

# Presentation Tips

from expert  
**Rick Altman**



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Most PowerPoint presentations suck.

You've probably seen your share of bad ones.

(and you may have even delivered a bad one yourself- I know I have!)

That's why I interviewed presentation guru Rick Altman to share some of his best tips on giving better presentations.

Rick shares not only "why" most presentations suck, but also "how" to make them better.

In fact, he wrote a highly rated book with exactly that in the title: [\*\*\*Why Most PowerPoint Presentations SUCK; and How You Can Make Them Better.\*\*\*](#) So I know he's the right guy!

Not only is Rick a popular presentation author, he's also the organizer of the [\*\*Presentation Summit\*\*](#), an elite conference that pulls together the top presentation minds in the world for 4 days.

With that said, let's get on with the interview!

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# Why do most PowerPoint presentations suck?



Most people do not really understand how to craft a good story, they have no formal background in design, and they are scared to death to speak in public.

Then there are two ironies:

1) PowerPoint is actually too easy, so very few people

take the time to learn it as they should; and

2) even if you did take the time to learn it properly -- even if you were a PowerPoint god -- that would not in any way guarantee that a person could craft a weighty message, design

## Most PowerPoint presentations **SUCK** because....

most people

- 1 *do not... craft a good story*
- 2 *have no formal background in design*
- 3 *are scared to death to speak in public*

~Rick Altman

evocative visuals to  
complement it, and then  
deliver the story with impact. ”

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even if you were a **PowerPoint GOD**  
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that would in no way guarantee that a person could:

- ✓ **Craft a weighty message**
- ✓ **Design evocative visuals to complement it**
- ✓ **Deliver the story with impact**

~Rick Altman

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# Is PowerPoint to blame for bad presentations?



Please. What can I say that hasn't already been said a million times?

Who blames the hammer instead of the carpenter for a bad remodel?

See my earlier comment: a vast majority of presentation content creators are undertrained with the software and just don't have a good handle on how best to craft good messages.



**“Presentation content creators are undertrained with the software and don't have a good handle on how best to craft good messages...”**

**-Rick Altman**

# How does PowerPoint function at its best?

“ When everyone understands the simple axiom that you are the presentation, not your slides.

When slides are subordinate to the human standing in front of them, PowerPoint functions at its best. ”

That immediately places everything in the proper perspective and does not compel you to try to do too much with your slides.

**YOU are the presentation,  
NOT your slides...**

**When slides are subordinate to the human standing in front of them, PowerPoint functions at its best.**

**Rick Altman**



# What makes a PowerPoint presentation exceptional?

“ Nothing.

It is impossible to make a PowerPoint presentation exceptional.

See my previous response: it is certainly possible to design and deliver an exceptional presentation,

with PowerPoint contributing visuals.

So some of this is parsing semantics -- I reject the whole idea of a “PowerPoint presentation.”

”

**I reject the whole idea of a  
“PowerPoint presentation.”**

It is certainly possible to design and deliver an exceptional presentation, with PowerPoint contributing visuals...

~Rick Altman~

# What's your favorite presentation?

“ Hard to go wrong with Jill Bolte Taylor, the neuroscientist who described her own stroke to her TED audience. This after using an actual human brain as a prop.

”

**#1 Presentation in the World**

as picked by presentation guru, Rick Altman

**“My stroke of insight”**

by **Jill Bolte Taylor**

**TED Talk**

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# What's your #1 tip for becoming a better presenter?



Audiences don't want perfect presenters. They want people who they feel are just like them. That should be incredibly comforting news to all nervous presenters. Don't be perfect; just be real.



**Audiences don't want perfect presenters. They want people who they feel are just like them.**

**Don't be perfect;  
just be real.**

..... ~ Rick Altman ~

**It's 5pm and your boss tells you you need to deliver a presentation first thing tomorrow morning... what do you do?**



Provide for him a menu of already-prepared and rehearsed presentations that I have delivered in the past, and say “here, choose one.”.



