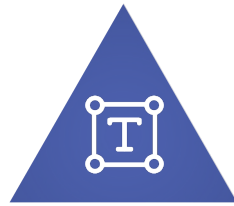
Pick System fonts

While custom brand fonts can look nice, they cause issues if you're sharing a template or presentation with someone who doesn't have your font on their computer.

We recommend choosing a System font that's likely to be on most computers.
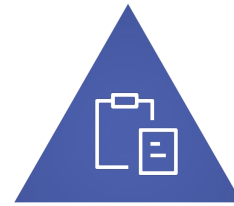
Paste content, not slides

If you copy and paste a slide from a presentation that uses a different template than the one you are working in, it will add elements that aren't part of your template as well as other inconsistencies.

Instead, rebuild slides by pasting the content into a slide from your template piece by piece.

Design for accessibility

In general, it's a best practice to use the built-in Accessibility Checker as you go.

This ensures that accessibility concerns are addressed before users start building on your template.

Applying your template to other programs

Even though you created it in (and for) PowerPoint, you can also use your template in other presentation programs, like Google Slides or Keynote. However, be prepared for certain elements not to transfer properly.
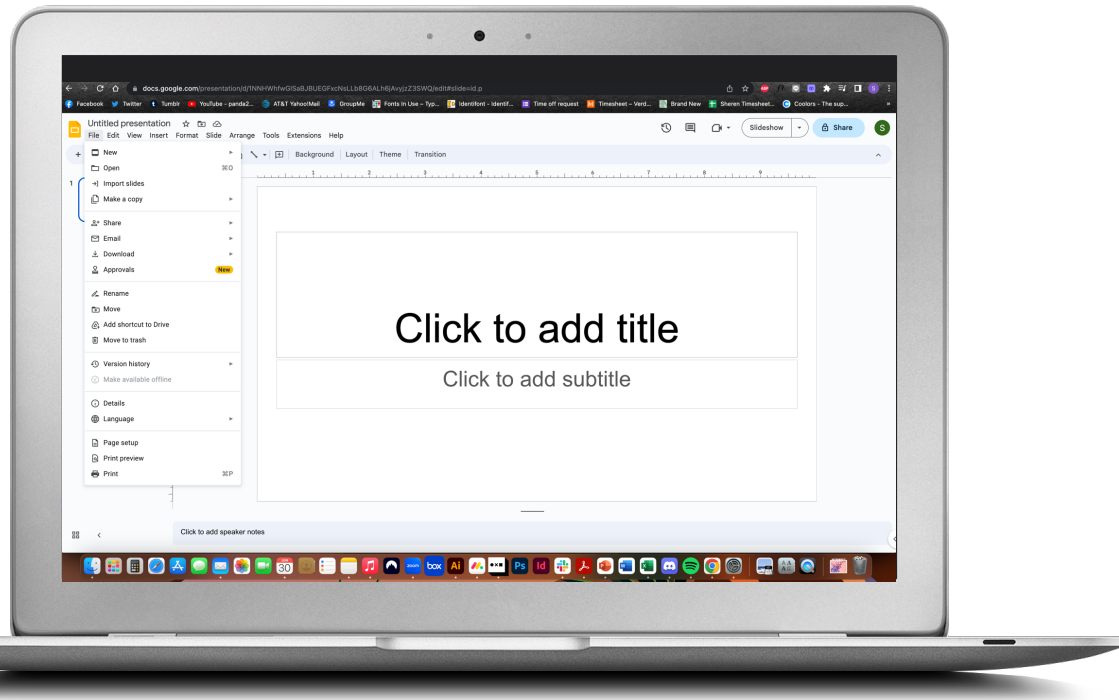
As a result, you should review your template and a few sample slides to see if anything broke during the transfer. We've found that complex elements like SmartArt, charts and tables, animation, and interactivity will need to be fixed once you bring your template into another program.

Here's a list of some of the most common compatibility issues when transferring templates between PowerPoint and other presentation programs:

- Font and type

- Animation

- Template and layouts

- Shapes

- Images

- Charts and tables

- Hyperlinks and interactivity

Conclusion

Templates are a powerful tool for streamlining the way you make presentations. And for businesses with lots of PowerPoint users, they can be the best way to ensure brand consistency and elevate the overall quality of presentations. Once you learn the basics of creating, editing, and using templates, you'll see the benefits almost immediately.

Looking for more information about templates and beyond? Check out our resources for expert advice and tested strategies.

- Storytelling
- PowerPoint design
- PowerPoint tips and tricks

Typography 101

Typography is one of the most important elements of a presentation.

It's unique in that it does two things at once: it's a decision about how you make content clear and easy to read, but it's also an expression of your visual brand.

VerdanaBold

Principles of typography

For all the countless fonts and many ways to use them, typography is actually a less complicated topic than it seems.

In this guide, we'll cover the general principles of typography, and best practices for using type in presentations.

Font vs. Typeface

While these two terms are often used interchangeably, there is actually a distinction between them. Technically, a **typeface** is the overarching family (e.g. Arial), while a **font** is the specific iteration of that typeface that you use in a document (e.g. Arial Bold). But since **font** is more commonly used, we'll be using it as a general term for all things type in this blog.

Typeface	Font
Arial	**Arial Bold**

Choosing the best type for your presentation

Serif and Sans serif

You can group all fonts into two categories: serif and sans serif.

"Sans" comes from the French word for "without", so fonts
can come with or without the decorative tails known as serifs.

A serif is a decorative stroke on the end of letters. They originate in traditional printing techniques, and tend to be seen as professional, traditional,
or formal. Serif fonts are often used in body text, as the serifs make each letter clear and legible, even at a small size.

Sans serif fonts don't have that end stroke on each letter. This creates a clear look that is commonly considered to be more modern than serifs. Sans serif fonts are popular in digital spaces like apps and social media. They are also used for things like wayfinding – the font for U.S. highway signage is in **Clearview**)

System vs. Google vs. Brand fonts

With these types of fonts, the difference comes from who makes or offers them, rather than their look.

System fonts are the ones that are included with most devices. In other words, the fonts you see when you open PowerPoint for the first time. Some examples are Arial, Times New Roman, Calibri, Courier New. Infamously, this category also includes Comic Sans and Papyrus.

Google fonts are fonts that are licensed by Google for anyone to download for free. They offer similar alternatives to many other fonts, as well as optimization for web use.

Brand fonts are just fonts that have been chosen to represent a specific brand. This means they can be any type or come from anywhere. Some are even custom created for that brand.

Serif	San Serif
Georgia	Arial

System	Google	Brand
Arial	Roboto	IBM Plex Sans

When picking presentation fonts, it comes down to two choices:

Usage

What fonts you use can be influenced by where you will be using them. For presentations, we recommend system fonts as a best practice.

This matters most when you are sharing a presentation to someone on a different computer. System fonts are easily accessible to most users as they don't require additional downloads, so everyone can open, read, and present a document with system fonts in place, without worrying if the appropriate font is downloaded or embedded.

Using Google fonts is a fine option as well, as they're quick and easy to download to your computer. However, they do require an additional step compared to using a system font. But Google fonts are a great resource for an exciting and refreshing variety of fonts to use if you're looking for something a bit more unique.

Aesthetics

Sometimes you might choose a font because either you like the way it looks, or because it's mandated by your brand guidelines. With purely aesthetic decisions, you are free to choose whatever you think best suits your presentation.

With brand fonts, this just refers to a font that is specified by your brand. These can be any category of font (system, Google, or custom), as they have been chosen specifically for their place in your larger brand vision.

This can create a unique and ownable look in a presentation, but it also creates some challenges. If you are using custom brand fonts, you may need to embed your font to ensure that presentations render correctly and consistently on every machine.

For Mac
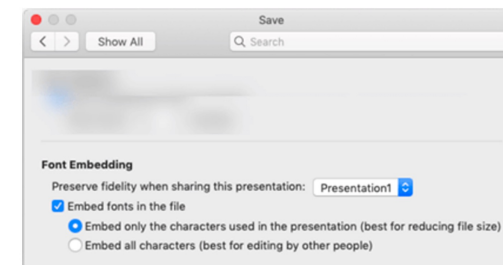
For PC
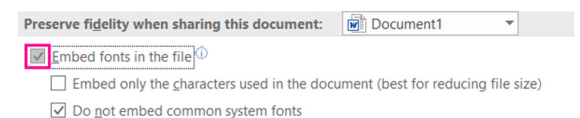
The right font for the right presentation

If you have a designated brand font, you will likely defer to that option for most of your presentations.
If you are choosing your own fonts, there are a few guidelines we like to follow when considering font options.

▶ **Before you choose a font, ask yourself these questions**

Is it legible:
Can you easily read and understand the content with this font?

Is it appropriate:
What does the look and feel of the font contribute to the content?

✔

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind

✕

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind

The right font for the right presentation

The quick brown fo☒ jumps over the lazy dog.

Legibility

is a core consideration of fonts, since they are essentially meant to communicate information. But appropriateness matters as part of legibility: some fonts aren't readable, and that can be intentional for a number of reasons.

Appropriateness

can be challenging for people to determine, as there are not real rules to follow. But a good approach is to start with considering the audience for your presentation. For example, Comic Sans is more of a meme than a font at this point, largely because its playful appearance often contradicts the serious information it's used to convey. It's made to be playful with a faux-handwritten and bubbly aesthetic, so it's not great for every wedding invitation or the sign for a <u>funeral home.</u>

Legibility and appropriateness of fonts

Here's a real-world example of how this dynamic works.

Graphic designer David Carson famously (or infamously) used Zapf Dingbats, a font that is just pictographic symbols, for the text of an interview with English singer Bryan Ferry in the magazine Raygun because he felt the content of the interview was <u>boring</u>. This instance really seems to be the opposite of the guiding principles above, but it illustrates why these principles matter.

Is it legible? No, you can't read or understand Dingbats on its own, but that's the point – Carson doesn't want you to because the interview is so boring that it's more interesting to look at a series of symbols than the content of the interview itself.

Is the font appropriate? Well, that depends on the audience. It might be if you're interested in reading quality content, but it's probably not if you're Bryan Ferry.
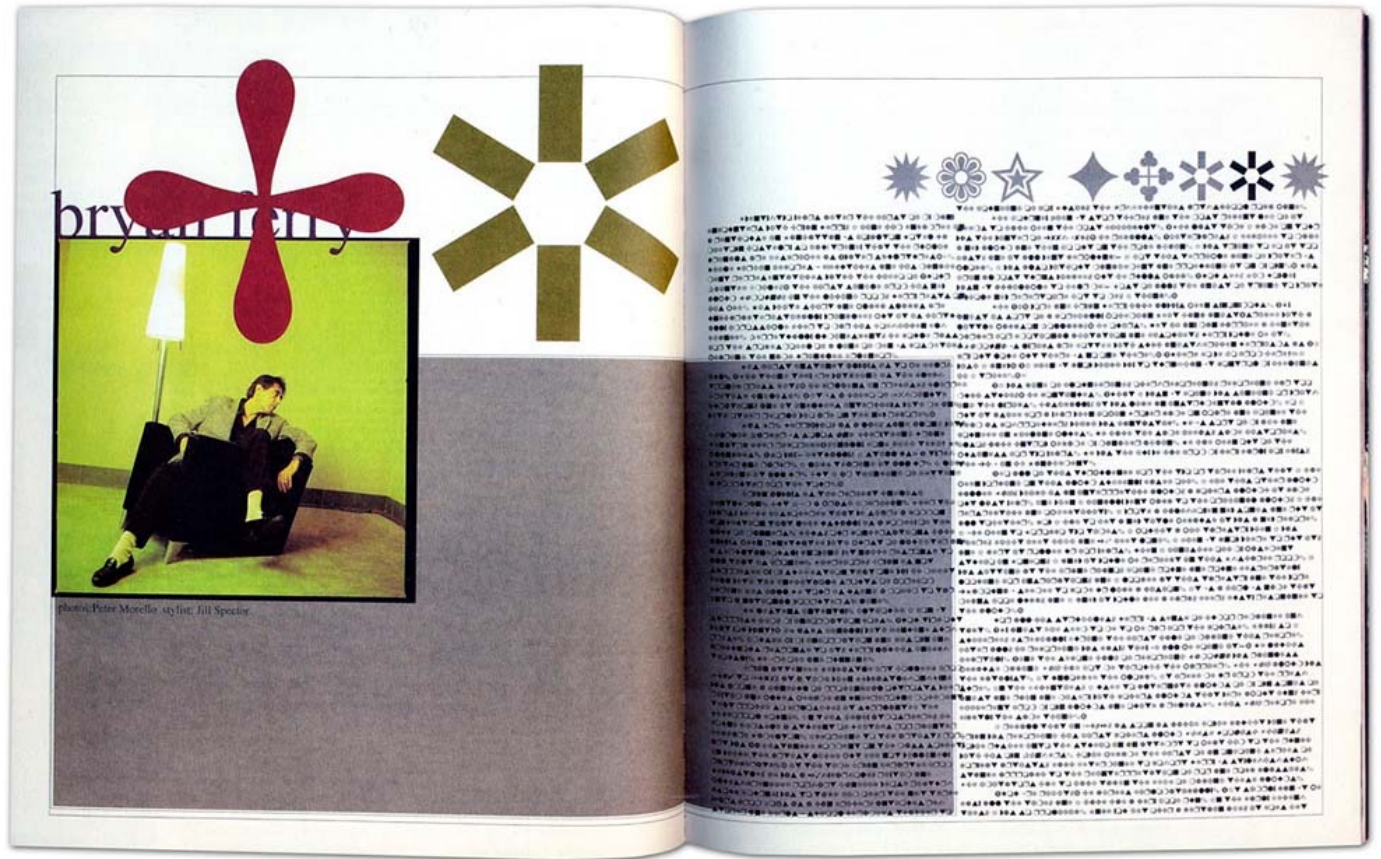
David Carson, 1994, **Ray Gun**
Image: AIGA Eye on Design

Finding a suitable font

Display and Body fonts

Not every font is meant to be suitable for every situation.

▶ Display

Lobster

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Display fonts are fonts meant to be large and attention-grabbing, like headlines or titles. These fonts have lots of personality to them to draw attention, however you wouldn't use this category of font for long passages, not even more than a few words, because it'd be too difficult and overwhelming to read.

