Designing a Strong Presentation

Start With the Audience in Mind

- Design your presentation based on what the *audience* **needs to know** (not what you want them to know).

- Ask yourself:
  - Who are they?
  - What are their concerns?
  - What do they need to do when they get back home?
  - How can I help them with their challenges?

- Remember: our audience tends to have a life-, task-, or problem-centered orientation to learning.

- Adults' readiness to learn is driven by their **need to *know* or *do* something**.

Use Backward Design

- **Start with the *defined learning objectives*** for your session: what does the audience need to know, believe, and do?

- **Next select your content**:
  - Ask yourself: What do I need to provide for participants to achieve the desired outcome?
  - Prioritize and select only content that directly supports your goals.
  - Determine what is "need to know" versus "nice to know."

- **Finally, support the learners with thoughtful design and engagement strategies**.
  - Ask yourself: What tools and experiences do I need to provide for my learners so that they have the ability to act when they return home?

Keep It Interactive

Learning is a **three-step** process:

- **First,** participants need to **acquire** information, either through presentation or discovery

- **Next**, they need to **interpret** information to determine how it applies to their life or work.
  - Provide opportunities for participants to reflect and write down how the information they have acquired applies to them.

- The **third** step in the process is to **apply** new information.
  - A written action plan allows participants to think about and plan how they could apply what they have heard when they get home.
  - Peer sharing and collaboration are also very helpful in applying new concepts.

Provide Take-Aways

- Give participants **handouts, tools, resources, thoughts, and ideas**.

- If you are providing materials, know how you will be posting them after the session is over and be prepared to tell the participants where to get them.

Designing a Strong Presentation

Keep It Short

- The magic number of **retainable main points is somewhere between three and five.**

- A concise presentation allows the learner to focus on the key elements and mentally organize them in a way that makes sense.

- In general, **do not talk for more than 20 minutes.**

- **Practice** your presentation to make sure you can **deliver it within the defined time limit.**

- Design your presentation to have some sort of **break,** interaction, time for integration, or assimilation of material **every 15–20 minutes**.

- If you are not the only presenter, work with the session lead to make sure you **understand the overall goal** of the session and how your presentation helps reach that goal.

Don't Download—Synthesize

- Pick your three to five main points, illustrate them, and repeat them.

- Reinforce your essential points with
  - Data
  - Visuals
  - Stories
  - Examples and/or case studies

- *Put aside* anything that does not directly reinforce your key points.

## Have a Strong Open and Close

Open

Take advantage where attention is highest. In the beginning, you have a very short window of opportunity to get the audience interested before they attend to other distractions and tune you out.

- Dive right in—tell a story, ask questions, throw out a compelling statistic, show a picture. **Captivate audience attention first.**

- Establish credibility and do *brief* **introductions second**. Remember, the audience will have access to your full bio and are most interested in what you bring to the topic and why you are excited about it.

Close

What you say here is important because it's what participants tend to remember. The close informs their perception of the session.

- Take 1–2 minutes for a summary of your session's key points.

- If you have a question-and-answer session, coach the audience about how to **ask good questions**. They should be
  - Relevant to others in attendance (if they aren't, save until after the presentation or ask via email) Brief and succinct, and only one per person (limit to one follow-up).
  - A question, not a comment (if rambling on, the questioner should headline the *question*).

- Leave the audience inspired!
  - Have a prepared closing. Tell the audience what you hope they will do with the information they have received—either as a call to action or a big idea for the future.
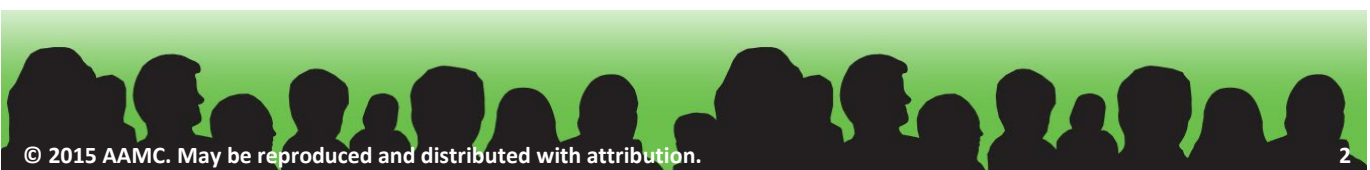
Presentation Design Checklist

AAMC

Item	Done
Have you identified what your audience needs to know, believe, and do?	
Have you identified the desired outcome for audience members attending your session?	
Have you limited the content you are presenting to between three and five key points?	
Have you identified tools and experiences to support what your audience is going to learn in your session?	
Have you designed a strong opening to captivate the audience right away?	
Have you planned time for participants to reflect on and interpret information?	
Have you planned time for participants to apply the new information through action planning or activities?	
Are you prepared to coach the audience about their questions and effectively manage Q&A?	
Have you provided take-away tools and resources for the audience?	
Does your close include a short summary and a call to action and/or a big idea?	

Sources:

Burke K. How not to ask questions at a conference. 2012. https://kev.inburke.com/kevin/how-not-to-ask-questions-at-conference/.

Goodman A. Why bad presentations happen to good causes. 2006. http://www.thegoodmancenter.com/resources/.

Imel S. Guidelines for working with adult learners. ERIC Digest No. 154.

Reynolds G. Top ten delivery tips. 2014. http://www.garrreynolds.com/preso-tips/prepare/.

The art of asking conference questions. 2013. http://anthropod.net/2013/08/14/the-art-of-asking-conference-questions/.

Wiggins G, McTighe J. Understanding by Design. 2005.