

njcoalition
against sexual assault



**designing inclusive
presentations**

**UNDERSTAND AND PREPARE
FOR POWER DYNAMICS**

NEW JERSEY COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

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Comprehensive sexual violence prevention requires that we address all forms of power imbalances, privilege, and oppression.

About This Document

Power dynamics are present in all aspects of life. Part of our prevention work is identifying and addressing power dynamics to create a safer world free of sexual violence. Power dynamics do not disappear during our prevention trainings and presentations, so it is important that we're mindful of the balances of power in these situations. Preparing for these dynamics will help create effective and relevant material and engage participants in the learning process.

This guide pulls together relevant information from anti-oppression work and applies it to our prevention initiatives to help create more inclusive, mindful trainings and presentations.

Understand your privilege

Privilege is one of the ways oppression presents in society. Privilege provides a select group of people with better treatment and opportunities that are inaccessible to people not in that group.¹ Perceived trustworthiness, intelligence, or capability are some of the ways privileged people access these opportunities. In essence, privileged people are often perceived as “better” or more likeable without having done anything to earn that perception.

It is important to remain mindful that an individual can experience privilege in some aspects of their life while also experiencing oppression in others. It can be harmful when individuals who have experienced oppression fail to acknowledge the privilege they may have also benefited from. For example, an immigrant, cisgender Man of Color may be aware of the discrimination he has encountered. However, it may be harder to acknowledge the privilege he experiences as a cisgender, able bodied, literate man who is able to speak English. Ignored privilege has problematic impacts on our work.

Having privilege doesn't mean a person hasn't experienced adversity, it means they have also benefited from advantages related to facets of their identity or experience.²

By having this document in front of you, you are a member of a privileged group. You are employed, educated, English speaking, and literate. This does not negate the oppressions you may have also experienced. However, it is important to be mindful of those layers of privilege when developing and delivering content.



Understand the limitations that come with your privilege

One of the challenges privilege creates is limiting our perspective on issues, particularly on oppression. This occurs from not having directly experienced **all** forms of oppression. This can result in poorly delivered information and failure to consider the implications of information presented. These limitations don't mean we can't or shouldn't discuss oppression. In fact, there are several things we can do to address the limitations that come with privilege, including:

- Acknowledge your privilege and limited perspective during the presentation
- Invite participants to share their perspective
- Seek feedback and input from a range of people when putting presentations together
- Include research from the perspective of marginalized communities

Create a safe environment

Experience has taught members of historically marginalized and oppressed groups to not address grievances with privileged people. This often results in denying, minimizing, or explaining away their experience, and even in blaming themselves for the oppression they've experienced. This could result in challenging dynamics within a learning environment. As presenters, and as people with privilege, the responsibility of creating a safe environment falls on us.

Although you may not personally harbor any overt discriminatory attitudes or beliefs, you are still a member of a privileged group. It is safer for historically marginalized and oppressed people to assume you don't understand their experiences than for them to assume you are an ally and be wrong. With that in mind, how can you signal yourself as an ally?

BE MINDFUL OF LANGUAGE

Try this: Use gender inclusive language, avoid words that reinforce ableism, and avoid language that reinforces harmful racist tropes. Using the terms 'partner' instead of 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' is one example of signaling allyship.

BE UPFRONT ABOUT YOUR PRIVILEGE AND LIMITATIONS

Try this: Preface presentations by welcoming all perspectives, acknowledging the limits of what you know, and encourage a mutual learning space.

REPRESENT A RANGE OF DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AND EXPERIENCES

Try this: Use images of men from a wide range of races and ethnicities as examples of healthy masculinity, include LGBTQ+ images of relationships, and invite conversation about how class affects our understanding of relationships.

APOLOGIZE IF YOU SAY OR DO SOMETHING OFFENSIVE

Try this: Acknowledge your mistake and the harm it caused. Reflect on ways you can avoid making that mistake again. Accept any feedback offered to you without criticism or defensiveness.



Develop strategies to reduce power dynamics

When privilege and oppression exist, they play out in all realms of life. This includes the learning environment, particularly when adults are working with youth. By nature of your position and age, you have a place of authority in the room. However, that isn't the only dynamic occurring.

Race, gender, and class, among other identities, all influence the dynamics of a room. Women cite many times men have talked over them, People of Color have many examples of times when white people dominated a space, and youth who do not fit mainstream expectations may feel less empowered stepping into the spotlight of a conversation.³ All of these voices have value, and all of these voices have a right to be heard.



TIP: Pay attention to how much space you take up in a room. Allow others to share their insights and avoid doing most of the speaking during discussions.

Be aware of the Savior Complex

A savior complex is anytime a privileged person assumes there isn't leadership already present in marginalized and oppressed groups, and that they have the answers to what these communities need. Saviorism does real harm to marginalized communities by disenfranchising the effected communities from addressing their community needs in the way they feel is best. Although saviors may be well intentioned, they actually commit tremendous harm by perpetrating the same harmful and oppressive patterns they are attempting to address.