The personality that some display fonts have also can be lost due to the scale, small details in the font can get shrunk out of existence.

▶ Body

Arial

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Body text, however, requires fonts that are meant to be read at a smaller scale. You can use a font meant for body text for a headline or at a larger scale but it's not recommended to do vice versa.

Finding a suitable font

Choosing font sizes

Because presentations (and fonts) are all about conveying information, picking font sizes should start with what's easiest to read.

A good rule of thumb for fonts is that bigger is better – bigger text is generally easier to read in most use cases, whether it's projected on a screen, shared virtually, printed out, or shared on a laptop. It's also more accessible for those who may have vision impairment.

It's also a best practice to stick to at most three different font sizes on any slide, and within your presentation overall. While your audience might not notice the specific changes in font size, using too many sizes will make your presentation messy and hard to follow.

▶ Font size recommendations

For Presentations

TEXT TYPE	NO SMALLER THAN	AIM FOR
Titles	20pt	28pt or larger
Subhead/Section title	16pt	20pt or larger
Body copy	12pt	16pt or larger
Callout labels	12pt	18pt or larger

For Documents/Reports

TEXT TYPE	NO SMALLER THAN	AIM FOR
Titles	20pt	28pt or larger
Subhead/Section title	16pt	18pt or larger
Body copy	10pt	14pt or larger

Finding a suitable font

Font sizes for different application

There are a few general ways that fonts are used in presentations. Here's how you can approach choosing font sizes in each area.

▶ **Title/Headline:** Typically at the top of a slide or on the cover. This is usually the largest piece of type on your slide and draws the most attention, as it's the key message you want the audience to understand.

▶ **Subhead/Section:** Usually below the title, it is often a more specific idea that is important but needs less attention than the Title.

▶ **Body:** The text that makes up the primary content of a slide, it's usually smaller to accommodate more text, but still large enough for the audience to comfortably read.

▶ **Callouts:** Labels within body text or on a chart/graph/map/etc. The size of these can vary depending on the content it is accompanying.

Type size ⊢ TITLE 18pt

VerdanaBold

Rights as Ordinary Human Beings ⊢ HEADER 16pt

A R T I C L E   1 0 ⊢ CALLOUT 12pt

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, ⊢ BODY 12pt
in the determination of his rights and obligations
and of any criminal charge against him.

When to use bold, color, and other emphasis

Beyond the base font, there are a number of ways you can modify your text to emphasize certain information. The most common are bolding, italics, or underlining, but you can also apply color or size for emphasis.

Bolding

Bold

Coloring

Color

Other Methods

Underlining

Highlighting

Italics

ALL CAPS

▶ **Here are a few of our best practices for adding emphasis to your text:**

Bolding text creates emphasis by darkening the appearance of letters, which comes from applying a thicker stroke around the letters. You can use the Bold function in your presentation program, or you can choose the "[typeface name] Bold" if the font you're using offers it. If you are using the latter option, note that your font may include multiple weights (in other words, levels of bold) to choose from.

Italics set your type to slant towards the upper right. Italics are often used for names or titles (like of a book or source), and can be combined with bold or other types of emphasis to create hierarchy.

Underlining does just what it sounds like and places a line underneath your text. Be mindful of how you use underlining, as it can typically signify a hyperlink rather than simple emphasis.

Highlighting fills the area around your text with color. This can be useful for collaboration and editing, but can also be a way to add visual interest to your text.

ALL CAPS is a strong way to grab attention, and is often read as shouting or LOUD text. While useful in small doses, too much text in all caps can be hard to read.

Type deep dive

Ligatures, kerning, leading, typesetting/ragging a block of copy

While most type today is digital, much of the terminology comes from old-fashioned manual typesetting. These concepts are advanced, and most presenters won't ever need to apply them, but there are situations where you might want to dig in and make some fine adjustments to your fonts.

MYRIAD PRO(SANS SERIF)

ff / fi / fl / fj / ffi / gg / gy

SOURCE SERIF VARIABLE (SERIF)

ff / fi / fl / fj / ffi / gg / gy

Ligatures

Ligatures were pieces of metal type that were made to solve the issue of letters physically colliding. The letters were commonly f with i/j/l/f or g with g/y. These visual overlaps can still be found in digital typesetting, though now ligatures usually are inserted automatically and most digital fonts will account for these letter combinations automatically.

To check if your font uses ligatures, right-click in the text and select **Font** from the menu. Click the **Advanced** tab. Next to **Ligatures**, select **Standard Only.**

Type deep dive

Kerning and Tracking

Kerning and tracking refer to adjustments made to the spacing of letters.

AV Wa

No kerning

AV Wa

Kerning applied

FROM WIKIPEDIA

TIGHT TRACKING

NORMAL TRACKING

LOOSE TRACKING

Line
spacing

Wide
Line

Spacing

Kerning refers to the spacing between individual letters. Most fonts are automatically optimized, but many programs allow you to manually adjust spacing if needed.

Tracking adjusts the spacing between letters overall, and is used for making the spacing consistent across your body text. It's also more common in Microsoft Office programs. For example, tracking out letters that are all caps helps legibility since they are all a uniform height, which might make it hard for the eye to pick out specific words.

Leading refers to line spacing in Microsoft Office programs. Tighter leading can imply connection and flow, while looser leading can give space for large amounts of text to breathe. Too little and the text is cramped, too much and it can feel disconnected.

Narrow leading should allow for enough room for the ascenders and descenders of letterforms.

- Ascenders are the upward strokes of a letter

- Descenders are the downward strokes of a letter

Type deep dive

Ragging

Ragging refers to the vertical edge on the margin of text. A lot of factors add up to create your rag – like font size, margin size, and sentence length – but ideally you want to create a consistent flow along the edge of your text.

In particular, a good rag reduces **orphans** and **widows**, which are words (or the ends of hyphenated words) that are left alone at the end of a text column /paragraph. They create a distracting amount of white space either at the beginning or end of text, and can be fixed by bringing more of the sentence down onto the line or adjusting columns so the word can be rejoined to the rest of the text.

✔

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

✕

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Conclusion

Understanding fonts is essential for good design and consistent branding. But you don't have to be a trained designer to get the most out of your text – with a few key concepts, you can ensure legibility and a pleasing design, slide after slide!

Looking for more information about fonts and beyond? Check out our resources for expert advice and tested strategies.

- Storytelling
- PowerPoint design
- PowerPoint tips and tricks

Color 101

VerdanaBold

Color is what brings a presentation to life. It's how you highlight key messages, represent your brand, and create visual interest for your audience.

But using color properly can be a little confusing if you aren't familiar with the fundamentals.
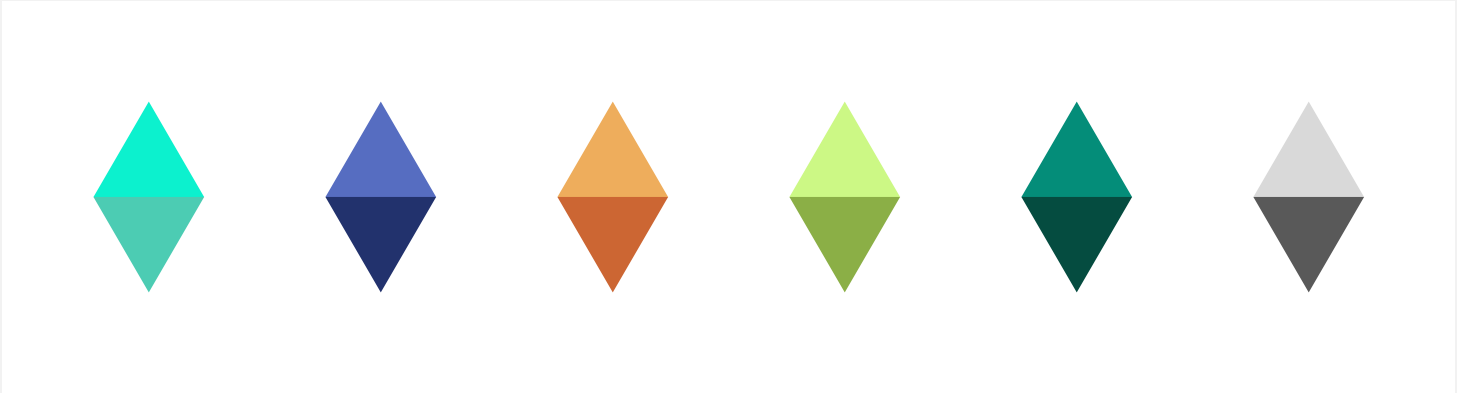
Luckily, they are easy to learn and apply!

Using color in presentations

In this guide, we'll cover the basics of color theory, dive into how to build a custom palette for your brand, and give you some best practices for more colorful presentations.

What is color theory?

Color theory is the basis for all the ways we use color. It's both art and science, and it helps users to understand how they can use colors.

Specifically, it's the principles and rules that we use to choose, mix, and pair colors. It forms the basis of how we understand and engage with color in the world.

Why color matters

Color is a powerful tool for evoking emotions and building associations. Colors can inspire feelings, change moods, or provoke a wave of nostalgia.

Think of traffic signals. Green is so strongly associated with "go" that the association now applies to almost any use of green, even outside the context of traffic.

We also associate general types of colors with certain feelings. Warm colors (orange, red, yellow) can suggest energy or action, while cool colors (green, blue, and purple) are seen as peaceful and relaxing.

Colors can be chosen for purely aesthetic reasons – your logo might be light blue simply because the founder loved the color. But since color can be such a powerful tool, there are also ways to use it strategically.

▶ Here's a <u>famous example</u> of this idea in practice

Why McDonald's uses red and yellow for their colors

"The color red is stimulating and is associated with being active. It also increases heart rate, which helps to jumpstart your appetite. The color yellow is associated with happiness and is the most visible color in daylight, so that's why a McDonald's logo is so easy to spot on a crowded road."

This has led to companies trademarking their custom colors. Tiffany & Co. trademarked their famous blue, UPS has its own brown, and 3M even trademarked the special yellow of their Post It notes. These brands are so closely associated with their colors that they have become synonymous with the brands themselves.

Understanding color relationships
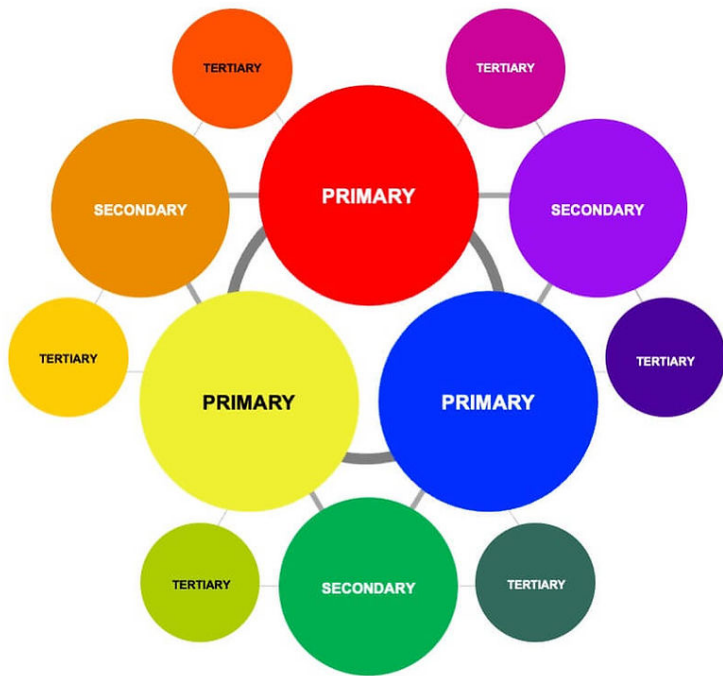
The color wheel

Using the color wheel, you can easily see the relationship between colors and understand how they will work together.

Primary colors	Secondary colors	Tertiary colors
Red, blue, yellow	Mixture of 2 primary colors: purple, green, orange	Mixing a primary and a secondary color

Warm colors	Cool colors
Red, orange, yellow	Green, blue, purple

How to use your colors

RGB or CMYK

These groupings refer to where (and how) you are using colors.

▲
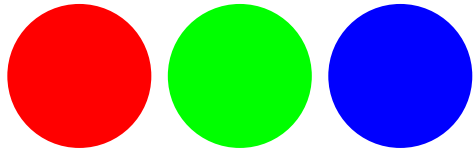
RGB uses the additive color mixing model, where you combine colors to make new ones. RGB is used on screens and other digital applications.

▲
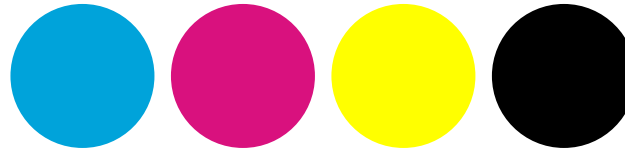
CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black) uses a subtractive model, where you remove light to arrive at new colors. It's used for printed documents.

Because PowerPoint is a natively digital platform (even if you do print out your slides), your presentation will always be in RGB. If you need to convert an image from CMYK to RGB, we recommend using another program to convert the images first, and then adding them to your presentation.

How to use your colors

Tints and Hues

On the color wheel, hues are pure colors.
From there, you can add colors to create new variations.

