

There is a lot to learn about good communication in presentations and reports, and lots of great resources to help you! To get you started, here is a list of resources that cover various topics around communication. I recommend spending a few hours watching videos of good presenters and browsing through the resources you'll find on the blogs. Pick and choose those that might be most helpful to you.

### Presentation resources

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**AEA's potent presentations initiative:** Get some great advice targeted to evaluators about how to do better presentations. You'll find content here that covers message, design, and delivery.

<http://p2i.eval.org/>

**General guidelines about how to present.** 10 commandments of powerpoint: <http://power-points.blogspot.com/2005/09/10-commandments-of-powerpoint.html>

**"Every Presentation Ever: Communication FAIL."** – A funny video with some great insights.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIABo0d9MVE&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIABo0d9MVE&feature=player_embedded)

<http://www.speakingaboutpresenting.com/> - a good resource on many aspects of presentations. Has lots of useful articles on everything from formatting to connecting with your audience.

Watch as many presentations as you can to see how even very complex or difficult information can be made clear and actionable by a great presenter. Check out the slides and the presentation styles, and see what resonates with you! A few examples of excellent presentations:

**Hans Rosling:** A talk using super cool software to make data interactive and fascinating. Take a look not only for the visuals, but for his engaging speaking style on what are otherwise dry topics. (This is only one of his great talks, you can find many more on TED.com)

[http://www.ted.com/talks/hans\\_rosling\\_reveals\\_new\\_insights\\_on\\_poverty.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_reveals_new_insights_on_poverty.html)

**Kathy Sierra, "Creating Passionate Users":** A nice video focused on how to connect with your audience. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSIRd6MnDv8&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSIRd6MnDv8&feature=youtube_gdata_player)

**Nancy Duarte: The secret structure of great talks":** Worth watching not only for the visuals, but for the discussion of how to craft the underlying structure of a presentation so that it engages and resonates with audiences. Highly recommended.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/nancy\\_duarte\\_the\\_secret\\_structure\\_of\\_great\\_talks.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/nancy_duarte_the_secret_structure_of_great_talks.html)

**Seth Godin:** a presentation without slides that talks about education. That's right, awesome presentations don't have to have slides!!!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXpbONjV1Jc&feature=youtu.be>

**Ester Duflo, Social Experiments to Fight Poverty:** A nice TED talk with pretty good visuals, on an evaluation-related topic. See how someone can make a discussion of experiments interesting!

[http://www.ted.com/talks/esther\\_duflo\\_social\\_experiments\\_to\\_fight\\_poverty.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/esther_duflo_social_experiments_to_fight_poverty.html)

**TED:** spend some time on this website and see some of the amazing presentations, with and without slides. There are lots around rigorous and challenging topics (e.g., science, experimentation, etc.) which are worth seeing in order to understand how very difficult topics can be expressed in a clear and engaging way. [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)

## Relevant blogs and websites

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\*Blogs are one of the best places to learn about good communication and visualization because they do a great job of centralizing resources. Spend a few hours perusing these resources and see what you can find that inspires you.

**Stephanie Evergreen:** an evaluator with a great blog on "Intentional Data Visualization & Reporting". She has some great resources and links a lot of her posts back to evaluation, which is handy!  
<http://www.evergreenevaluation.com/>

**Ann K. Emery:** some very interesting blog posts about data visualization. <http://annkemery.com/>

**Presentation Zen:** Don't miss this one! A great blog with lots of ideas for presentations, and tons of resources on everything presentation related. This is worth a few hours of your time for sure.  
<http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/>

**Flowing Data:** a blog with some nice examples of visualization, though it tends more towards fancy visualizations.  
<http://flowingdata.com/>

**Junk Charts:** nice examples of data visualization from various sources  
[http://junkcharts.typepad.com/junk\\_charts/](http://junkcharts.typepad.com/junk_charts/)

**Storytelling with data:** A great blog for seeing examples of how to improve charts. It includes lots of real-life and step-by-step examples of how charts can be made more meaningful through better formatting. Make sure you check out the pre-made templates for creating charts  
(<http://www.storytellingwithdata.com/2012/02/no-more-excuses-for-bad-simple-charts.html>).  
<http://www.storytellingwithdata.com/>

**Duarte Design:** A leader in structure, storytelling, and visual design. Make sure you look at Nancy Duarte's books "Slide:ology" and "Resonate" as well.  
<http://blog.duarte.com/>

**Olivia Mitchell:** A nice compilation of resources and blog posts.  
<http://www.speakingaboutpresenting.com/>

**Extreme Presentation:** a website that has some useful resources, as well as a book that talks about how to create impactful slides and presentations. <http://extremepresentation.com/>

## Some authors to check out

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**Nancy Duarte:** “Slide:ology”, “Resonate” (I recommend the interactive iBook version of Resonate if you have that technology)

**Garr Reynolds:** “Presentation Zen”, “The Naked Presenter”

**Edward Tufte:** “The Cognitive Style of Powerpoint: Pitching Out Corrupts Within”, “The Visual Display of Quantitative Information”, “Beautiful Evidence” and every other book or article he’s written.