The White Savior⁴ is a story frequently told about white people who go into communities of color to “save” them and inspire them of all they can do. The white savior assumes there isn’t leadership present in historically marginalized and oppressed groups, that they have the answers for what these communities need to do, and that their way of approaching problems is the best way to do it. This approach to anti-racist work often fails to account for the professional’s own privilege, the system and institutional racism that exists, the way communities of color are “othered,” and the already present strengths of communities. In essence, the white savior is here to rescue People of Color from themselves, leading to further perpetuation of harmful behaviors and ideas.



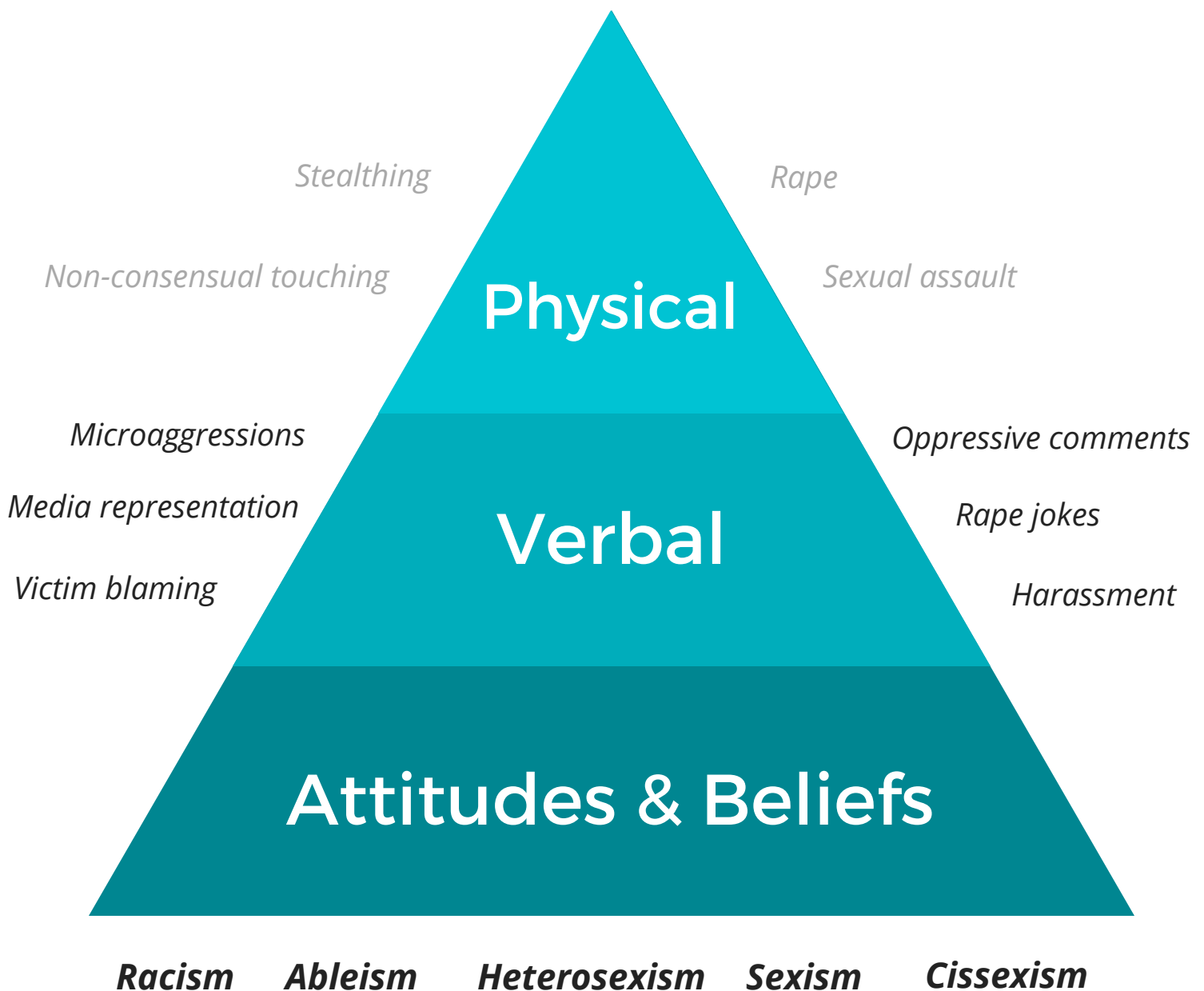
There are several things professionals can do to start understanding how the savior complex affects their work and avoid falling into this practice:⁵

- Unpack your privilege
- Avoid centering yourself and your experience
- Turn to local leadership
- Build on the strengths and assets present in the community
- Make the process collaborative. Don’t assume you have the solutions, work with the local community to bring their ideas to the front and build on those



Help understand privilege and oppression

Prevention work is a great time to introduce youth to their own privilege and how it intersects with sexual violence. All forms of violence are rooted in oppression, and all forms of oppression intersect with each other. Part of effectively ending sexual violence includes ending other forms of oppression as well.