▶ **Hue** (Pure color)

▶ **Shade** (Add black)

▶ **Tone** (Add gray)

▶ **Tint** (Add white)
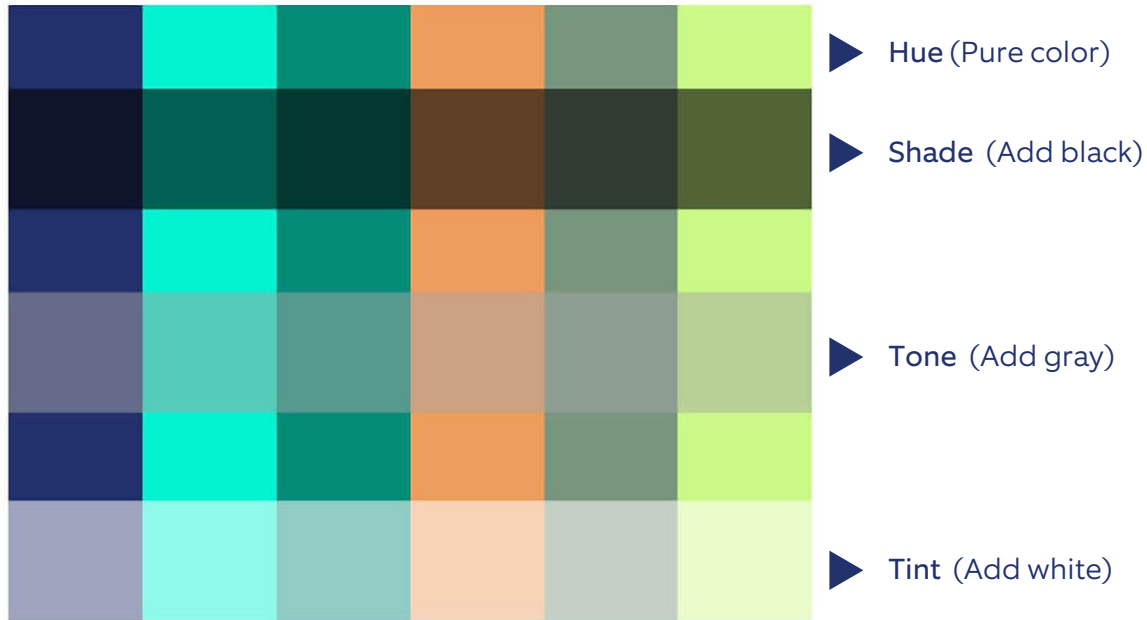
If you use Theme Colors in a presentation, PowerPoint will automatically create tints and shades for you.

Theme Colors

How to use your colors

Hex values and Pantone colors

Since color can vary in so many ways, we use tools like hex values and Pantone to ensure we're all using the same colors.

There are a few ways of ensuring that multiple people are using the same colors. The most common are using Hex values or Pantone colors.

#F2F2F2

Hex codes are a combination of 6 numbers and letters that identify a specific color. These are great for using colors across different programs.

Pantone 2244 C

Pantone colors use a numbering system to identify unique colors. They started in print, but now are the major color identification system in most industries.
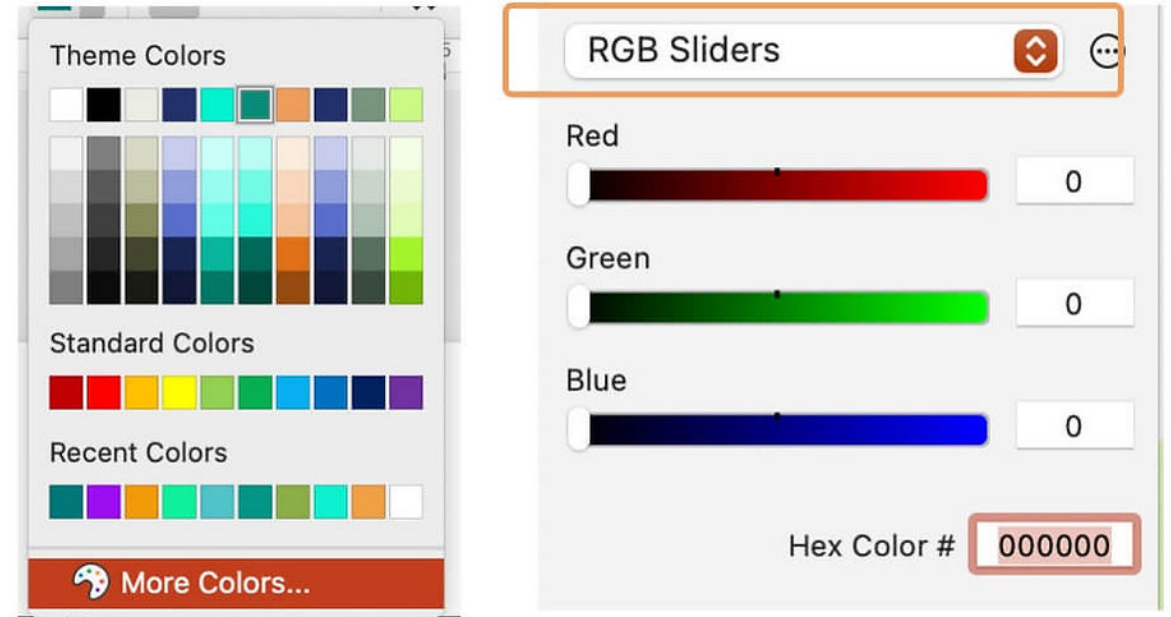
▶ To enter a specific Hex code in PowerPoint:

After opening your fill or text colors, select "More Colors" at the bottom. Then, select "RGB sliders" at the top of color types and you'll see the option to enter the Hex code.

For reference: Pure white is #FFFFFF. Pure Black is #000000

How to use your colors

Creating your own palette in PowerPoint

You can build your own custom color palette in PowerPoint, so you'll always have your brand colors ready to go.

1. Go to the View tab and click Slide Master to access the Slide Master (or template) mode

2. Select colors, and then "Customize Colors…" to make your new color palette

3. Choose your colors. Name the palette and hit "Save."

4. Your custom color palette will now be available in your presentation
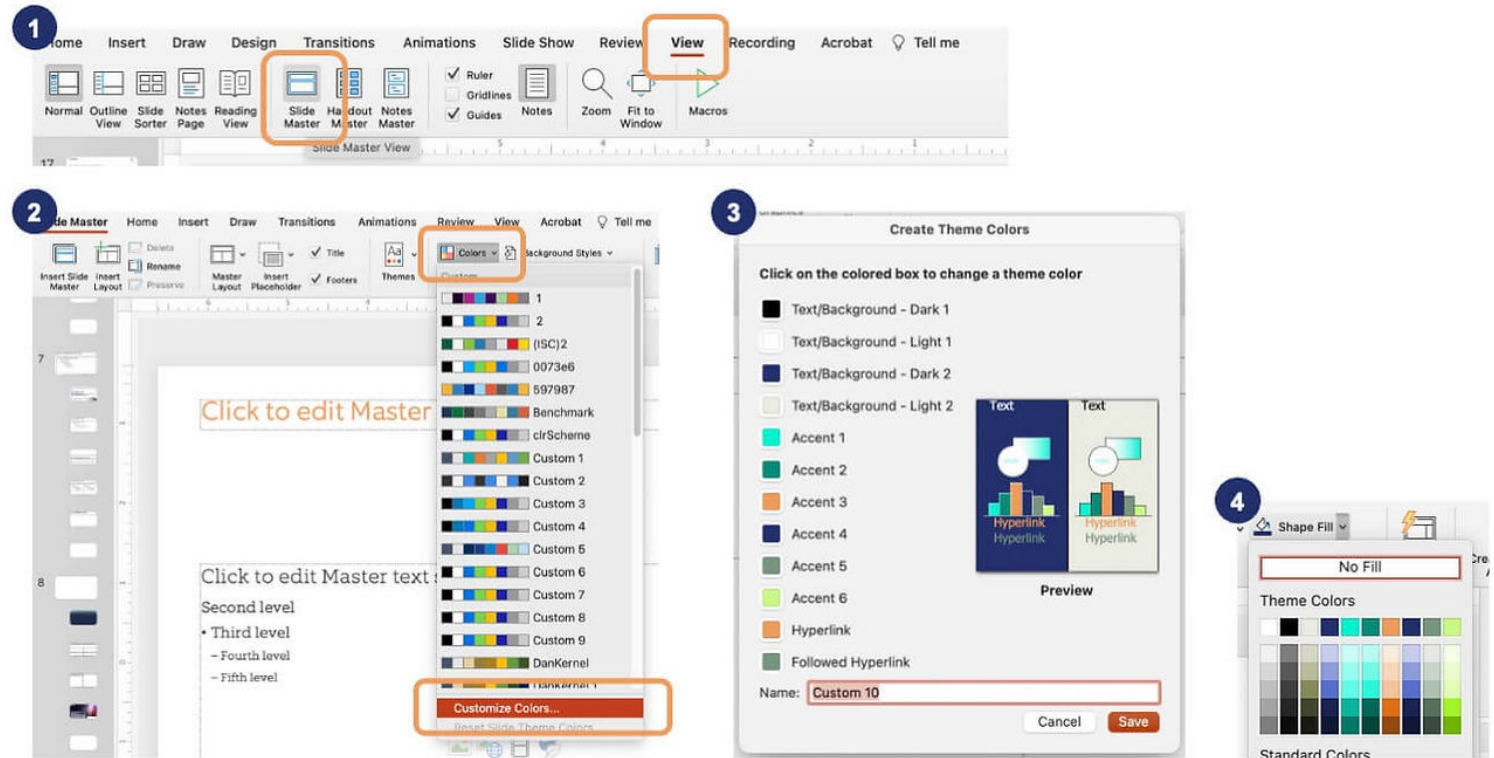
Ways to add color to your slides

Highlight key ideas

You can change the color of a key word or phrase on your slide to draw attention to it. This is a great way to make a key message pop, and to make sure the right point gets across.

▲
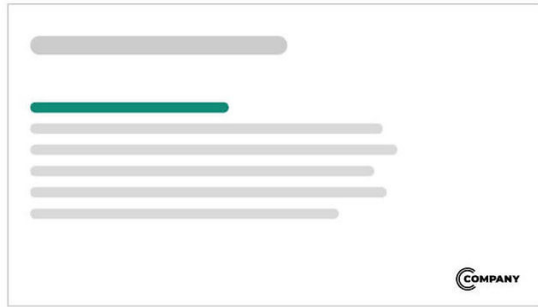
Using color in subheads to emphasize sections

▲
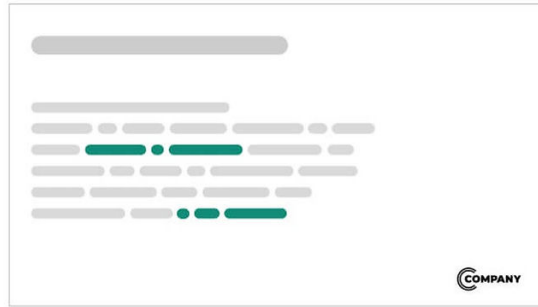
Using color within paragraphs to emphasize certain words an ideas

Add colored shapes

Brighten up a simple slide with a few shapes. This is a convenient way to arrange content, and it lets you add in more of your brand colors in an intentional way.
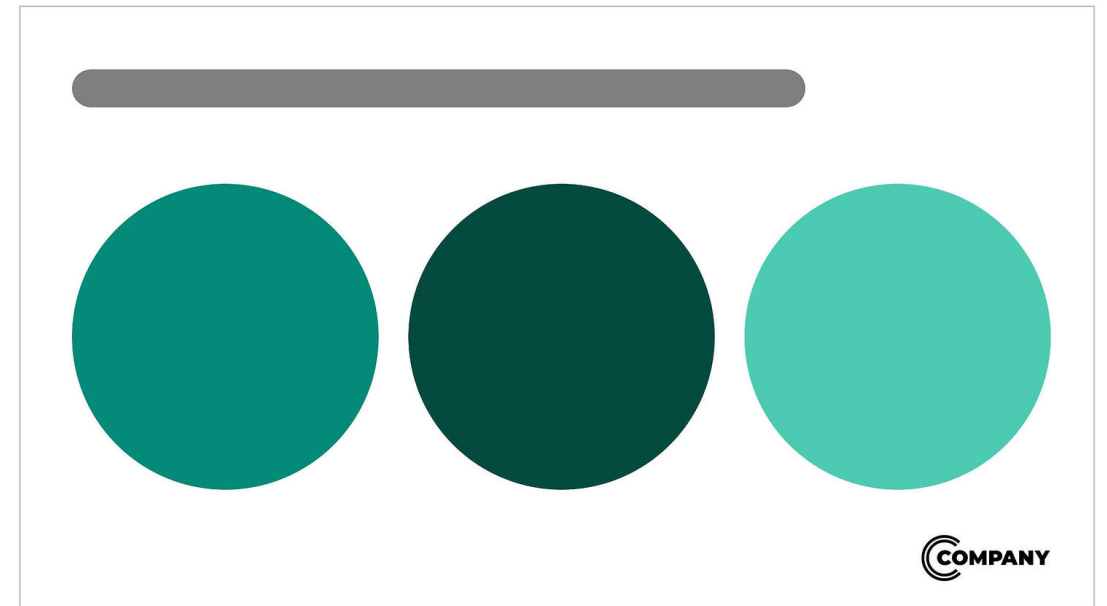
Ways to add color to your slides

Color your charts

You can add your custom colors to charts and graphs for a branded look that helps highlight information.
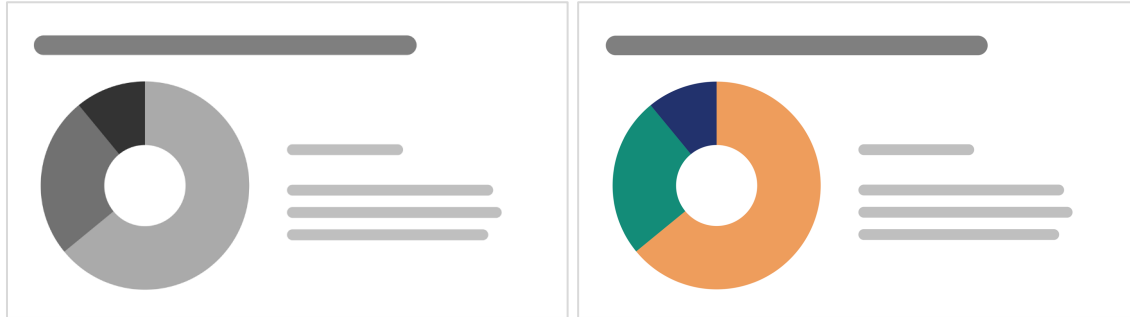
Add bars of color

With a field of color, you add a sense of organization that also directs the motion of the eye across the slide.

