

Giving Effective Presentations

A beginners guide

Lancashire & South Cumbria Integrated Stroke & Neuro Delivery Network
April 2026

1. Start with purpose



Ask first: What should people *understand, remember, or be able to do* after my presentation?

Do

- 1 Define 1-3 takeaways – Less is more
- 2 Tailor examples and complexity to the level and context of your audience
- 3 Align all slides and activities back to your objectives

Avoid

- 1 Trying to cover everything
- 2 Teaching content that isn't related to your main goal

2.1 Structure for understanding



Remember: Audience attention follows a narrative arc:
Give them direction

Do

- 1 Use a clear structure
- 2 Verbally signpost transitions
e.g. "First..." "Now we'll look at..."
- 3 Keep one key idea per section or slide

Avoid

- 1 Rambling or information dumping
- 2 Long explanations without check-ins or application

2.2 Worked example of a clear structure

- **Hook**

- “Imagine waking up unable to move one side of your body... this is the reality for many stroke survivors.”

- **Context**

- Stroke is a leading cause of disability, and early rehabilitation significantly improves recovery outcomes.

- **Key points**

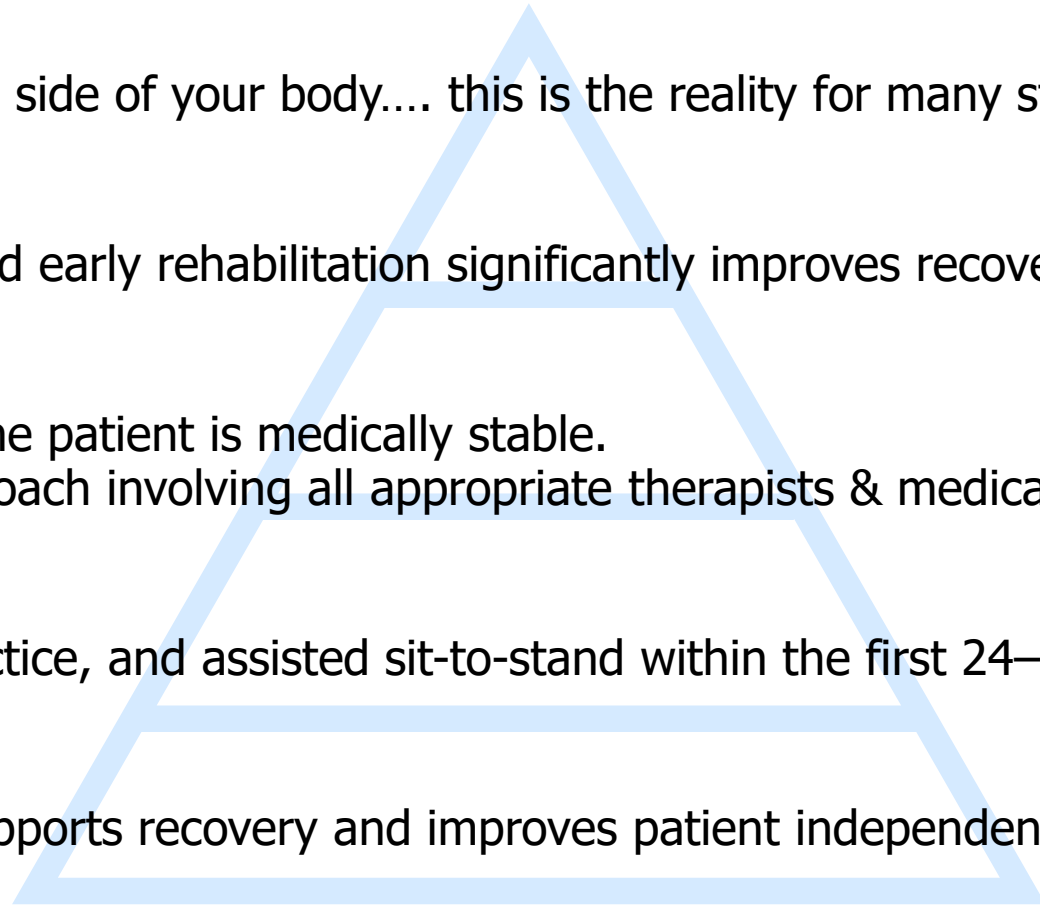
1. Begin mobility early and safely once the patient is medically stable.
2. Use a multidisciplinary functional approach involving all appropriate therapists & medical colleagues.

- **Application**

- Example: supported sitting, balance practice, and assisted sit-to-stand within the first 24–48 hours.

- **Summary**

- Early, safe, and collaborative mobility supports recovery and improves patient independence.



