



Online Presentations

Now more than ever, much of our communication takes place online, including presentations. Whether you are presenting live in an online meeting or recording a presentation and uploading it to an online platform, you have the opportunity to send your message far and wide. However, if you are used to giving presentations in person, online presentations can feel like a whole new ballgame. Here are some tips to help you create and deliver dynamic, engaging, and effective online presentations:

Plan Carefully

Before you start any work, read your assignment guidelines carefully. Understand the purpose and goal of your presentation. Do not wing it!

- Create an outline for your presentation. This will serve as a roadmap and keep you on track.
- Most presentations follow this basic outline:
 - **Attention-Getter:** Start with a statement that captures your audience's attention.
 - **Introduction:** Establish the topic, why it is relevant to your audience, why you are credible to speak on it, and what your main points will be.
 - **Transitions:** In a natural way, let your audience know when you are moving from one section of the presentation to the next. The presentation is a journey, and you are the guide.
 - **Body:** Expand on each main point. You may include cited research or stories.
 - **Conclusion:** Recap what you have talked about and suggest what the audience can do with the information.
 - **Closing Statement:** End your presentation confidently. This is often called a "wow" statement because you leave your audience in awe.

Mind Your Mannerisms

After you have figured out what you want to say, focus on how you are going to say it. Use your physical behaviors and vocalics to complement your message.

- Practice, practice, practice (but not too much). You should always rehearse a presentation before it is time to formally deliver it, but do not practice so much that your delivery is robotic. Practice will help you minimize the use of filler words such as "um," "so," and "like."
- When you are delivering an online presentation, you may not be able to see your audience members at all, or they may be in boxes on your screen. Either way, it is best to make eye contact with your camera. This gives the effect of making eye contact with your audience.
- While referring to notes can be less obvious in an online presentation than an in-person one, it is still obvious if you are note dependent. Your audience will be able to tell if you are reading a script. Instead, use an extemporaneous speaking style. When you deliver a speech extemporaneously, you use your notes sparingly and focus on engaging with your audience in a more natural and conversational manner.
- Plant yourself. Do not swivel or rock back and forth in your chair. You should use gestures, but make sure they are not constant or distracting. Also, place your computer on a stable surface so your audience does not get dizzy.

- Your voice is your greatest tool. Speak clearly, not too softly or loudly, and not too fast or slow. Make sure your tone matches your message. If you do not sound interested in your topic, your audience will not be either. Find your favorite [TED Talkers](#) and take notes on their vocalics.

Choose the Right Setting

Have you ever been in an online meeting, and you cannot pay attention to what a person is saying because you are too distracted by the unmade bed and unfolded laundry in the background? The setting you choose to present in impacts how professional you look.

- Make sure your surroundings are non-distracting. You may opt to sit in front of a blank wall, a bookshelf, or a piece of art.
- Avoid sitting out in the open or near other people. You do not want to risk another person talking over your presentation or walking into frame behind you. You could put a “do not disturb” sign on your door to ensure privacy.
- Silence your cell phone so it does not start ringing in the middle of your presentation.
- If you are totally unable to be in a non-distracting setting, you could use a microphone that reduces background noise and a virtual background. Make sure the background you choose is simple, and remember, virtual backgrounds are not flawless. Your audience may still get peeks of your real background even if you are using a virtual one.

Think, “Lights, Camera, Action!”

Preparing for an online presentation requires wearing many different hats. You are basically writing, directing, producing, and starring in your own show.

- Before delivering your presentation, set up a test meeting or recording to ensure your camera and sound are working and clear. If not, you may need to use an external webcam and microphone/headset that can be plugged into your computer.
- If you are delivering an online presentation live, get comfortable with the meeting platform before your presentation. Test out the tools and features, especially if you are going to be sharing your screen.
- Make sure you are well lit. It is best to face a window rather than having your back to one. You could also put a lamp near your computer screen to ensure your face is illuminated.
- Confirm your computer is charged and you are connected to a steady Wi-Fi network. The last thing you want when you are delivering the best presentation of your life is for your computer to go dark. The [Kraemer Family Library](#) has equipment and study rooms you can use if needed.
- Position yourself so you are not too far from or close to the camera. Sit up straight and center yourself in the frame. Make sure your head, neck, and shoulders are visible. A good rule of thumb is to have at least four fingers between the top of your head and the camera frame.

Dress to Impress

Even though delivering a presentation from home can feel a little more comfortable than delivering one in person, you still want to treat it with the same professionalism.

- Dress for the presentation like you would a job interview. Think business attire.
- Solid colors and simple patterns are usually captured best on camera. Sometimes, certain colors like white, black, and bright red can alter your camera exposure, but jewel tones like navy blue and emerald green are usually safe.

