



Tips and Best Practices for Professional Presentations

Lightning Talks

A lightning talk is a very short session that briefly introduces and touches on a topic. Lightning talks are anywhere between 3-15 minutes, typically lasting about 5 minutes. They are often part of a larger session of lightning talks on a variety of topics or topics surrounding a common theme.

The goal of a lightning talk is to connect the audience with an idea and provide attendees with a name and face to follow up with if they want more information on the subject presented. Due to their nature, these talks are not deep. Focus on the key points regarding what matters most.

When developing your lightning talk...

- **Limit Your Slides:** Stick to a small number of slides with only the most pertinent information on your topic. Further guidelines may be provided by the presentation coordinator.
- **Use Good Design:** Check for high color contrast, choose simple sans-serif fonts sized 36 or higher, and limit use of animations or transitions.
- **Communicate Clearly:** Your presentation should be simple and direct. Be prepared to summarize content portrayed visually, such as information detailed in a graph.
- **Ask Yourself:** What is most important for your audience to take away from the session?
- **Use Handouts:** Provide handouts or links for further information and resources, including your contact information. Include more than one handout format (e.g. Word and PDF) if uploading to the conference website.

Resources for Further Exploration

Fowler, M. (2004, July 30). [Giving lightning talks](#). Perl.org.

Software Sustainability Institute. (2016). [Giving a good lightning talk](#).

Web Accessibility in Mind (2017). [WebAIM Color Contrast Checker](#).