Bars across the top or bottom of a slide can introduce an idea or emphasize a takeaway.
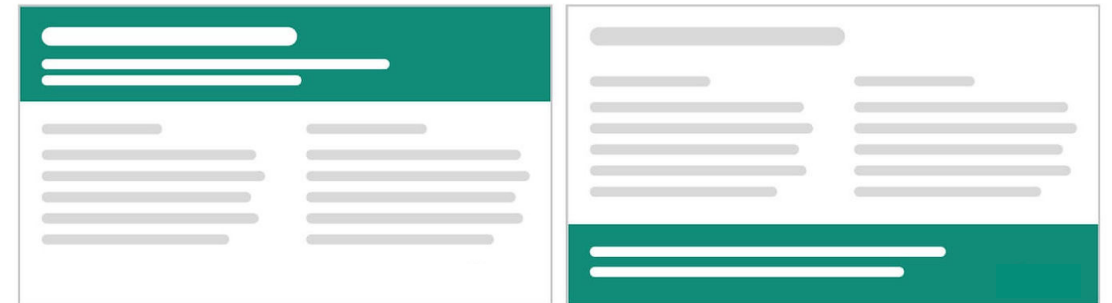
Ways to add color to your slides

Use color in slide backgrounds

A full-color (or full bleed) background can add a powerful impact, particularly if you want to highlight a quote or key statement.

You can also use full-color slides as section dividers, to give a clear visual cue about the flow of your presentation.

These dividers also add moments of visual excitement in long presentations. They are almost like a break for your audience.

Ways to add color to your slides

Combine them all

Each of these tips works fine on its own, but you can also combine them for a design that's both consistent and visually appealing.

Ways to add color to your slides

Making colors accessible

Accessibility helps everyone to engage with your content, and it's an important consideration when designing presentations. PowerPoint offers built-in tools to assess the accessibility of your presentation, but you can also consider these best practices for addressing accessibility issues with color.

▶ For more information, check out this article from Microsoft: Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with disabilities.

Not enough contrast	Not enough contrast
Enough contrast	Enough contrast
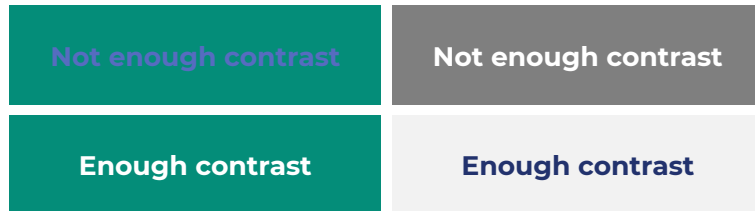
Have adequate color contrast

Colors that are too similar can be hard to read.
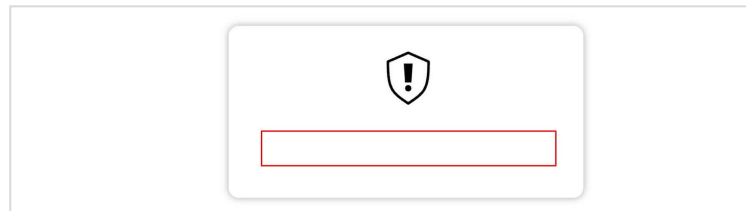
Use icons in addition to color

In cases where you are using color to communicate a message, such as a red box to indicate a warning, you can also use an icon to reinforce the message.
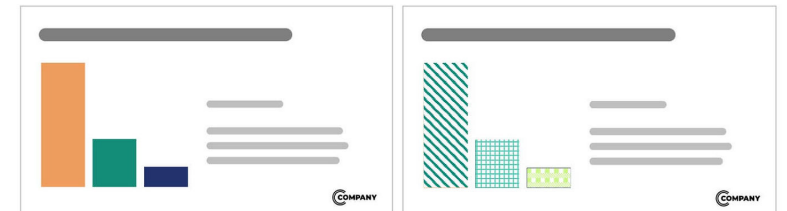
Add texture in addition to color

You can add to (or replace) colors with textures to clarify design elements in charts.

Conclusion

Color is a powerful and nuanced tool for enhancing your message and highlighting your brand. While some people might find it challenging at first, these basic principles and best practices should make it easy to add a new dimension to your presentations!

Looking for more information about color and beyond? Check out our resources for expert advice and tested strategies.

- Storytelling
- PowerPoint design
- PowerPoint tips and tricks

Images 101

From icons to photos to illustrations, images turn an otherwise standard presentation into a powerful visual experience.

Understanding images in presentations

Images can enhance your content story, elevate your aesthetic, reinforce your brand principles, even draw connections with your audience.

But elevating your slides isn't just about adding images, it's about adding the right images to support your story.

In this guide, we'll cover the basics of imagery, explore some key ideas and best practices for choosing images in your presentations, and share some sources for finding the right image.

How to use images

When you hear "images" you probably think about photographs. While that's a big part of how images are used in presentations, it's not the whole story.

Imagery in presentations refers to any visual representation that you use on a slide. This could be a photo, or it could be an illustration, an icon, or even a decorative element.

Typically, we judge an image based on appearance – in other words, is it aesthetically pleasing? This is a useful way to think, but when you are using imagery in presentations, you need to go one step further and think about what the image conveys.

In general, we recommend using images that directly support the content story you want to tell, rather than those that just look good on the slide.

Illustration vs. photography

The choice between illustrations and photographs can set a strong tone in a presentation. But the choice isn't about which to use – instead, it's how to use both effectively.

Single column layout

Side image layout

How to use your images

When to use illustrations

Illustrations are great for showing fanciful or conceptual visuals. Some scenes just can't be captured in a photograph, and illustrations can take your audience to new places.

Illustrations can also have a retro or classic feel. Before photography was widely accessible, illustrations were everywhere, and even now they can call us back to the past.

Finally, illustrations also cover icons. Icons are simple representations of things or ideas. They are great for reinforcing content, making slides more visual, and adding a unique feel to your brand.

Single column layout

3

COMPANY
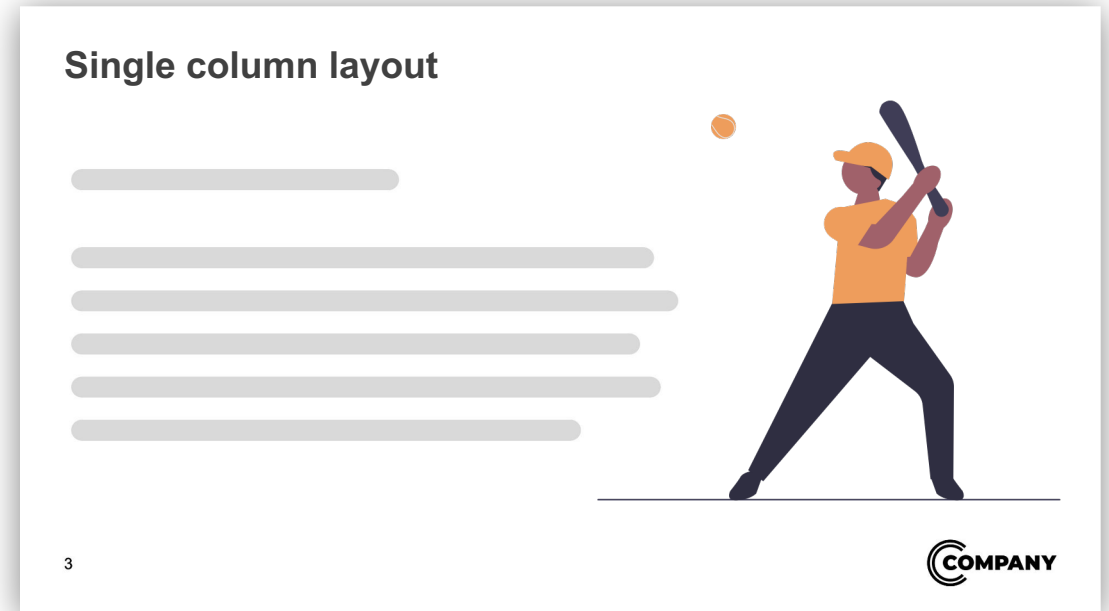
Illustration is being used to give a friendly vibe

How to use your images

When to use photographs

Photos excel at accurately portraying a moment or experience. They offer an accuracy and realness that can humanize a slide.

They are also great at conveying a professional vibe. If you want to seem earnest and authentic, photos are a great tool.

And photos are best at conveying the real experience of a product. There's no substitute for showing people what you do.

Most presentations can benefit from a mix of both. Icons and photos work well together to tell a story in a visual style.

Single column layout

10
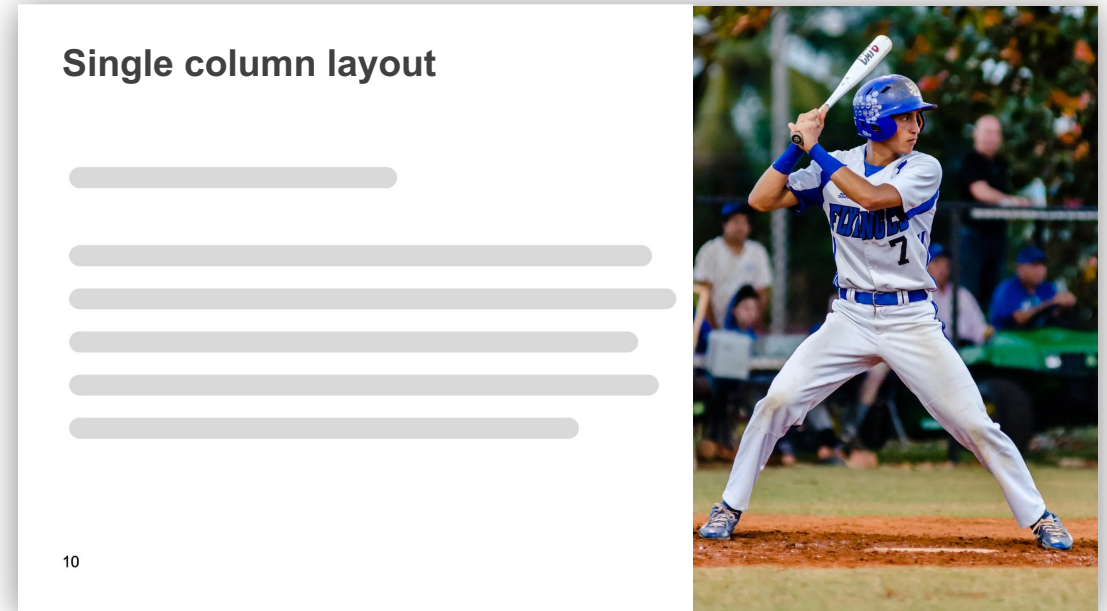
Photography is putting viewers in the moment

Best practices for using images in PowerPoint

Watch out for pixelization

Too many images make it hard to scan your slide. It makes it harder for your audience to know where to focus their attention and can distract from your message. Using one strong image rather than multiple smaller ones helps keep your slides clean and focused.

Use high-quality files
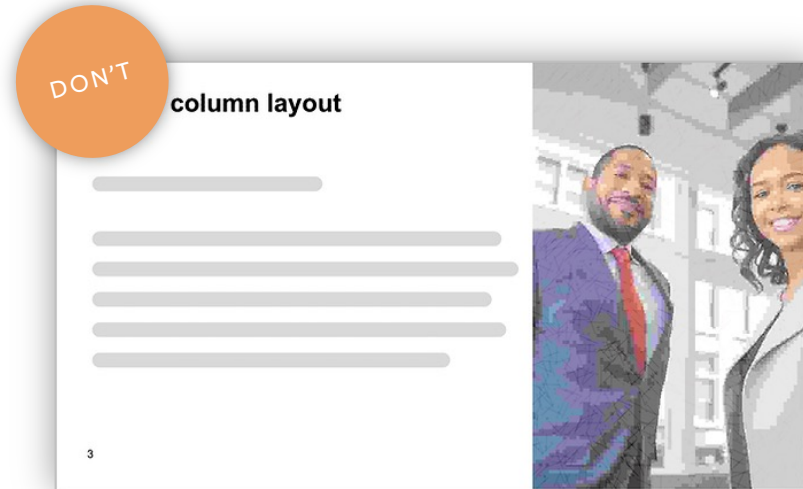
Blurry / pixelated

Don't select pictures that will be too blurry or pixelated
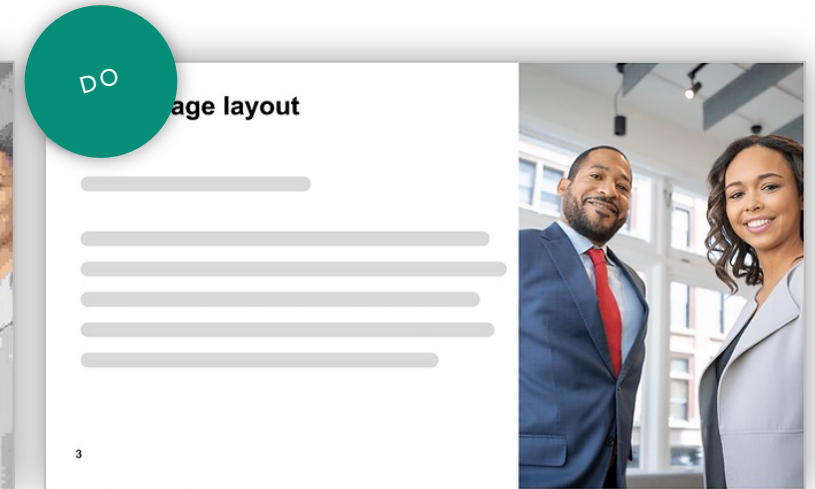
Crisp / clear

Be sure to use images that are high-definition to keep the presentation clean and professional

Best practices for using images in PowerPoint

Keep it clean

A blurry or pixelated image makes your slides look unprofessional. Make sure your images are high-quality before adding them to your slides. But note that pics that are too high-res might also make your file too large. If this happens, just compress the images to 150 ppi or crop out any unused parts of pictures.