3. Communicate on all three channels

Verbal

WHAT YOU SAY

- 1 Define new or technical terms clearly
- 2 Encourage student thinking
"Explain how you got that"
- 3 Normalise confusion and curiosity
- 1 Dismissive phrases
"This is easy"
- 2 Fillers ("um," "like")
Try to pause instead

Vocal

HOW YOU SAY IT

- 1 Project your voice
- 2 Speak slightly slower than normal conversation
- 3 Use pauses after complex ideas and information
- 4 Vary tone to emphasise importance
- 1 Talking faster when nervous
- 2 Monotone delivery

Visual

WHAT PEOPLE SEE

- 1 Maintain open posture and purposeful movement
- 2 Use consistent eye contact across the room
- 3 Write or draw clearly and legibly on boards
- 1 Standing behind the screen/podium at all times
- 2 Pacing or nervous fidgeting

4. Slides that support, not sabotage



Remember: Slides are prompts, not scripts

Do

- 1 ≤ 6 words per line, ≤ 6 lines per slide (guideline, not law)
- 2 Use key words + images, not paragraphs
- 3 Emphasise visually via bold, colour, or size
- 4 Reveal content gradually to reduce cognitive overload
- 5 Maintain LOTS of white space

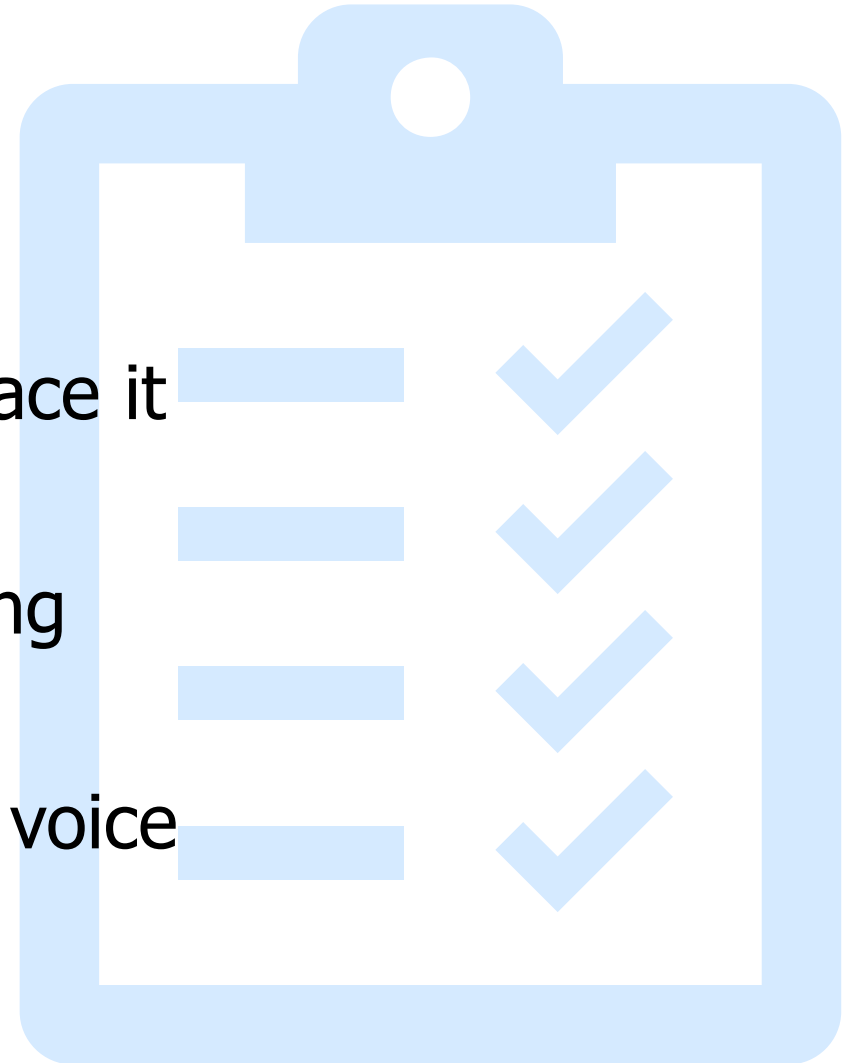
Avoid

- 1 Walls of text
- 2 Reading directly from slides
- 3 Unnecessary animations or decorative images
- 4 Multiple complex charts on one slide

“Death by PowerPoint”

4.1 PowerPoint Success Checklist

- **Slide:** One visual idea
- **Text:** Supports speech, does not replace it
- **Images:** Serve a purpose e.g. teaching
- **Ensure:** No slide competes with your voice



5. Activate learning



Remember: Retention increases when learners talk, write, struggle/think, and connect

Do

- 1 Use 'Think – Pair – Share' moments or short polls
- 2 Pose real-world or open-ended, "messy" problems
- 3 Scaffold challenges, build complexity gradually

"Encourage active participation"

