



# PART 1: PITCHING BASICS

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## Guide to Pitching Your TPP Project

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# Core components

To pitch successfully,  
you need to:

- Define a goal for your pitch
- Know your audience
- Use your team members' strengths
- Include all the necessary content

# Define a goal for your pitch

*What do you hope to accomplish by pitching?*

It's important to clearly define what you want to accomplish through this pitch. Is it money? Recognition? Investment? Or something else?

Your goals should be your north star. Write them down before starting and **refer back to them throughout.**



## OUR GOALS FOR THIS PITCH ARE...

Primary: \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Know your audience

*Who are you pitching to today?*

For any pitch opportunity, your target audience is only going to be a subset of the people in the room. **Choose specifically who in the room you want to target your pitch towards.**

Who can help accomplish your goals? And what would they want to hear? You can even do some interviews beforehand to learn more.



## Questions to ask:

- Who is the audience for your pitch?
- What is their mindset likely to be?
- What would they want to hear?
- What actions do you want them to take after your pitch?

# Use your team members' strengths

*What is each person really good at?*

Everybody in the world has their strengths and weaknesses. **It's important to know what each person's strengths are so that you can make the most of them.**

Taking the time to sit down as a team and figure out what everyone is best at can be a great way to put your team's best foot forward *and* lift each other up!



## Examples of strengths to action:

- *Public speaking?* Put them on stage
- *Visuals and art?* Have them make your slides
- *Technical expertise?* Have them network with the academics

# Include all the necessary content

*What do you need to say?*

Each pitch should be tailored to the pitch opportunity, even if much of the content will remain the same. **A pitch should always serve its goals and target audience.**

If a pitch opportunity has an established template or structure, you can use that. If not, ask yourself: **what is the story we want to tell?** What do we need to include to tell that story well?



## Most pitches will at least include:

1. Engaging introduction
2. The problem
3. The solution and it's promising
4. Call to action

# Pitch content checklist



## Engaging intro

- Who are you and why are you qualified to talk about this topic?

## The problem

- What is the problem or opportunity you're tackling?
- Why should we care about this problem or opportunity?

## The solution and why it's promising

- What is your innovation or project, and how does it address the problem/opportunity?
- What makes your innovation or project sustainable or financially viable?
- What's next for your innovation or project?

## Call to action

- What are your asks from the audience? *(This is always the last part)*

# Core skills

To pitch successfully,  
you need to think about:

- **Storytelling**
- **Slides and visuals**
- **Accessibility**
- **Public speaking**

# Storytelling

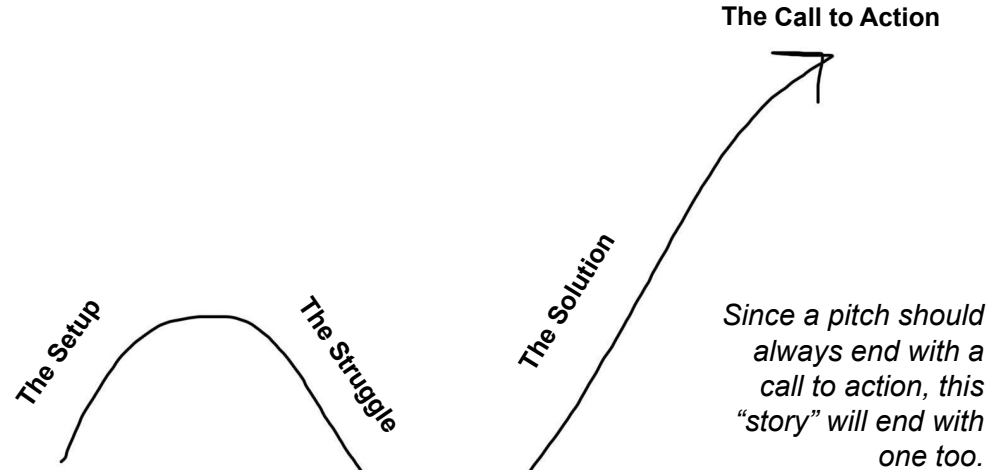
*Turning a pitch into a compelling narrative*

All good stories have three parts:

- The setup
- The struggle
- The solution

In a pitch, this means start with a hook of some kind, then describe the problem, then present the solution and end with a call to action.