Don't overdo it with images

DON'T
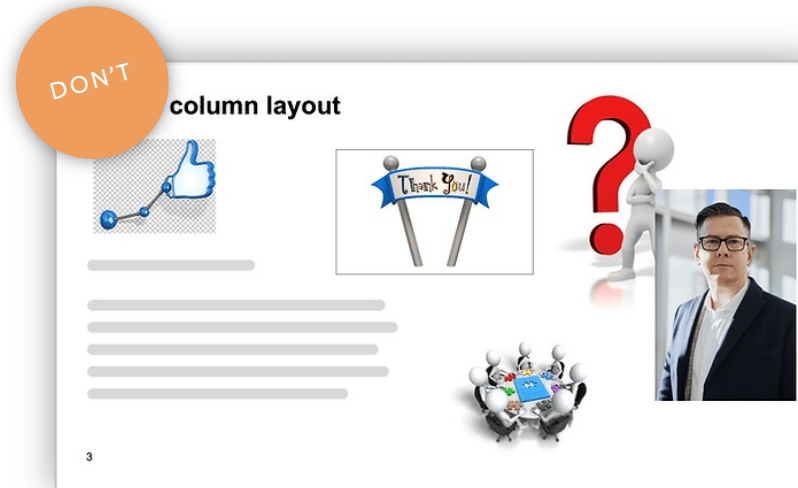
Too many images

Too many visuals on the slide will make it hard for the audience to focus

DO
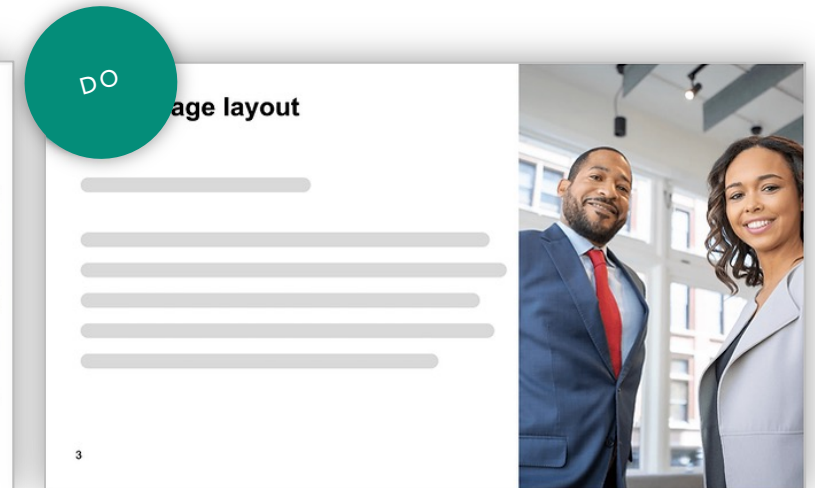
Just the right amount

Focus on one strong image to make your message clear

Best practices for using images in PowerPoint

Pick the right image for your audience

If your image doesn't resonate with your audience, you're going to lose them. Images that are too cheesy or seeming unserious might not work for an investor audience, while more authentic and high-quality ones might spark their interest.

Think about your audience
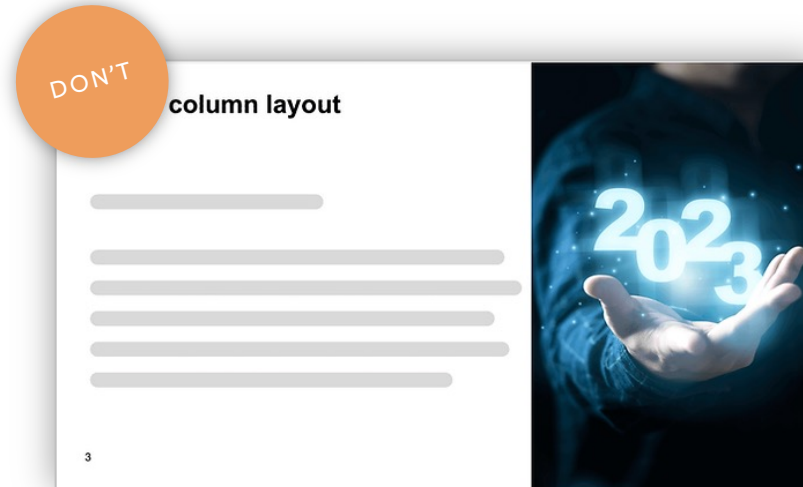
Cheesy

Pictures with the wrong tone can turn off your audience
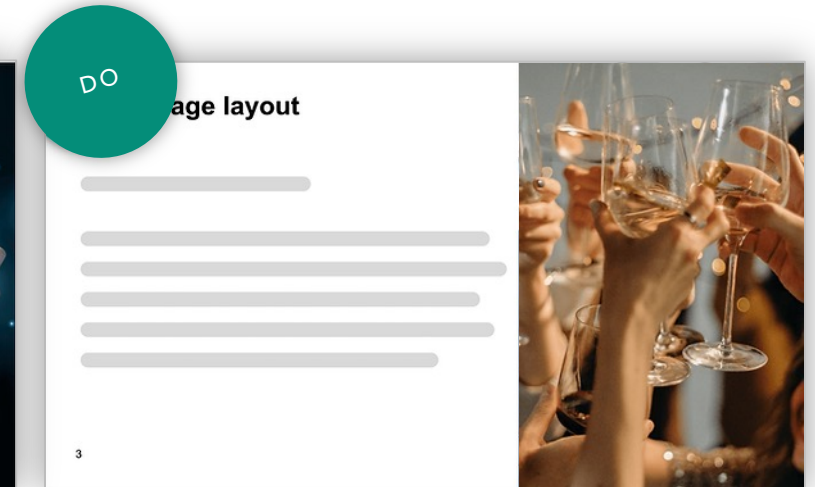
More appropriate

Think about what will resonate with the audience before choosing

Best practices for using images in PowerPoint

What makes a good image?

A good image is one that helps support the content of your presentation. While there are many ways to assess the quality of an image, in presentations the real answer is just about functionality, rather than aesthetics.

That said, you may find yourself choosing between several similar types of images to support your content. To help you choose the right one, you can look at the following categories to see which image will work best for your presentation.

Relevance

Composition

Attention to detail

Display of emotion

What makes a good image?

Storytelling

Appropriate lighting

Lin, Christopher, and Christopher Lin Co-Founder of SLR Lounge and Lin and Jirsa Photography. Based in Southern California with a love of experiencing new foods. "10 Characteristics of a Good Photo." *SLR Lounge*, 23 Nov. 2022, https://www.slrlounge.com/techniques-10-characteristic-of-great-photos/.

What makes a good image?

Relevance

Does this image make sense in the context of your presentation? Does it match the tone and brand? Is it consistent with any other images in the presentation?

Composition

The principles of composition can be complex, but you don't need to understand any rules to pick good photos. Look for images with a clear subject and a balanced layout.

Attention to detail

This idea is about the little things that make a photo stand out. Small elements that draw the eye, focus or lighting that highlight key areas, and a composition that suits the subject can all add to the quality of an image.

Display of emotion

This doesn't mean over the top emoting. Rather, it's about finding authentic moments of real emotion. One of the common issues with images we see in stock images is photos that look very "posed." It's a common addition to many brand guidelines to direct creators to not use "people staring directly at a camera," for example.

Storytelling

Adding an image to a slide is a big deal. It draws attention, can distract the audience, and changes the balance of your layout. So if you're going to include one, it needs to help tell the story of your content.

For example, a picture of a bike might not tell any particular story on its own. But a picture of a person on a bike, hands raised in the air as they cross a finish line, tells a very clear story.

Lighting

The lighting in an image can really set the emotional tone. A dark room has a very different vibe than the same space in a bright afternoon shot.

Understanding icons

Icons are one of our favorite tools for simplifying slides and making them more visual.

What are icons?

Icons are simple visual representations of specific objects. They are simplified drawings of objects or ideas that can be easily recognized, and make for a good stand-in for words on a slide.

How are icons used?

Icons are very useful for their simple and universal appeal.

They can allow you to communicate a core action or idea with just a few lines, where otherwise it might take whole sentences of description.

DON'T Slide layout

DO Slide layout
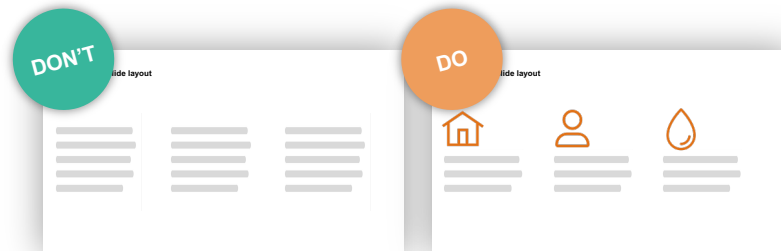
MAKING SLIDES MORE VISUAL

Using icons instead of words helps you convey a lot of information concisely. It also adds to the tone and feel of your slides.

DON'T Slide layout

SMART | HEALTHY | HAPPY | EAGER

DO Slide layout

SMART | HEALTHY | HAPPY | EAGER
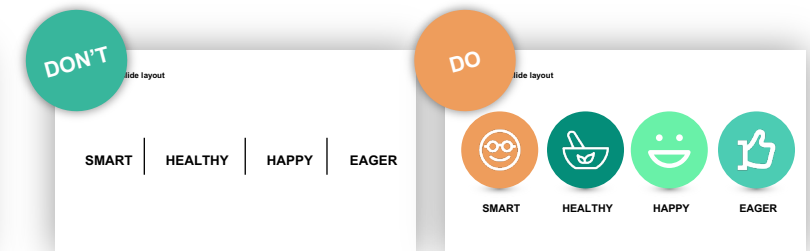
REINFORCING CONTENT

An icon can add context or nuance to an idea, helping you tell a richer story without overloading the audience.

Finding imagery

Thenounproject.com is a library of free, well-designed icons that cover millions of topics. It's also a good resource for stock photos.

Creating an icon or illustration library

Building a library of brand-approved illustrations and icons can help you add consistency and clarity to slides. By establishing an illustration and icon library for your brand, you also create a unique voice and feel to your overall visual style.

▶ **A good illustration library should be:**

- Flexible enough for multiple channels
- Easy to use and update
- Customized to your brand
- Consistent and clear

Where to find images

While some brands have custom photography or illustrations, most images come from stock sites. Here are some of our go-to options for all types of images.

iStock

iStock.com is a subscription-based, royalty-free stock photography provider. It has a huge range of assets for you to choose from.

Unsplash

Unsplash.com (by Getty Images) is a free resource for a wide range of images. It's a great place to start your image search.

Undraw

Undraw.co is a free resource for semi-customizable, open-source illustrations.

Getty Images

Getty Images is a subscription-based service for great image assets. It's one of the most popular choices for images.

Nappy

nappy.co is free image site that's focused on representing black and brown people in a way that's purposeful and authentic.

Ouch!

Ouch! offers free or subscription-based illustrations with a modern vibe.

Conclusion

〜〜

Images can make the difference between a flat presentation and one that will move your audience. With so many images to choose from and ways to use them, it can be hard to know where to start.

With these resources and concepts, you should have everything you need to create better presentations with powerful images.

Looking for more information about imagery and beyond? Check out our resources for expert advice and tested strategies.

- Storytelling
- PowerPoint design
- PowerPoint tips and tricks

Motion 101

From text zooming on screen to epic visual stories, PowerPoint animation can do more than most users ever realized.

But that capability also led to overuse, with folks creating complex and unnecessary animations that ultimately led to people believing that all PowerPoint animations were bad.

What is PowerPoint animation?

The reality is that adding a few carefully chosen animations can add a level of polish and wow-factor to your presentations. And best of all, you don't need a background in animation to make it happen!

Animation 101

In PowerPoint, animation lets you add motion and more to the visual elements on your slide.

This could be text, images, or even the transitions between the slides themselves.
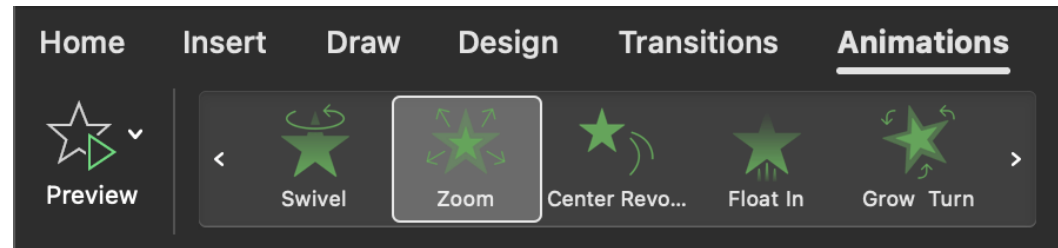
Animation refers to motion effects applied to individual objects
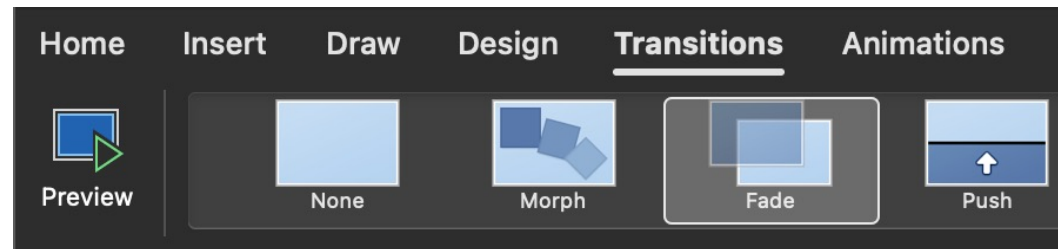
Slide transitions are motion effects applied between two slides

When to use animations

How will it be presented?

Animation works better in certain situations than in others.

In-person presentations are the best time to add animations. These presentations tend to be more visual and don't suffer from issues like streaming lag.

Virtual presentations can sometimes have animation, but be careful: animations can look choppy over a stream. A virtual audience can also have more distractions, so interruptions like choppy animation can make it harder to keep their attention.

Printed presentations do not need animations.

Yah

In-person

Okay to use animation when appropriate.

Maybe

Virtually

Use sparingly. Animation can be choppy in video chat.

