

# TIPS FOR A GREAT PRESENTATION



Clear Message + Visually Appealing Slides + Confident Delivery =  
**Great Presentation!**

## Developing a clear message

### TIP 1

**Focus on what is new and unique about your approach.**

Don't spend too much time discussing widely understood topics or your institution/organization's mission and demographics. Instead, focus your time on presenting what is innovative or surprising about your specific research, program, approach, etc.

### TIP 2

**Simplify complex ideas.**

It's hard to stay focused for long periods, especially at a brain-filling conference. Don't alienate and bore your audience by explaining complicated details they don't need to know. Instead, keep them interested using simple language, analogies, metaphors, and images to relay essential concepts.

## TIP 3

### It's all about the audience.

The best presenters design every moment of their presentations with session attendees in mind. These presenters don't want to tout their accomplishments; they genuinely want to connect with and help others. Thus, your session content will be most useful if it overtly addresses a specific IRPE-related issue or problem your attendees are facing.

You might not have solved it, but sharing what you did and learned will almost certainly contribute to another institution's success. Use these prompts while planning your session to tailor your content to your audience:

- **What?** [Name the primary big idea](#) you want your session to address. Be sure to consider how someone from a different functional area or institution type/size might benefit from your experience. Anticipate possible objections and be ready to address them.
- **So What?** Describe why this topic is important or significant to the field. Why do we have to get it right? What implications for practice should attendees be aware of? Be sure to note insights from your unique perspective (i.e., how specific decisions, actions, spaces, people, budgets, etc., shaped your experience).
- **Now What?** Discuss your key takeaways, recommended action items, and questions for reflection. What do you hope attendees do with the information and insights you provided?

## Designing Your Slide Deck

## TIP 4

### Keep your slides clear, concise, clutter-free, and compliant

You don't have to be an artist to create good looking slides. However, you do need to apply the [principles of Universal Design](#) to ensure all session attendees can utilize your visual aids. In particular:

- Choose a font that makes it easy to distinguish between letters. Make sure it's large enough to be read from far away or, in the case of virtual events, on small mobile device screens. For paragraph text, your font size should be a minimum of 24 (though 28, 30, or 32 would be better).

- Our brains cannot listen and read simultaneously, so resist the urge to fill your slides with words. Unless you plan to read everything verbatim (such as a quote), use only short phrases so that attendees can focus their full attention on what you're saying.
- Similarly, too many elements on a slide can feel overwhelming and confusing. Emphasize just one key point or idea per slide and leave plenty of white space so that viewers' eyes go straight to the most important part.
- To ensure that your slides are accessible to all attendees, we encourage you to run an accessibility checker.

**Bottom line:** Your slides should guide and illustrate, not house everything you want to say and share with the audience. That's what presenter notes and handouts are for!

## TIP 5

### Use images wisely.

Pictures, vector art, icons, screenshots, charts, and graphs are a great way to illustrate key points. Your institution/organization probably has some stock photos you can use, but if not, there are loads of websites that allow free downloads (some with attribution and some not). StockSnap.io, Unsplash, and FreePik are some of our favorite go-to's.

## TIP 6

### Choose the right presentation template.

Although PowerPoint and Keynote are outstanding programs, we've probably all seen their stock templates about a million times. (And, sadly, they make it easy to design bad slides.) If you're looking for something different and have a little time, there are tons of great online presentation tools available.

Canva and Visme are an excellent place to start. Both are intuitive, loaded with features, and free to use, and there are plenty of tutorials to help you get up to speed quickly. You can even export your presentation to PowerPoint, Keynote, or PDF!

If you don't have time to learn something new, feel free to use your institution/organization's standard slide deck.

# Presenting Your Session

## TIP 7

### Have a strong start.

The first few minutes of your presentation are vital in setting the tone for the rest of your presentation. If you spend too long on presenter introductions or other background/context info, attendees will quickly lose interest and become distracted. Instead, be creative and begin with something that [makes your session attendees think and pay attention](#), such as a story, provocative question, shocking fact, compelling quote, imaginary scenario, etc.

## TIP 8

### Thread engagement opportunities throughout your talk.

Keep attendees interested in what you're saying by periodically inviting them to participate in the session. Pausing 1-2 times every ten to fifteen minutes is a good rule of thumb. Common examples include asking questions (for personal reflection or in open dialogue), breaking into small discussion groups, quizzing, and sharing case studies/scenarios. For virtual presentations, tools like [Kahoot](#), [Mentimeter](#), and [Mmmhmm](#) can also be useful (Mac only at the time of writing).

## TIP 9

### Avoid sounding too scripted or monotone.

This tip is pretty straightforward. If you read directly from a script or don't vary your intonation, your presentation will become dull and boring. And nobody wants that! [Using a script is totally okay](#), as long as you plan appropriately and write in a way that allows your enthusiasm for your topic to shine.

## TIP 10

### Practice, practice, practice.

Presenting a virtual session feels completely different than presenting at an in-person event. First, it's hard to feel the energy coming from your audience, particularly if you can't see faces. Second, monitoring the session technology is a tad more complicated than simply clicking through your slides.

To avoid being thrown off, it's essential to practice your presentation until you become comfortable explaining your ideas naturally and relationally. You can use a mirror, present to a friend or pet, or even record and watch a video of yourself speaking. Whatever you do, pay particular attention to what you're doing with your face and hands. Are you overly expressive, gesturing wildly, or pounding your desk? Are you raising the volume of your voice so much that it distorts the audio?

## TIP 11

### Have a backup plan in case of technical difficulties.

Ask yourself these questions, as well as anything else you can think of:

- What should I do if I cannot connect to Zoom?
- What if my internet/computer stops working?
- Have I updated my software and apps recently enough to avoid surprise updates?
- What if my internet connection is poor/slow?
- What happens if my microphone/speakers won't connect?
- What if my webcam fails? How can I present an engaging session anyway?
- What if the video I want to play fails to load?
- Are my presentation slides, notes, and handouts available in multiple places?

## Are you looking for more information?

- [How to Give a Good Presentation: 11 Top Tips for Killer Presentations](#) | Orana Velarde, Visme
- [11 Tips for Presenting at a Conference](#) | Brian Campbell, ExOrdo
- [How To Make A Good Presentation - 7 Tips From The Experts](#)
- [7 Common Powerpoint Presentations Design Mistakes and How to Fix Them](#) | Peregrine
- [Overcome Your Fear of Public Speaking: The Definitive Guide](#) | Dom Barnard, VirtualSpeech