Incorporate

- ★ Peer discussion
- ★ Group problems
- ★ Case studies / Story-telling
- ★ Short reflections or questions
- ★ Address "What's in it for me" (the audience)

Avoid

- 1 Long passive lectures without engagement
- 2 Questions that only require recall, not thinking

"Passive spectators lose interest quickly"

6. Make it human



Remember: Emotion strengthens memory

- 1 Use short stories, personal examples, or humour (purposefully)
- 2 Address participants by name when possible
- 3 Acknowledge contributions warmly
- 4 Present authentically, find a style that fits you
- 5 Copying another presenter's persona
- 6 Performing rigidly or reading from notes



7. Practice for confidence



Remember: Rehearsal transforms anxiety into presence

Do

- 1 Practice out loud, standing up
- 2 Time your talk and refine pacing
- 3 Record yourself to improve filler words and clarity
- 4 Treat pauses as tools, not threats



Speaking is a physical performance, not merely a mental exercise

Avoid

- 1 Over-rehearsing to the point of memorising
- 2 Don't fidget/pace/rock (its distracting), use too many "errr" fillers
- 3 Perfectionism, audiences connect to *clarity & new understanding*, not a polished script

8. Nerves are normal...



Remember: ... but also manageable!

Do

- 1 Focus on communication, not judgment
- 2 Breathe before transitions
- 3 Slow your speech consciously
- 4 Remember: audiences **WANT** you to succeed



Nerves are a performance-enhancing tool & they signal that you care!

Avoid

- 1 Rushing
- 2 Apologising for nervousness or mistakes, audiences rarely notice
- 3 Imagining worst-case scenarios (when do they actually happen?)

9. Quick “Before You Present” Checklist

- ✓ Clear objective defined
- ✓ Slides support (not duplicate) speech
- ✓ Opening story or a hook prepared
- ✓ Interactive moments built in
- ✓ Terminology/acronyms explained
- ✓ Pauses planned
- ✓ Active learning included
- ✓ Slides are simplified



10. Presenter “Do & Don’t” at a Glance

Do

- ✓ Connect content to audience goals
- ✓ Speak slowly, clearly, and with energy
- ✓ Use visuals intentionally
- ✓ Engage learners actively
- ✓ Practice and pause
- ✓ Teach authentically

Don’t

- ✗ Overload slides or your audience
- ✗ Read from the screen
- ✗ Rush through content
- ✗ Dismiss questions or confusion
- ✗ Deliver long passive monologues

The Ultimate Rule

If your slides or lecture do all the talking, **your audience stops listening.**

Engagement happens when **YOU** communicate, slides only support the message.



Key Sources Integrated

- **University of Sheffield:** confidence, delivery, body language, slide simplicity
 - The University of Sheffield. (2025). *How to plan and deliver presentations*. Available online: <https://sheffield.ac.uk/study-skills/university/communication/presentations> [Accessed 10.04.2026].
- **MIT Teaching & Learning Lab:** verbal, vocal, visual teaching channels
 - MIT Teaching & Learning Lab. (n.d.). *Effective Communication in the Classroom*. Available online: <https://tll.mit.edu/teaching-resources/how-to-teach/presentation-tips/> [Accessed 10.04.2026].
- **Freeman et al. (NIH/PNAS):** active learning improves outcomes
 - Freeman, S.; Eddy, S. L.; McDonough, et al. (2014). Active Learning Increases Student Performance in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 111 (23); 8410–8415. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1319030111>
- **Richard Mayer:** multimedia learning & cognitive load principles
 - Mayer, R. (2020). *Multimedia Learning* (3rd Ed.). Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316941355>
- **Nancy Duarte, 'Resonate':** storytelling structure
 - Duarte, N. (2010). Present Visual Stories that Transform Audiences. Wiley. [online] Available online: <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Resonate%3A+Present+Visual+Stories+that+Transform+Audiences-p-9780470632017> [Accessed 10.04.2026].
- **Garr Reynolds, 'Presentation Zen':** minimalism, clarity, authenticity
 - Reynolds, G. (2019). *Presentation Zen* (3rd ed.). New Riders. Available online: <https://presentationzen.com/> [Accessed 10.04.2026]
- **TED speaking standards:** pacing, storytelling, audience connection
 - TED Conferences. (n.d.). Storytelling and effective talks. Available online: <https://www.ted.com/topics/storytelling> [Accessed 10.04.2026].

About this resource

- This resource is intended for use in conjunction with other presentation skills tools:
 - Presenter Self-Assessment Checklist
 - Recorded webinar: 'Presentation Skills Training'
- It was developed for the 'Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Stroke and Neuro Delivery Network' (L&SC ISNDN) after presentation skills were identified as a workforce development priority by the 'L&SC ISNDN Stroke Workforce: Education and Training Group'
- Developed April 2026