Nah

Printed

Why bother?
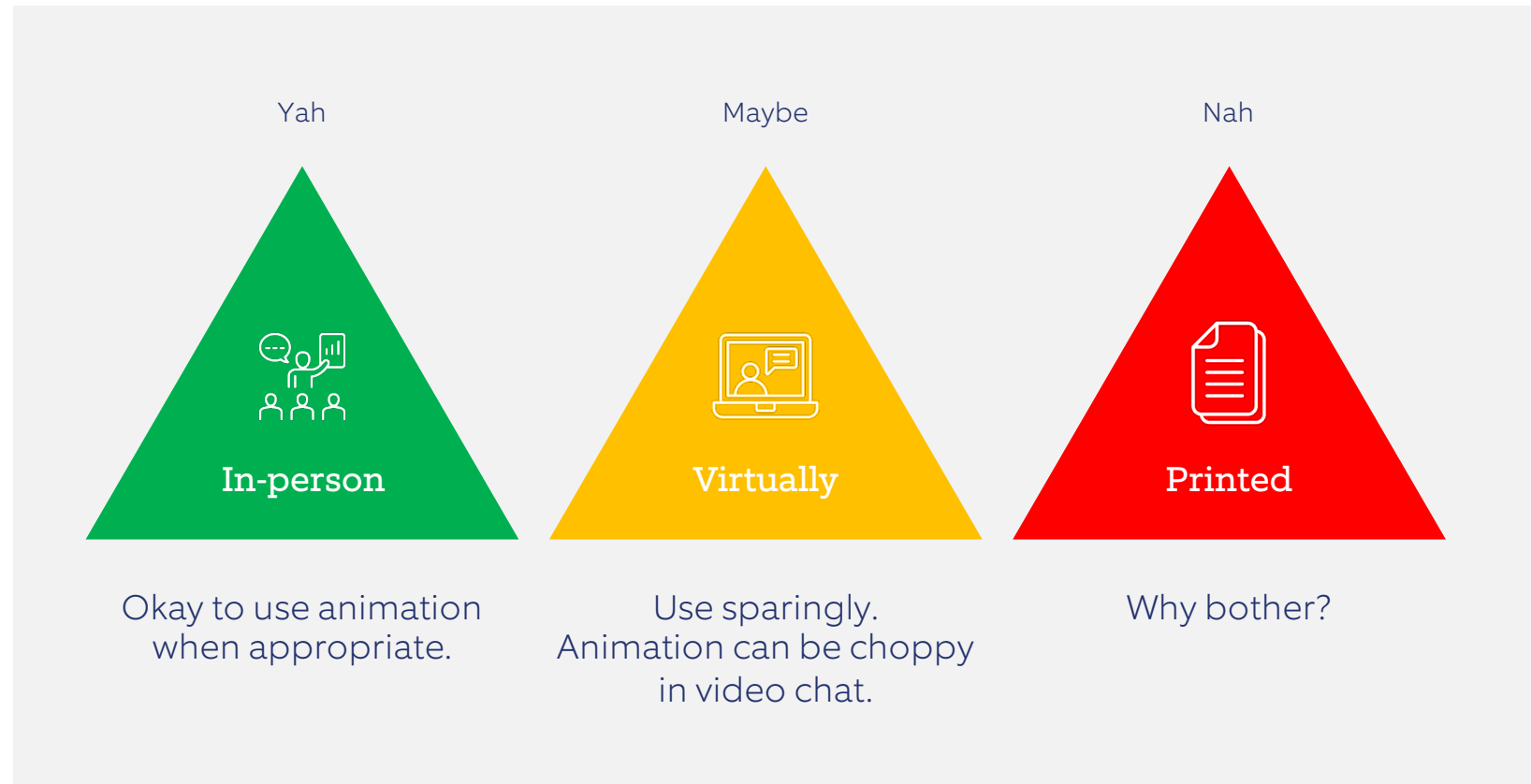
When to use animations

Who is presenting

The type of presenter can impact the appropriateness of animation in a PowerPoint presentation.

People in sales who want to wow a potential customer find a lot of value in tools like animation.

Executives and senior leaders sometimes use animations, but tend to prefer a more streamlined design.

Presenters with lots of hard data to share want the focus on their credible content, not flashy aesthetics.

Yah

Sales / marketing

Animation adds sizzle. Sizzle sells steaks.

Maybe

CEO

Animate your keynotes. Use judiciously for board presentations.

Nah

Finance

Most finance wonks are more concerned with data, numbers and trendlines.
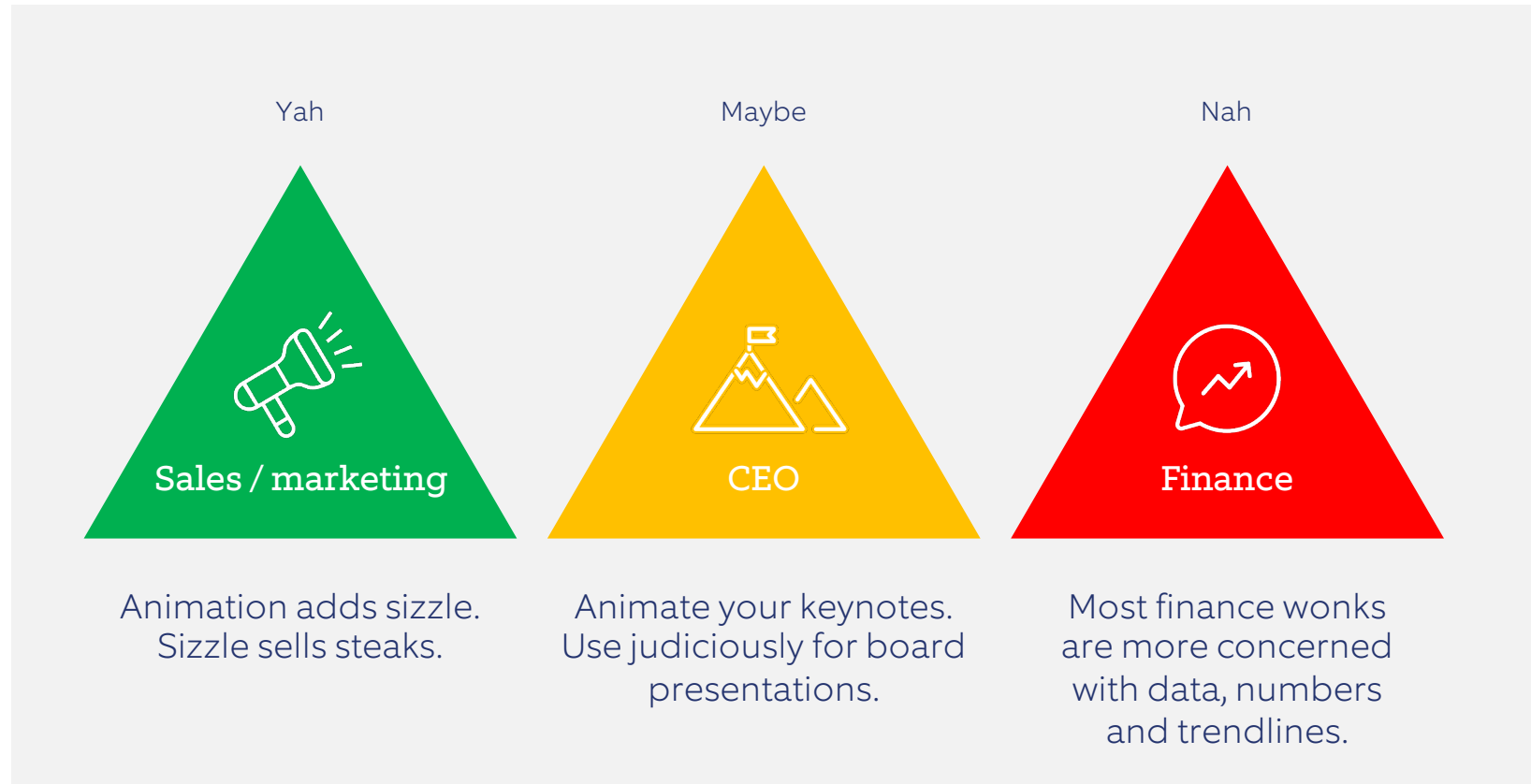
When to use animations

What's the content

Finally, consider what's on the slides before you start adding animations.

If you have highly-visual slides like you might see in a keynote presentation, where the slides are more like a visual aid, then animations can be very effective.

If the slides have dense or complicated content, there can be value in building the information onto certain slides piece by piece.

If you have lots of content and no way around it, then it's best to leave the animations off and keep the slides straightforward.

Yah

Maybe

Nah

Highly visual

Dense content

Brochure-like

Presenter voices over slides, using the presentation as a visual aid.

Building dense slides one piece at a time can reinforce learning.

Some presentations must function like a static brochure.
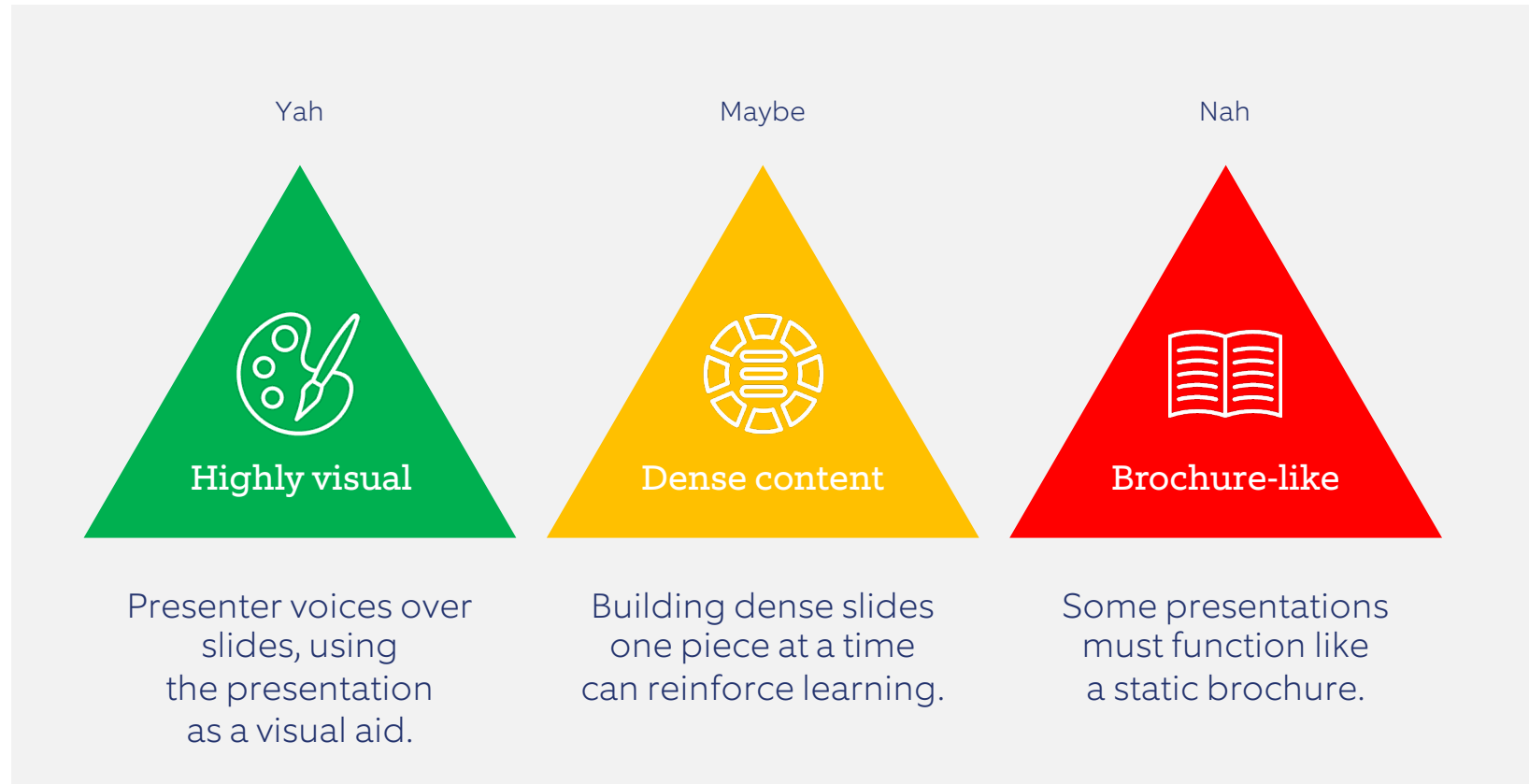
Types of PowerPoint animation

PowerPoint categorizes animations into four different types of effects based on how they interact with a visual element.

ENTRANCE EFFECTS

These effects make an object appear on a slide with animation

EMPHASIS EFFECTS

These effects modify an object already on a slide

EXIT EFFECTS

These effects make an object disappear from a slide with animation

PATH ANIMATION

These effects make an object disappear from a slide with animation

| Home | Insert | Draw | Design | Transitions | **Animations** | Slide Show | Review | View | Record | Acrobat | Shape Format | 💡 Tell me |

Preview | Appear | Blinds | Checkerboard | Dissolve In | Fly In

Fill Color | Font Color | Grow/Shrink | Line Color | Spin

Blinds | Checkerboard | Disappear | Dissolve Out | Fly Out | Path Animation
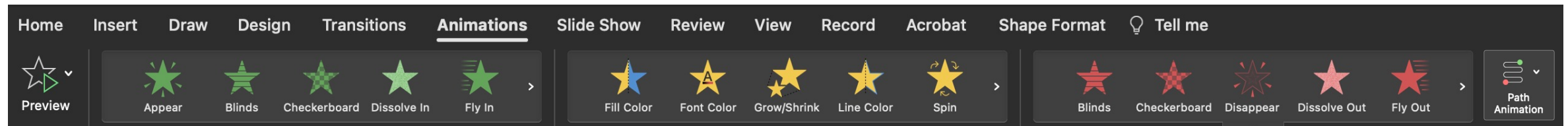
Customizing PowerPoint animation

After you've chosen an animation type, PowerPoint gives you a range of options for customizing how it functions on your slides. With these options, you can customize exactly how your animation displays.
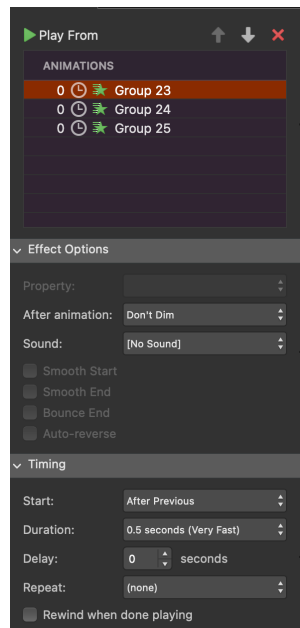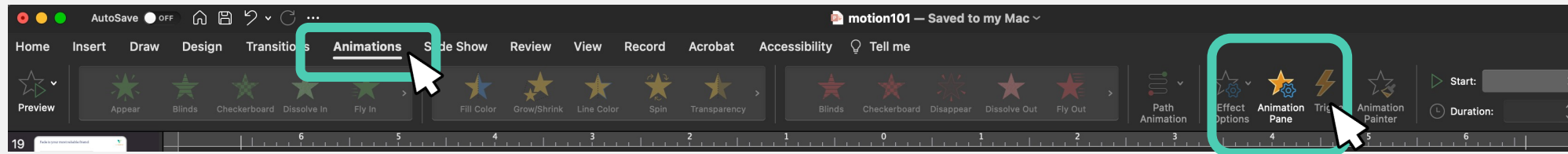
Animation Pane shows you all the elements with animation, as well as the order they appear on the slide

Effects Options let you customize exactly how the animation works during the animation.

