

The Room-Ready Slide Spec

Font, contrast, aspect ratio, and word limits by screen. Your laptop hid all of these.

The one test that matters

The Back-Row Test: shrink your slide to a thumbnail.

If you can still read the main point at that size, the back row can read it on screen. If you cannot, neither can they.

Design for the screen you are actually using

Screen	Viewing distance	Text floor	Per slide	Aspect	Watch for
Stage LED wall	60 to 120 ft	Body 28 to 36pt, headline 54pt+	1 idea, ~6 words	Match the wall ratio	If you would not read it across a parking lot, it is too small
16:9 projector	Up to ~60 ft	Body 24 to 30pt, headline 40pt+	1 idea	16:9	Washout in bright rooms, weak contrast
Dual flanking screens	Up to ~60 ft	Same as projector	1 idea	16:9 each	Decide early: mirror or extend. Keep the key point on both
Pod monitor (32")	~6 ft	Body 18 to 20pt OK	1 idea, tight	16:9	It is close, so design dense-but-clean, not ballroom-huge
On-camera / broadcast	The lens	Large, title-safe margins	1 idea	16:9, safe area	Thin lines shimmer on camera. Build a separate on-camera version

Working floors, not gospel. Exact sizes depend on the font, the room, and the lighting. When in doubt, go bigger.

Three rules that survive a real room

One idea per slide.

A presentation slide should communicate a single, clear message. Trying to cram multiple concepts onto one screen forces your audience to split their attention and makes it harder for them to retain what matters most. If a slide contains several competing ideas, it's usually a sign that the content should be broken into multiple slides.

Real contrast.

Subtle design choices that look polished on a laptop often fall apart in a meeting room. Light gray text on a white background may appear elegant on your screen, but it can become nearly impossible to read once projected. Strong contrast between text and background ensures everyone in the room can clearly see your content, regardless of the venue or lighting.

Cut the words, then cut again.

Your audience is trying to read your slides while listening to you at the same time. The more text you include, the more you force them to choose between reading and listening. Give them one job: use the slide as a visual anchor while the speaker tells the story. The slide is the backdrop—not the script. If the presenter can simply read every word on the screen, the audience will read ahead, disengage, and stop listening.



SMARTSOURCE

When the room and the screen have to match

Designing for a screen you have not seen yet? Let us spec it together.

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