


POTENT



PRESENTATIONS

MESSAGE • DESIGN • DELIVERY

Guidelines for Handouts [by Sheila B. Robinson, Ed.D.](#)

Handouts are a key component and often misunderstood aspect of presentations. Handouts are supporting materials you distribute before, during, or after your presentation. A handout might contain text, charts and graphs, images, or other elements. While not always necessary, if a presenter chooses to use a handout, it must be well planned and composed. The following guidelines will assist in creating effective, engaging handouts that can help you better connect with your audience and make your presentation even more memorable.

In general, the point to remember from these guidelines is: **Slides are NOT handouts.**

WHY? Because if you follow guidelines for good [slide design](#) which include slides with visuals (i.e. graphics, images, icons, etc.), very limited text, and no bullet points, your slides will not make any sense without the presentation and without YOU, the presenter!

WHY use handouts at all?

- 1.) You can share key points of your presentation without conflicting with slide design guidelines.
- 2.) Your audience will be able to take notes in the same place as the key points of your presentation.
- 3.) Your audience can take away your contact information along with additional resources for further learning.

HOW to create good handouts

- 1.) You can use the same slide software (PowerPoint, Keynote, Google Slides, etc.) to create note pages which become a handout.
 - a. Use the “Notes Master” in PowerPoint (Presenter Notes in Keynote or Speaker Notes in Google Slides) to customize the size of the slide image, font, colors, etc.

- 2.) You can create a document (Word, Pages, Google Docs, etc.) that may or may not include pictures of some of your slides.
 - a. Copy any relevant slides and paste as images on the document. You can move them around and change the size as needed.
- 3.) Use the same design elements as your slides for a unified look.
 - a. Use the same fonts, icons, and other design elements, including lots of white space for a polished professional look.

INSIDER TIP: While handouts will naturally be more text-heavy than slides, use design elements here too – boxes, thick/thin lines, arrows, etc. to help break up the text for easier reading

INSIDER TIP: Convert your handouts to PDFs and share in a conference app, email, or via a special webpage you set up where participants can download and take notes electronically.

WHAT to include in handouts

Consider including any or all of these elements:

- 1.) Text you want the audience to read and be able to reread later such as:
 - a. Key presentation points
 - b. Quotes (people want these - it is often a reason they ask for slides)
 - c. Additional content not included in the presentation
- 2.) Relevant images or icons (these can even be small pictures of some of your slides)
- 3.) Supporting data, including additional charts/graphs
- 4.) References
- 5.) Resources (e.g. website URLs) and suggested reading (e.g. book or article titles) for additional learning
- 6.) Your contact information
- 7.) Your social media names/handles
- 8.) Your company logo
- 9.) White space for audience members to take notes

Critical consideration – length! Consider whether your handout will be distributed electronically or printed. Printing costs rise as handouts become lengthier. It's not just whether you distribute them electronically, but if you think your audience might want to print them. If you find your handout becoming too lengthy, consider cutting back and putting some content elsewhere, such as on a website, where your audience can access it after the presentation.

WHEN to distribute handouts

There is debate about when to hand out your handouts – before, during or after the presentation, and there is no clear answer. Here are some considerations:

- 1.) If you want people to be able to take notes on the handout, they need it before or during.
- 2.) If you want people to practice a skill, reflect, brainstorm, etc. in writing and they need written information (such as directions or relevant text), they need it before or during.

- 3.) If there is an element of surprise in your presentation, or information you do not want audience members to read before you talk about it, distribute after.
- 4.) If you include a lot of text on the handout that audience members may feel compelled to read while you are speaking, distribute after.

INSIDER TIP: Handouts can stand alone – in other words, they can include enough information so that someone who didn't attend your presentation can whet their appetite about your topic and have enough to spark their interest. They will also have your contact info which can potentially lead them to look for and attend other presentations you do, read your blog, buy your book, or contact you for services.

Check out these additional resources on the topic of handing out slides and creating handouts:

[13 Best Practice Tips for Effective Presentation Handouts](#)

[Why I Never Email My Presentation Slides \(and What to do Instead\)](#)

INSIDER TIP: Consider a “skeletal outline” format for handouts. List a few subtopics and a few key points (along with relevant images) with white space between so that audience members can take notes under each heading.

INSIDER TIP: If you want a handout for distribution *after* your presentation and are creating in slide software, try dictating some of your key presentation points to accompany each slide. **BONUS:** This makes for excellent presentation rehearsal and saves some wear and tear on your hands!

Check out these links and the following pages for example handouts:

[Putting Data in Context: Timelining for Evaluators \(Evaluation 2015\)](#)

[The Data Visualization Checklist, 2016 Edition](#)

(web page includes guidance on adapting graphs for presentations or handouts)

The Title of My Fabulous Presentation

Conference Name, Any City, 20--



This is a tremendously profound quote by a famous person in this field who said something I really want my audience members to be able to read during the presentation and be able to take home with them.

- J.P Famousperson



Key presentation point #1

- Important detail #1
- Important detail #2
- Important detail #3

Notes:



Key presentation point #2

- Important detail #1
- Important detail #2
- Important detail #3

Notes:



Key presentation point #2

- Important detail #1
- Important detail #2
- Important detail #3

Notes:

Key take-away point from the presentation. This slide is very memorable because it illustrated the key point.

This pink elephant reminds us...



My contact information: My Name



myemailaddress@somedomain.com



@MYTwitterHandle



My Super Duper Company