Timing Options let you specify when the animation starts, ends, how long it lasts, and more.

The two main types of animation

Animations vs. slide transitions

There are many types of animation you can use in PowerPoint, and we'll get into the nitty-gritty details further in this blog, but at its core PowerPoint animation boils down to two areas: animations and slide transitions.
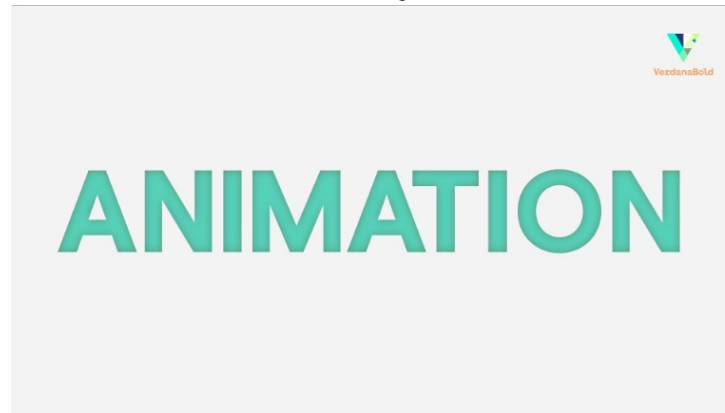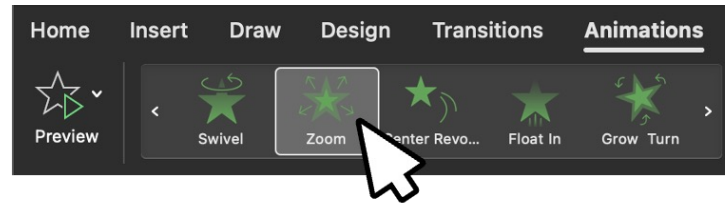
Animation refers to motion effects applied to individual objects. These animations take place within one slide.
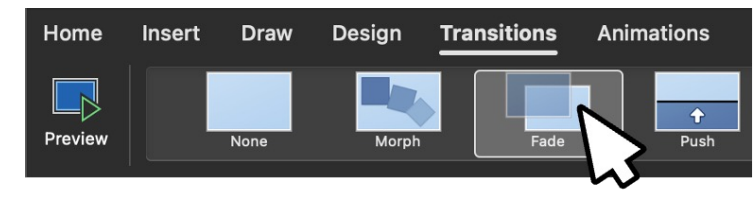
Slide transitions are motion effects applied between two slides. They can also impact individual design elements on a slide, but they are really about the move from one slide to the next.

Basics of PowerPoint animation

How to use Slide Transitions in PowerPoint

PowerPoint offers a large selection of transitions to use between slides. But most of these options are too overpowering or fussy to fit in most professional presentations.

Most transitions are going to be too much

More on this next   Works great!

Much robust.
Very options.

The exceptions are the Fade, which is our go-to transition, and the Morph, which is a surprisingly powerful tool.

Basics of PowerPoint animation

If you don't add any transitions, your slides will still look fine, but the movement from one slide to the next can be abrupt and inelegant.

Without transition, flowing between slides can feel jarring

▶ No transition; movement between slides is abrupt

With a Fade, you get a more polished look that is barely noticeable in all the right ways.

Adding a fade transition between slides is a quick way to add polish to your presentation

Fade slide transition applied between slides

Advanced PowerPoint animation

The Morph transition is a little different

Morph is a slide transition that appears to add motion to objects that appear on two consecutive slides. For this reason, it tends to look more like an animation than a transition.

Morph can be powerful but picky

Let's say you have a shape on a slide. If you duplicate that slide and change the size, color and location of the shape on the second slide, the morph transition will move the animation in-between the two states so that it appears to have motion.

You can even change shapes completely (e.g. circle to square) or use it with text.
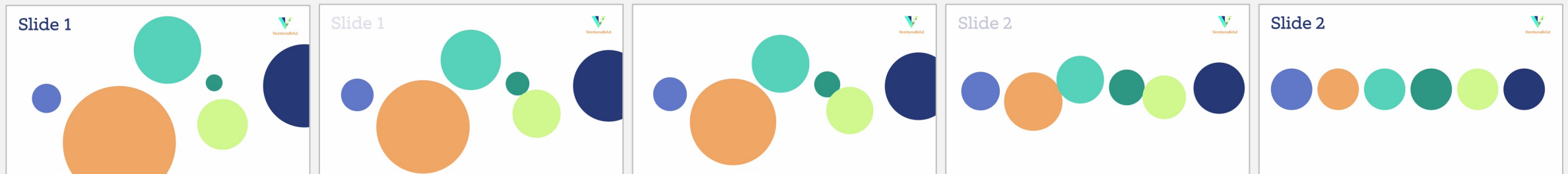
Morph is a slide transition that appears to add motion to objects that appear on two consecutive slides.

▶ **Pros:** Quickly add impact that would take a lot longer with traditional animation.

▶ **Cons:** It can be unpredictable and require a little trial and error. Keeping it simple helps.

Learning Morph can take some trial and error, as the results can sometimes be inconsistent. But once you figure out what works well with Morph and how to get the results you're looking for, you can use it to quickly add motion that would take a lot longer to make using PowerPoints traditional animation tools.

Animation best practices

With so many options and ways to customize your animations, it can be a little overwhelming to figure out what works and what doesn't. Here are some tips and best practices for PowerPoint animations that will help you get started.

You can also check out our blog post on the top 3 animations to make any presentation look good for more tips on which animations to choose.

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Aug 30, 2023

PowerPoint Animation 101

VERDANABOLD

Animation 101

From text zooming on screen to epic visual stories, PowerPoint animation can do more than most users ever realized.
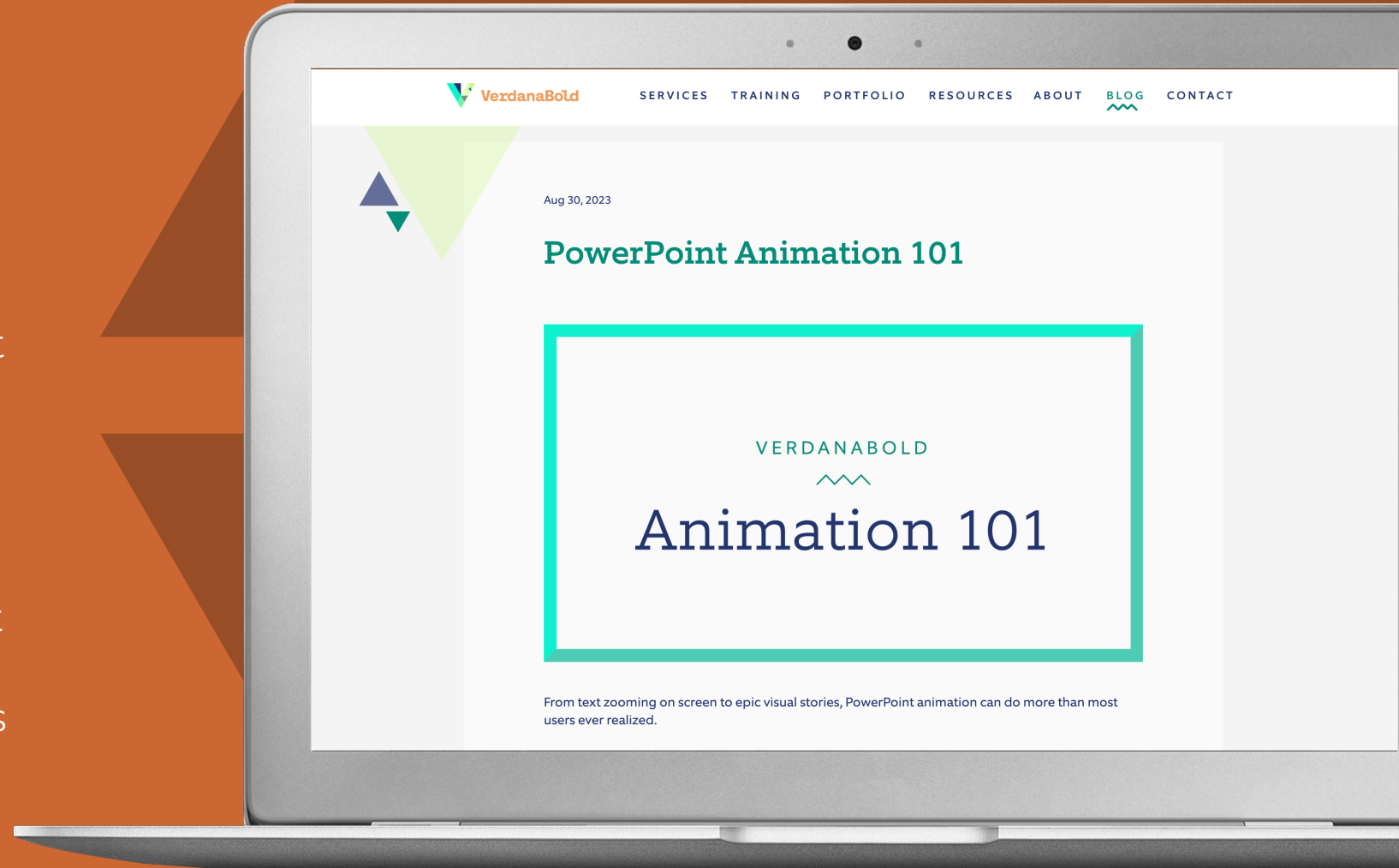
Animation best practices

Keep track of animation in Selection Pane

The Selection Pane lets you see, name, and reorder the elements on a slide. Any changes you make here to the names of elements will carry over to the animations tab, which can make it much easier to to keep track of objects when you're building animations.
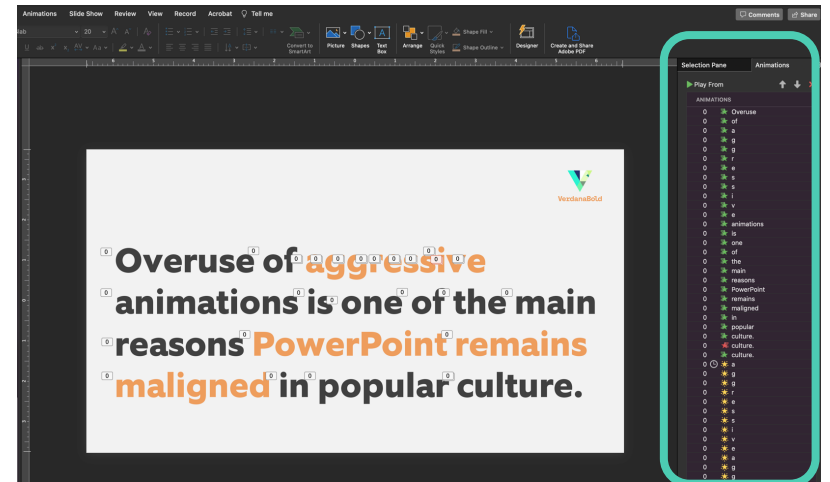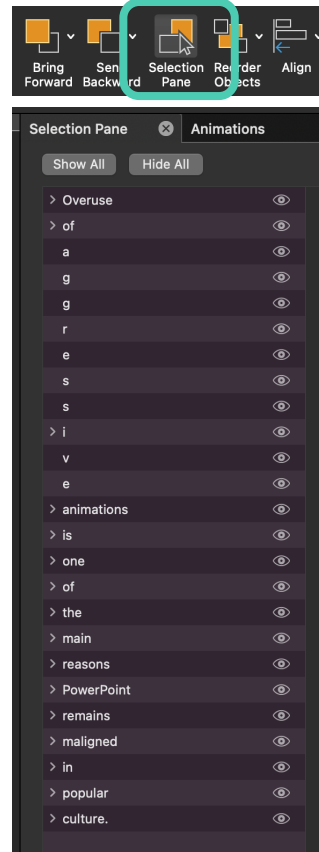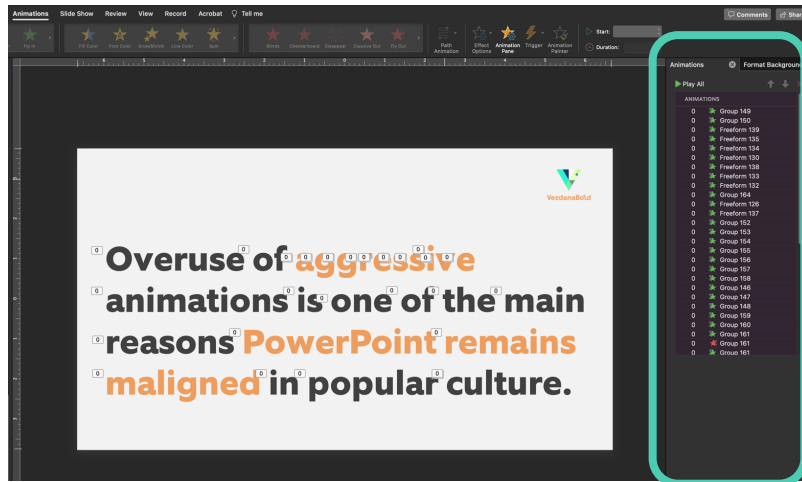
The Selection Pane functions allows you to quickly name and reorder elements on a slide. The naming structure carries over to the animations tab, making it easier to keep track of your objects for complex animations.

