



HOW TO GIVE A GREAT IGNITE TALK: TIPS FROM THOSE WHO'VE DONE IT!

In Ignite, each speaker gets 5 minutes, and must use 20 slides with each slide advancing automatically after 15 seconds, forcing speakers to get the point, fast. Some tips:

- Figure out your points before you make slides. Talking about something for five (5) minutes is easy – really, give it a shot once or twice before you make a single slide (practice with a timer) it will help you sort out what you want to say. You'll quickly discover how unlikely it is to run out of things to say during an ignite talk. Once you know the four (4) major points you want to make, only then work on finding images and slides to support what you're going to say.
- Three hundred (300) seconds is easy to practice. You can practice ten (10) times in an hour. Do it! Rehearse and rehearse some more.
- Here's a link to a great 15-second timer to help you pace your talk: [practice with a timer](#).
- It's good to breathe. No law that says you must fill every second with talking. When you practice, practice breathing. Give your audience a moment to digest the last thing you said. Take a moment between points. Like whitespace in visual design it's the pauses that make what you do say stand out clearly. Give yourself a slide or two that's for just for catching up and taking a breath.
- Don't get hung up on your slides. What you say matters most. Good slides support what you're saying, and not the other way around. The last thing you want is to end up chasing your slides, a common problem at Ignite – as you'll never catch up. Pick simple images and if you must use text, be sparse (and use large 50+pt fonts). No bullet lists, just one or two points. Make the slides flexible enough that – if you fall behind – it's easy to skip something to catch up.
- You will stumble. What's important is how you recover. Build your talk into 4 or 5 pieces, where each piece could stand alone if necessary. Then, if something goes wrong or you get lost, there's no problem. You simply move on.
- Watch some Ignite talks. Just Google them.
- You can hack the format. Put the same slide twice if you want more time to make a specific point.
- Know your "key moments" and use them as anchors. Whether it is a joke that you've planned or a poignant moment when you want to move the audience, know where these points are in the slides and make sure you edit in a way that keeps them intact.
- Plan to lose your first and last slide. Time will be eaten by getting on and off stage, the audience laughing, and by any ad-libs you do. When you practice, allow for some extra seconds, especially in the second half of your talk, when you might need to catch up.
- Plan and practice for about 4:30 instead of the full 5:00.
- Keep your fonts large. Assume people don't see well. Even if they did see it, people will be trying to listen to you. The more you try to cram text on the screen at the same time, the less likely any of it will be understood.
- Simple images work best.
- The audience is expecting interesting ideas, but they are also expecting to be entertained. This isn't the audience for a serious academic speech. That's not to say you can't have deep and incredibly thoughtful presentations. Some of the best presentations cover complex subjects. It just means don't be dry. Be energetic. Be funny. Be yourself!