- Although your audience probably will not see the bottom half of your body during your presentation, it is better to be safe than sorry. You want to leave your audience remembering your message, not your pajama pants.

Add Visual Elements

Use visual aids to bring your message to life and assist visual learners. Keep in mind that a visual aid is meant to *aid* your verbal message, not dominate it.

- Use the SCRAP method when you are designing your visual aid:
 - **Simplicity:** Do not overload your visual aid with text, images, or special effects. If you read off your slides verbatim during your entire presentation, you will lose your audience's attention.
 - **Contrast:** Make sure your visual aid is easy to read. Light text against a dark background or vice versa usually provides the best contrast.
 - **Repetition:** Keep your design (font type, font size, colors, etc.) consistent. You do not want each slide in a slide deck to look like it is from a different template.
 - **Alignment:** Balance the text and images in your visual aid and avoid excessive blank space or rogue bullet points.
 - **Proximity:** Design your visual aid so it is clear how the information is grouped and what viewers should be paying attention to.
- If you are using a slide deck, avoid templates that are noticeably outdated. You can explore modern and visually interesting templates available online for free through platforms like [Slidesgo](#) and [Canva](#), but remember to keep it simple and uncomplicated.
- Double check your visual aid for typos. If you use a template, make sure you do not accidentally leave any placeholder text.
- If you record yourself presenting, and the video is overlaid on your visual aid, make sure the video is not blocking any important information. While you are designing your slides, leave open space where your video will be.
- Avoid pixelated and grainy photos and cite your images and information when necessary.
 - Pro tip: PowerPoint has a whole collection of free stock images that are high resolution and updated regularly. They can be accessed in PowerPoint by selecting the Pictures command under the Insert tab.
- Practice your presentation using your visual aid so you are comfortable referring to it and transitioning your slides while you speak.

Synergize for Success

Presenting in groups allows opportunities for increased creativity or increased conflict. For the best group experience possible, make sure you are communicating and collaborating.

- Start by discussing each group member's strengths and plan accordingly.
- Make sure each group member is clear on their roles and tasks.
- Practice as a group so transitions are smooth.
- Strive for cohesion and incorporate group interaction when possible. The end result should not be several distinct presentations spliced together.
- Remain engaged and professional when another group member is presenting.

Find Your Favorite Tools

There is no shortage of online platforms, tools, and software for creating online presentations—many of which are one-stop shops for designing, recording, and editing videos.

- Keep in mind that when you are done creating your video, you will need to share it with your instructor and/or your classmates. So, before you start working on your video, make sure it can be easily shared later. Check if your instructor has specified how to turn in your video and if you need to use certain tools to record it. You may need to share a link to your video or download it to your computer as an MP4 file and upload it to your assignment box/board.
- Keep file size in mind. Some MP4 files are too large to upload directly to Canvas. If that is the case, you can upload your video to [Panopto](#), and then share it in Canvas using the Panopto tool. Alternatives include uploading the video to YouTube, OneDrive, or Google Drive and sharing the link with your instructor. Again, check with your instructor to see what they prefer. If you do send a link to your video, double check the visibility settings and make sure it is not private. If the video is set to private, your instructor and classmates will not be able to watch it even if they have the link.
- If you are recording your presentation through PowerPoint, [you must convert it to an MP4 file](#) before turning it in. If you turn in the presentation as a PowerPoint file, your audience cannot view it as one cohesive video.
- Some platforms are limited to voice-only recording, which is not very helpful for a presentation where you must be visible. Many platforms allow your video to appear in the corner of your slides, and some integrate your video into the slide design itself. If you are not sure how to use a certain platform, see if there are any tutorials available through the platform itself or through YouTube. While we do not endorse any particular tool, it may be best to opt for the ones that are already integrated into Canvas, such as Microsoft Teams and Panopto. Here are some options to explore:
 - [Panopto](#)
 - [Microsoft Teams Recording](#)
 - [PowerPoint Recording](#)
 - [Prezi Video](#)
 - [Loom](#)
 - [Canva Videos](#)

Leverage Your Finished Product

So, chances are, you are creating online presentations because your GPA depends on it, but guess what? After you have recorded an online presentation for a class, you now have a great new item for your portfolio! You can add the recording to your LinkedIn profile or offer it as supplemental material when you are applying for a job. The benefits of online presentations extend far beyond the virtual classroom, and the skills you learned along the way will transfer to virtual meetings, in-person presentations, and all other online content creation!

Need more information or assistance?

Schedule an appointment with the [Excel Multiliteracy Center](#). We are here to provide one-on-one and group assistance to any and all UCCS students!