Animation best practices

Preview your animation as you work

Since animations don't play while you are editing a slide, it's common to put the presentation into slideshow mode to view your work. Instead, you can use the "Preview" button in the Animations tab to see it play directly on your slide.

This can be a huge time saver as you work through the finer points of an animation.
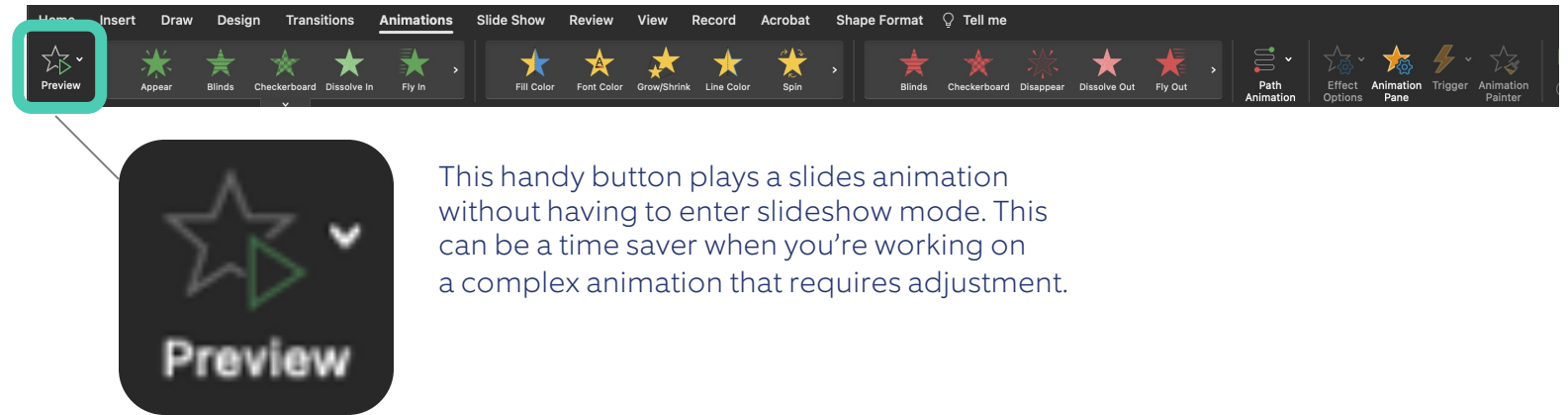
This handy button plays a slides animation without having to enter slideshow mode. This can be a time saver when you're working on a complex animation that requires adjustment.

Animation best practices

The Fade is your friend

If there's one animation type you can use over and over, it's the Fade. It's subtle enough to not get in the way, but useful enough to add polish to almost any deck.
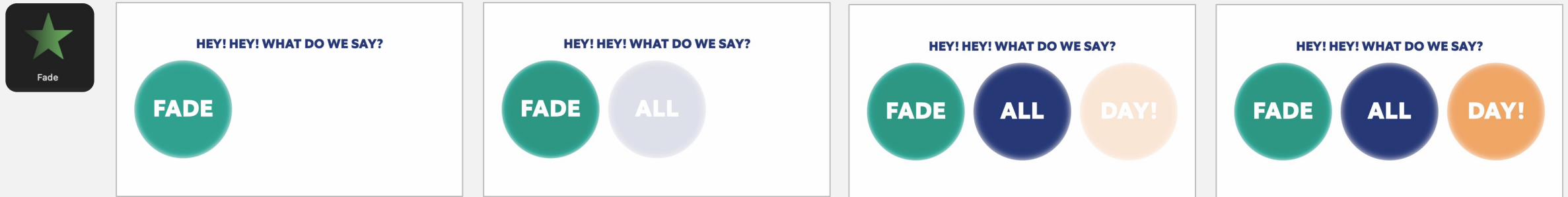
▲ When can you use fade? Pretty much whenever!

▲ Use it any time you want to add a simple polish to your deck

▲ It is subtle enough that your audience won't fatigue from viewing this affect across multiple slides

Animation best practices

Navigate tricky situations with Motion Paths

If you want an object to move in a certain way, you can use a motion path to specify the exact path it travels across your slide.
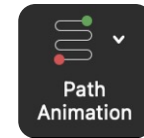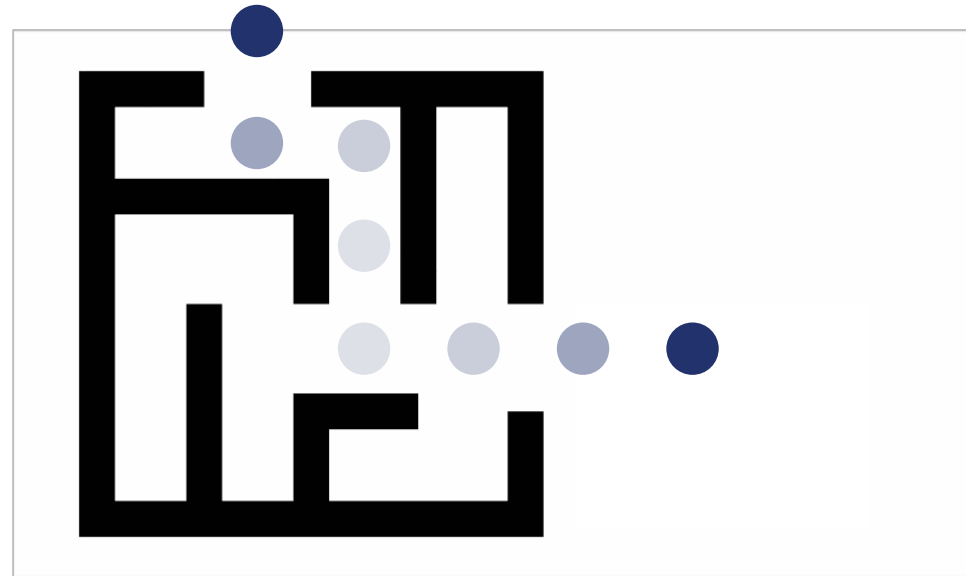
Motion paths can be used any time moving an object across the slide in a specific path to help reinforce the story.

Animation best practices

Stick the landing with Rise Up

This style is a powerful way to highlight a key message or final takeaway on a slide. But be careful, it can quickly get overused.

Rise Up can get a little intense when overused, but it can really hang a hat on your key message when used as the final word on a slide

Animation best practices

Add cinematic drama in key moments with Fly In

Fly In might be the most aggressive animation we employ, but it can really add some big screen drama if used intentionally.

▲

Fly In might be the most aggressive animation we employ, but it can really add some big screen drama if used intentionally

Animation best practices

Draw in lines and shapes with Wheel, Wedge, Wipe and Split

Combining the **Wheel, Wedge, Wipe** and **Split** with shapes that contain a linear element can make them appear to "draw in".

Note that these effects are less useful when applied to solid or blocky shapes.
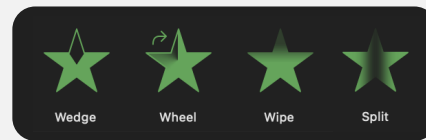
Using **Wheel, Wedge, Wipe and Split** with shapes that contain a **linear** element can make them appear to "draw in".

Using these effects on solid/blocky shapes is less successful in our opinion.
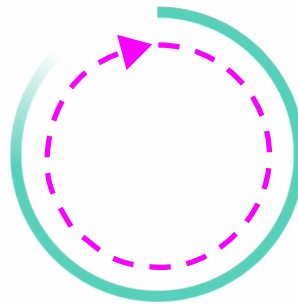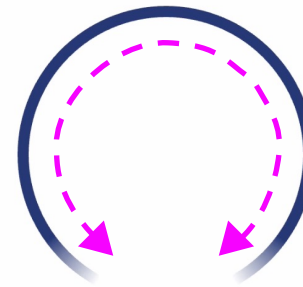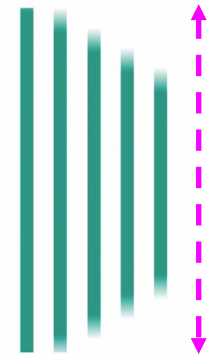
| Wheel | Wedge | Wipe | Split |

Animation best practices

Call attention

If you want to draw attention to a specific object on a slide, emphasis effects like Grow/Shrink or Spin can highlight key elements.

Use these when you want the audience to focus their attention in a specific spot on the slide. Emphasis effects also lend themselves well to combining with other animations (more on that below).
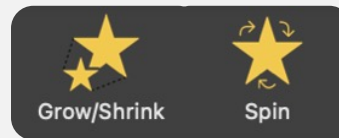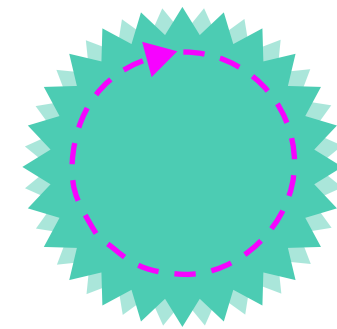

Emphasis effects such as grow/shrink and spin can be used to draw attention to your object.

Use when you want audience to focus their attention in a specific spot.

Emphasis effects also lend themselves well to combining with other animations (more on that next).
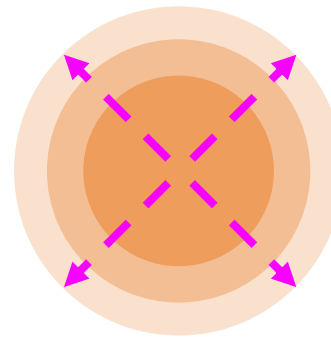
Grow / Shrink

Spin

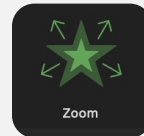# Advanced PowerPoint animation tips and tricks

After you've mastered the basics of PowerPoint animation, there's still a lot more to learn.

Here are a few ways to elevate your animations and add a new level of polish.

Combine animations to power up your point

Once you've mastered simple animations you can start to create combos for bonus impact. For example, you can combine Zoom and Grow/Shrink to have an element pop onto the slide, or you can combine the Spin effect with a motion path to have a circle roll across the screen.
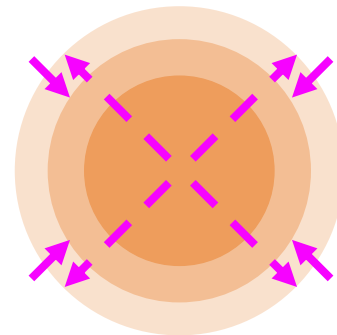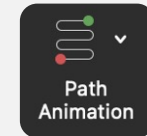
There's a ton of customization available once you get comfortable with combining the many types of animation effects PowerPoint offers.
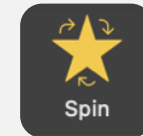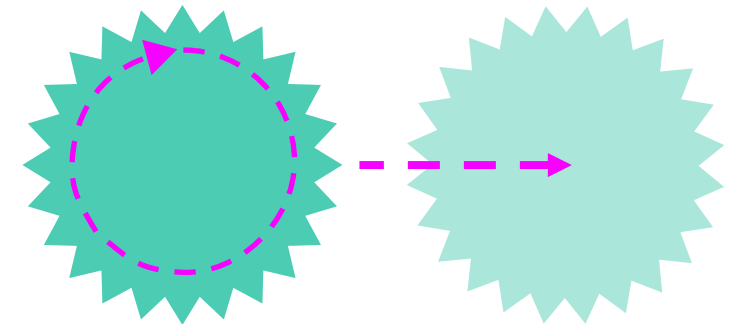

Zoom + Grow / Shrink

Spin + Move

Advanced PowerPoint animation tips and tricks

Combine video & animation for some sizzle

It might seem like a lot, but there's a powerful combo to layering animation over a video. This is a compelling way to add a high impact slide to any presentation.

For more on using videos in presentations, check out our blog on movies and animated GIFs in PowerPoint.

Video can play behind animation and even be tailored to interact with other objects on the screen.

Use this when you need a moment of high impact in a presentation.

Advanced PowerPoint animation tips and tricks

Add animation
to the Slide Master

If there are certain core animations that you always want to be a part of your presentations, or you want to make sure other people in your team don't alter any carefully crafted animations, you can add them directly into the Slide Master.

This lets you bake them directly into the template, which also means they aren't accessible in the standard slide edit mode.
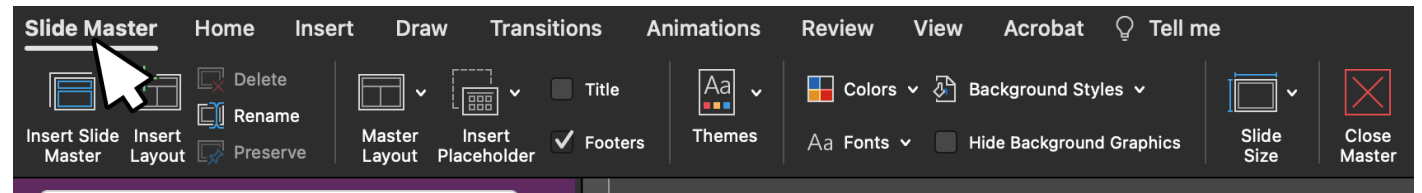
Animations and videos can also be added to slides in the master section so that they are baked into the template and inaccessible in regular slide edit mode.

Use this when you want to lock motion elements down at a template level to avoid users from altering the animation.

Conclusion

PowerPoint animations are an underappreciated but highly-useful tool for adding polish and visual power to presentations.

While animation can seem like a complicated or advanced technique, with a little practice it can be easy to add this visually appealing technique to your presentation toolkit.

Looking for more information about presentation animation and beyond? Check out our resources for expert advice and tested strategies.

- Storytelling
- PowerPoint design
- PowerPoint tips and tricks

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Thank you!

For help with presentation design, storytelling and training, just say
hello@verdanabold.com

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