Presentation Resources

A narrated presentation is for a specific audience to which you would ideally present in person or online in real time, but for practical reasons, you need to record for later viewing.

While Microsoft PowerPoint is considered the default presentation tool for presentations, you may consider using other presentation platforms or tools. Just be sure the tool supports prerecorded narration.

Preparing for Your Presentation

As with any project, it is good to begin by creating an outline. This will help you determine how many slides you will need to develop and how much information you will need to present on each slide. It should also help determine a logical order in which to present material.

Be sure to dedicate enough time to the narrated presentation to get the timing for transitions right, and ensure that the sound is clear and the narration is at the right volume.

**Creating Slides**

Source: cnythzl / Getty Images

A good recorded presentation shares most of the same traits as a good live presentation. Your presentation should not be an academic paper cut into text-filled slides. You are giving a talk to an audience, so the narrative should provide most of your ideas and argumentation. Be sure the themes either flow or transition appropriately from slide to slide.

Here are some recommendations:

* Keep slides uncluttered by using brief bullet points—only a few key words each.
* An easy way to make your presentation look more appealing is to use one of the designs provided within PowerPoint.
* Adding images and/or clip art is another good way to add visual interest to your presentation, but don't overuse slide transitions or animations, as these can be distracting.
* When you are citing sources of information on a slide, use a small font size so the citations don't detract from the primary points.
* Be sure to proofread carefully: Any errors on a slide will be particularly noticeable because of the relatively small number of words.
* When you record audio for each slide, a loudspeaker icon will appear in the middle of the slide. You can drag this icon to a better position (often the bottom right corner of the slide) so it doesn't interfere with the text.

**Writing the Script**

The script for your presentation can be a complete word-for-word documentation of what you intend to say as each slide is displayed, or it can be a much briefer set of notes to use as a reminder while you are recording to ensure that you cover all the points. The latter approach is preferable, because this makes it less likely that you will sound rushed or overly scripted when speaking. Keep in mind that if you were making the presentation in person, you would not want to be reading your comments; instead, you would want to make eye contact with the audience.

Here are some additional recommendations for your script:

* Try to keep the amount of narration to less than two minutes per slide. If you need to say more than that, create another slide so the audience doesn't get bored.
* Make sure the script and what appears on the slide are closely related so the audience can easily follow what you have to say.
* Don't simply read the material on the slide—add value by providing additional information.

**Recording the Narration**

Source: cnythzl / Getty Images

At this point, you have created and saved slides as a PowerPoint presentation, and you have the script ready. Now it's time to record the audio.

Here are a few general recommendations before you record:

* If you are using a computer to record, use a headset/microphone combination rather than using the computer's built-in speakers and microphone for better audio quality. It isn't necessary to spend a lot on a headset/mic (typically $20 or less), and you will be rewarded with better sound quality and less background noise.
* Make sure the headset/mic is installed and working. There are simple programs on both Macs and PCs that allow you to test whether recording is occurring and whether the sound quality is acceptable.
* Choose a quiet location to record so that background noise is minimal.
* When you begin recording, speak clearly and conversationally without rushing.
* Remember that it's easy to redo the audio for a slide. If you're not happy with the way it sounds, you can do it again.
* Once you have completed and narrated the presentation, it is a good idea to email the file to another computer. If you are able to watch and listen to the slide show successfully on the second computer, you will know that the audio files have been successfully embedded in the presentation.