**SCENARIO:**

**Boss gives you no warning about a presentation**

**Rick Altman's advice:**

**“Provide a menu of already-prepared and rehearsed presentation... and say... ‘choose one’ ”**

# What's your best tip for good visual presentation design?



A good presentation is made up of three things:

- 1) What you say to your audience,
- 2) what you show them, and
- 3) what you give to them (in the form of a handout).

Make each one of those things as good and as

distinct from one another as possible. When you begin to think separately about these three critically important components of the presentation experience, you will begin to think like an effective presentation designer.



## A good presentation is:

- 1** What you say to your audience,
- 2** What you show them, and
- 3** What you give to them (handout)

Make each one of those things as good and as distinct from one another as possible.

~ Rick Altman ~

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# When you teach PowerPoint, what tip gets the most oohs and aahs?



Relative to my last answer, I open the most eyes when I discuss how to use the Notes page to create handouts that are contained within the same PPTX file as the slides.

Most people have never spent even a second in the Notes master so they never knew you could globally

reformat the Notes pages to allow them to better accommodate the creation of handout pages.



## PowerPoint Tip

Use the “Notes” page to create handouts that are contained within the same PPTX file as the slides.

..... ~ Rick Altman ~

# Rapid fire- Would you rather?

*Note: Rick's selections in **bold***

- Know your audience OR know your content
- Read text verbatim from slide or **animate every transition**
- Have a text-heavy deck OR **have no slides at all**
- Use humor OR **tell a story**
- Use an image or use a word **EITHER**
- Have the projector stops working OR **tell a joke no one laughs at**
- Stand behind a lectern or **walk around**
- **Separate presentation and handouts** OR all in one
- **Point with your arm** OR use a laser pointer
- Microphone OR lavalier mic OR no mic **ANY**



# Presentation Rapid Fire with RICK ALTMAN

## Would you rather? Choose 1

Know your audience

OR

know your content

Read text verbatim  
from slide

OR

animate every  
transition

Have a text-heavy  
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Stand behind a  
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walk around

Separate  
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OR

All in one

Point with your arm

OR

use a laser pointer

Microphone

OR

lavalier mic

OR

no mic

*ANY*

# What PowerPoint feature are you most excited about with the latest release (2016)?

“ Morph is going to be a real game-changer. I have been complaining for over a decade that we do not have enough control over motion paths and over the animations that involve an object’s changing size. Now we do. Now we can create the end of an animation with meticulously-positioned

objects just by moving those objects on a slide. The Morph transition takes charge of the animation between the “before” and the “after” slide. That is so much more precise and so much more intuitive than wrestling with the animation functions that have tried to perform those tasks.

”

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Best new feature in **POWERPOINT 2016**