**Dan Roam:** “The Back of the Napkin”, “Blah, Blah, Blah: What to do when words don’t work”

**Hallie Preskill:** “Evaluation Strategies for Communicating and Reporting: Enhancing Learning in Organizations”

**Stephanie Evergreen:** “Presenting Data Effectively: Communicating Your Findings for Maximum Impact”, “Effective Data Visualization: The Right Chart for the Right Data” (upcoming in 2016)

## Where to get images

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**\*Protip:** Keep a picture library of images that might be handy for presentations. When you come across a picture that is high quality and suits your style (e.g., I like images with a white background with a single object – boots, a fortune cookie, a pair of dice, a goldfish), save it to your picture library. Make sure you only keep pictures which are licensed for general use and which are high resolution!

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com) – the images section has some good search features to allow you to narrow down the type of image you’re looking for (e.g., color of picture/background)

<http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/> - another free resource, though you might have to wade through a lot of crummy pictures. Search features are improving so you can narrow it down more easily based on picture characteristics like color.

[www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com) – a key resource for photos, but most require a fee.

<http://us.fotolia.com/> – another good paid resource.

<https://pixabay.com/> - a good source of free photos.

<http://www.shutterstock.com/index-in.mhtml> - good source of paid images.

**Take your own** – there are lots of resources on how to take your own pictures for presentations. If you’re game, try googling the topic and see what you can find!

## Formatting tools

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**Microsoft Word** – don't underestimate the value of Word for creating visually appealing reports. You don't need fancy software, this program is much more powerful than you think. Spend a little time getting familiar with how to create nice visual formats using already existing templates and QuickParts. Make sure you understand how to use in-built styles and automatic numbering to make your life easier (honestly, this will save you hours). You're likely to have this program in all your jobs (at least for the near future), so get as savvy as you can – become a Word pro!

**Microsoft Publisher** – see if this is already on your computer, since many people have it and don't realize it is part of the basic Microsoft Office Suite. It's a great tool for creating visually pleasing newsletters, brochures, handouts, etc.

**Microsoft Excel** – Look past the horror that are the default charts. A few simple changes to formatting can produce quite nice charts without any additional fancy software. This is another program where you need to learn to use the formatting tools to their full advantage! If you need consistency across many charts, consider using chart templates to simplify formatting. And please...do not use any 3D charts. These are a terrible practice and should be avoided at all costs. There are some very good templates to get you started on the road to better looking charts, like this one:

<http://www.storytellingwithdata.com/2012/02/no-more-excuses-for-bad-simple-charts.html>.

**Kuler:** A nice tool that will help you find or create very nice color schemes. Consider using this instead of Word's existing color schemes to create a match to your client's colors, or to better visually represent a certain type of theme (e.g., environment, early childhood). <https://kuler.adobe.com/>

**Instant-eyedropper:** This fun little tool will allow you to determine the RGB value of any color on your screen. You can use this to match to a client's color scheme, or to pick out certain colors from a picture. <http://instant-eyedropper.com/> It only gives you the values as a hex color, so you'll also need to use a website like <http://easycalculation.com/color-coder.php> to translate it into a color code that can work with Word or Excel (which generally want RGB values).

There are probably some great apps as well – but I haven't personally explored these options yet ☺.

\*Protip: Make sure whatever colors you use can be differentiated when they are printed in black and white – most people don't print in color. Avoid colors like red and green, which can't be differentiated by people who are color blind (if you want to create a dashboard consider using icons instead, like ↑ and ↓). It can be helpful to choose a single color and differentiate based on gradations of that color.

## Other useful things

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**IDRC Data Visualization Review:** This report discusses best practices in visualization and actually looks at visualizations in some IDRC work, and analyzes them in terms of how they could better communicate the message. Very interesting read. <http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Documents/Amanda-Cox-report-Final-English-07-May-2012.pdf>

### Infographics

**\*Disclaimer:** Many infographics are crummy if we consider their ability to clearly convey a message. Remember, infographics should not be about 'pretty', they should be about creating a visual representation of knowledge. Thoughtfully constructed infographics can be very useful, but many are just awful messes of image and color. Be a wise creator and consumer of infographics.

Example of an infographic: <http://www.knightfoundation.org/publications/kaboom-evaluation>

## Reports with Interesting Structure

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\*There are many more out there, these are just a few.

Marsh, J. A., Springer, M. G., McCaffrey, D. F., Yuan, K., Epstein, S., Koppich, J., Kalra, N., et al. (2011). *A Big Apple for Educators: New York City's Experiment with Schoolwide Performance Bonuses* (No. ISBN 978-0-8330-5251-3). RAND.

Gross, B., & Pochop, K. M. (2008). "How charter schools organize for instruction." Available from [http://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/pub\\_hfr08\\_ch2\\_dec08\\_0.pdf](http://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/pub_hfr08_ch2_dec08_0.pdf) [Interesting example of using questions for the table of contents. It really lets you know what you'll find in those sections!]

Mathematica. (2011). *The National Study of Charter Management Organization (CMO) Effectiveness*. Retrieved from [http://www.edweek.org/media/%28cmo\\_final%20\\_report%2011%2002%2011.pdf](http://www.edweek.org/media/%28cmo_final%20_report%2011%2002%2011.pdf)

Hoxby, Caroline M., Sonali Murarka, and Jenny Kang. "How New York City's Charter Schools Affect Achievement, August 2009 Report." Second report in series. Cambridge, MA: New York City Charter Schools Evaluation Project, September 2009.