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PRESENTATIONS

FREE RESOURCE

Presentation Tips

Fifteen rules for executive presenting, each short enough to remember while you are standing up.

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Good executive presentations are not decorated documents. They are arguments, made clearly, with just enough evidence to support a decision. These fifteen rules cover the habits that matter most.

#	RULE	WHY IT MATTERS	TRY THIS
01	One message per slide	If a slide makes two points, the audience remembers neither. Split it, or cut the weaker point.	Write the slide's one message before you open the software.
02	Use meaningful slide titles	A title such as "Q3 results" makes the audience work. "Revenue grew 6% in Q3, ahead of plan" tells them what to see.	Read only your titles, in order. They should tell the whole story.
03	Structure the narrative	Lead with the conclusion, then the evidence, then the ask. Building up to a reveal works in theatre, not in a board room.	State your conclusion in the first two minutes.
04	Make the recommendation obvious	Senior audiences look for the ask. If they have to hunt for it, they assume there isn't one — or that you are unsure.	Give the recommendation its own slide and say it out loud.
05	Make decisions explicit	Write the decision as a question the audience can answer: approve, reject, or choose between options.	End the decision slide with "We are asking you to..."
06	Distinguish information from action	Mixing updates with requests buries the requests. Audiences remember what they were asked to do when it stands apart.	Put actions and asks on their own slide, with owners and dates.
07	Reduce unnecessary text	If the slide says everything, the audience reads instead of listening — and you become optional.	Keep the words that would still be needed if you were not there. Delete the rest.
08	Avoid overcrowding	A full slide signals that you could not decide what mattered. Small text and dense tables also fail on projectors and shared screens.	Move detail to an appendix and test the slide from the back of the room.
09	Establish hierarchy	The most important thing on the slide should be the biggest, boldest or brightest. Everything else steps back.	Squint at the slide. What you can still see is what the audience will notice first.
10	Use consistent spacing	Consistent margins, alignment and spacing look deliberate and make content easier to scan. Inconsistency looks rushed.	Use the same positions for titles and content on every slide.
11	Use charts appropriately	Choose the chart for the message: bars to compare, lines for change over time, a table when exact values matter. Give every number a comparison.	Write the chart's message as its title before you choose its type.
12	Label data clearly	Legends make the audience match colours to lines. Direct labels let them read the chart at once. Bar axes start at zero.	Put labels next to the data and remove the legend.
13	Remove visual noise	Gridlines, borders, shadows, 3D effects and decorative icons compete with the message.	Delete each element in turn. If nothing is lost, leave it out.
14	Rehearse the story	If you can only present with the slides in front of you, you know the slides, not the argument.	Tell the story out loud without the deck, timed. Then check the deck supports it.

#	RULE	WHY IT MATTERS	TRY THIS
15	Finish with a clear outcome	End on what happens next: the decision taken, the owners and the dates. Meetings overrun, so plan to finish early and know what to skip.	Close with one slide: decisions, actions, owners, dates.

THE ONE-MINUTE VERSION

- Know the one thing you want the audience to do.
- Say it first, and put it in the titles.
- Show only the evidence that supports it, with comparisons.
- Make the ask explicit — and finish early.

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