**MORPH** is going to be a real **GAME-CHANGER.**

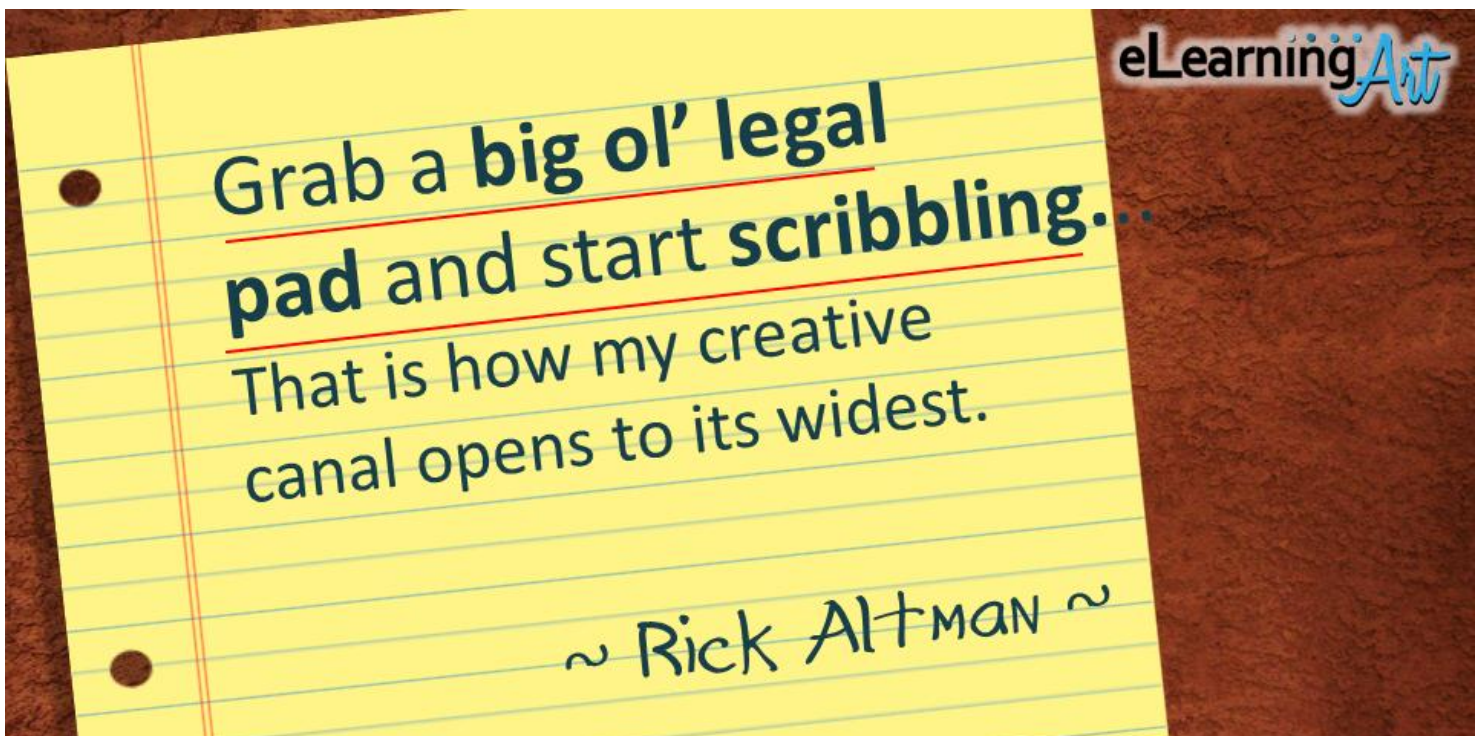
~ Rick Altman ~

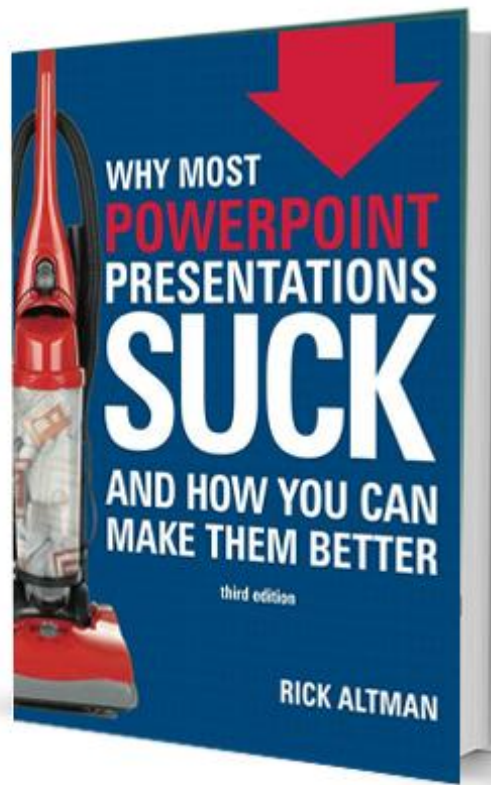
# What's the first thing you do when you start working on a new presentation?



“ Grab a big ol' legal pad and start scribbling. I scribble words, ideas, and really juvenile-looking sketches of things. That is how my creative canal opens to its widest. But you might be different; you might be at your creative best by composing complete paragraphs out of fully-formed thoughts. I don't care how you get to that

max creative state; just that you get there. You're going to need to do both -- you're going to need to map out ideas for the spoken narrative and produce articulated sentences for the printed handout -- so it doesn't matter which you do first. Pick the one that allows you to visualize your story arc with the most clarity. ”





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