**If you can turn your pitch into a narrative where the audience feels your innovation or project is the hero—adding in stories, examples, props, and other personal touches—you will have a winning pitch!**



**A Pitch as a Story**



# Slides and visuals (cont.)

*Making your pitch beautiful and useful*



## Use templates

**The easiest way to have professionally designed slides is to use a template.** There are a million options out there and they come in all formats (Google Slides, PPT, Canva, Keynote). *See Resources.*

You can and should customize the template's colors, images, and more to fit your team's style and voice!

## Visuals as props

Any visual that you use should serve a purpose, both for the story you are telling and for the words you are saying. **Visuals should always be props, never extraneous.**

A short video (under 30 seconds) can be okay if it helps tell a story. But it's usually best to avoid longer videos, which can take valuable time away from the rest of your pitch.

## Less is more

**In general, the less content your slides have, the better.** The audience's focus should always be on the speaker and what they are saying rather than the slides.

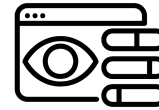
Even if you are presenting virtually where the audience may not see the speaker as much, slides with a lot of content can distract from listening.

# Accessibility

*Making your pitch accessible to everyone*



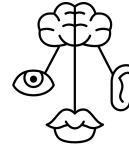
Use captions for videos and transcription (on Zoom or onscreen in-person) to help with audio. Share slides + notes in advance.



Run all slides and images through colorblind checker tools to ensure compatibility. *See Resources.*



Use language that is approachable for a diverse audience (e.g., avoiding academic terms for non-academic audiences, defining acronyms.)



Offer sensory warnings in case there will be loud noises/music, flashing lights, etc. during your presentation.

# Public speaking

*Putting your most confident self on stage*



## Speaking aids

Speaking aids can be distracting. When possible, **use only subtle speaking aids**. For example, use speaker notes in your slides instead of note cards, which tend to be more noticeable.

Reading pre-written sentences can come off as inauthentic. **Try to write any notes as short bullet points instead**. This will help you remember topics but still ensure you speak in a natural way.

## Speaking style

**It's good practice to avoid “um,” “uh,” and “like,”** even though that is how people often speak. **Try pausing instead**, which will be less distracting for the audience.

**Practice speaking within your time limit**. This is a helpful way to make sure you are not speaking too fast, which can happen when you find yourself rushing to finish.

## Authenticity

**It's much better to be your genuine self onstage than to be perfect.** People can tell when you are being fake. Plus inauthenticity is a disservice to what makes you unique!

Watch videos of speakers you admire to see how they communicate well but still show their personality.

Projecting confidence is key, so even if you don't *feel* confident, trust yourself and fake it til you make it!

# The value of practice



- Don't underestimate the value of practicing your pitch!
- Practicing will help you help you figure out how to:
  - Use speaking aids to enhance (not distract from) your pitch.
  - Refine your speaking style.
  - Capture an authentic and polished voice.
- Practice multiple times.
  - You can do it front of a mirror, on video, or for other people.
  - Experiment with different volumes, speeds, and tones.

# Resources



## Storytelling

- [A guide to storytelling in business pitches](#)
- An older (but still great) deck on [How to Give a TED-Worthy Presentation](#)

## Visual design

- [Pitch deck templates](#) and [SlidesGo](#) and [SlidesCarnival](#) for general templates
- [Unsplash](#) for beautiful and free stock images
- [Google Fonts](#) and [FontPair](#) to help you choose font pairings
- [Colors](#) to choose or create your own color palette

## Accessibility

- Making [Powerpoints](#) and [Google Slides](#) more accessible
- More general tips on accessible [slide design](#) and [presentation](#)
- [Color Oracle](#) and [Sim Daltonism](#) which simulate different types of color vision

# Resources



## Public speaking

- [A short course on public speaking](#) on Coursera
- [Public speaking tips](#) from Harvard's School of Continuing Education
- [Tips from Calm](#) on how to manage presentation anxiety

## Ways to Use AI

ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and others can be really useful for:

- Crafting a narrative for your pitch
- Turning heavy slide content into succinct text or ideas for visuals
- Turning written-out speeches into bullet point speaker notes
- Feedback on pitch style, content, delivery, and more from a particular audience's perspective

**Check your organization's AI policies.**