Do you have a PowerPoint presentation coming up that requires you to deliver key findings or data to your colleagues, tutor or students? PowerPoint has over the last few years gotten the reputation of becoming an archaic and boring way of doing presentations, but it doesn’t have to be. The good news is you don’t have to be a professional designer to know how to make an awesome and attractive presentation.

There are a few simple rules and tips you can follow for creating a professional and visually engaging presentation. In this video I’ll be walking you through some design tips and tricks to maximize your PowerPoint skills and make you look really good next time you’re up in front of the crowd (whether it is in person or virtually).

## 1. Write a script.

Before you even open PowerPoint, you need to know what you’re going to say. A little planning goes a long way.

The presentation needs to stand on its own; the slides are just something you layer over to enhance the listener experience. It’s easy for slides to feel more like presenter notes, but it’s far more effective when your slides give your audience a visual experience that adds to the words.

Make sure your script follows good storytelling conventions: give it a beginning (intro), middle (content), and end (summary); have a clear arc that builds towards a conclusion; make your audience appreciate each slide and eager to know more.

## 2. Consistent look and feel

A good presentation consists of slides that feel like part of the same story. This means using the same fonts, sizes and colours across all the slides (I will delve into this in more detail later).

PowerPoint offers built-in theme and colour variations to help you along with this. You can also use built in elements, your design sense and a selected colour palette to make your own ‘theme’. (should you show them this quickly or you could leave to a different video?)

If you are presenting on behalf of Queen’s, check what the brand guidelines are. Queen’s has primary and secondary brand colours, and it’s a good idea to use them in your presentation to align with Queen’s identity and style.

## 3. Top to bottom

Normally, we tend to read left to right, top to bottom. You want to guide the audience’s eyes to the parts of the slide you want to emphasize.

You create a visual hierarchy by taking into consideration something as simple as the layout of the slide. This includes using different text size, alternating fonts, colours to distinguish headlines from body text and placement.

## 4. White space

This is the room around the elements of a slide and any area of a slide free of elements. White space makes slides easier to read. When your slides are cluttered, your audience will not receive your message. They are too busy to parse out what you are trying to say.

White space draws an audience into the slide. It funnels their vision to the key message of the slide. When you use white space effectively, it becomes impossible not to understand the message of the slide.

## 5. Think about Typography

Fonts play a vital role in the readability and overall success of your presentation- the perception of your font type could influence your audience's impression of you. The right font is an opportunity to convey a consistent level of professionalism.

Some of the most accessible fonts are Arial, Calibri, Tahoma and Verdana. All these fonts are sans-serif (those without the tail) and these are ideal for presentations as they are easier to read on screens.

## 6. Choose the right size

It is important to make the font big enough so that everyone can see and read. When determining size, think about the presentation screen and how the fonts look on larger/smaller displays. Also, some fonts looker bigger or smaller than others even if they are the same point size.

## 7. Don’t over style it

There is no need to have every word on your slides to be capitalized, you don’t want your audience to think you are shouting at them! Nor do you want to have all your bullet points in title case. Our eyes are naturally drawn to things that stand out but use these changes sparingly. Over styling can make the slide look busy and distracting.

## 8. Consider contrasting

For digital accessibility, colour contrast is essential, thankfully it is also simple. Colour contrast refers to the difference in light between font (or anything in the foreground) and its background. By using sufficiently contrasting colours, a presentation’s font visibility is clear enough to distinguish, meaning the information on your slides can be read by the audience.

The highest contrast you can have is black and white so if you’re using a dark background or image, make sure to have white text for it to be visible. If you are not sure, use an online colour contrast checker to see if it meets accessibility standards. WebAIM contrast checker is one great example but there are many others out there as well.

## 9. Keep it simple

At any given moment, what should be on the screen is the thing you’re talking about. If there are a lot of words on your slide, you’re asking your audience to split their attention between what they’re reading and what they’re hearing.

If you can’t avoid having a lot of text on your slides, try to progressively reveal text (like unveiling bullet points one by one) as you need it.

## 10. Picture this

Images play an important role in your presentation. It is one of the best ways to make your presentation look great, but also, one of the best ways to make it look bad.

Picking the right image for the information that is on screen can be tricky. You want to make sure that they are relevant, engaging and not distracting.

Here are a few do’s and don’ts when it comes to picking images:

* Avoid using blurry or pixelated images
* Don’t use small images that are hard to see
* Use images sparingly
* Arrange images neatly on the slide
* Do not use watermarked images
* Avoid distracting images
* Do not stretch images when scaling
* And make sure to attribute images which are not Creative Commons

Hopefully these 10 tips will help you on your way to creating that next visually engaging and professional PowerPoint presentation. Thank you for listening.

In the next video, I will have a step-by-step process of putting together some example PowerPoint slides for you to follow along to.