Creating accessible documents

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CREATING ACCESSIBLE CONTENT

- Keep layout and design consistent among types of publications. Templates assist in helping readers know what to expect.
- Align text along the left – avoid right-justified or centered text. Centered text may work for titles or some headings.
- Use active and personal language, such as “we” or “you,” to help focus the reader and your writing.
- Be mindful of language usage and “ten-dollar words.” When including a word or phrase, ask “what is the purpose of including this particular word or phrase?” Many times, “big words” are unnecessarily used in place of simpler, more direct language and ways of speaking. Channel Albert Einstein, “My aim is to make things as simple as possible, but not simpler than that.” Some helpful resources for plain language include a listing from the Plain Language Association International.⁶

CHECKING READABILITY

You can check the reading level of your content by making sure Microsoft Word runs a readability assessment when reviewing a document.

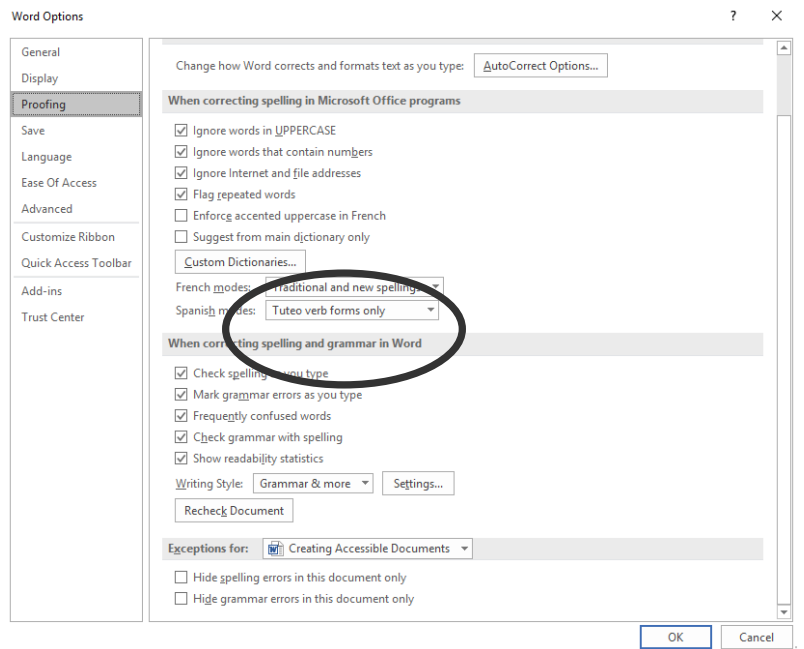
Make sure this setting is turned on:

Go to Review -->

Language --> Language preferences --> Proofing

Select “Show readability statistics”. (pictured)

After you have completed your document, run a check for spelling and grammar.



Readability Statistics	
Counts	
Words	709
Characters	4,320
Paragraphs	47
Sentences	55
Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	1.9
Words per Sentence	12.2
Characters per Word	5.0
Readability	
Flesch Reading Ease	55.1
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	8.6
Passive Sentences	9.0%
OK	

The readability report will pop up after checking spelling and grammar (pictured). Materials intended for general audiences should aim to be written at an **eighth-grade reading level** to ensure accessibility.

Readability scores are calculated by the number of syllables in a word and length of sentences. A document will receive a lower score on the Flesch Reading Ease scale if there are long sentences and many words with a high number of syllables.

Documents intended for professionals or subject matter experts, such as this one, may have a higher readability due to jargon commonly used in the field.

Flesch Reading Ease:

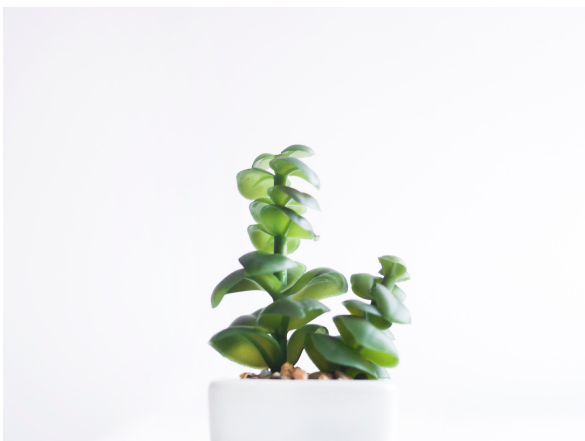
This is rated on a 100-point scale. The higher the score, the easier it is to understand the document. You should aim to have a score between 60 and 70 for most documents.

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level:

This checks the U.S. school grade level of the document. You should aim to have a score between 7.0 and 8.0.

To read more on readability, visit Microsoft's webpage on testing your document's readability.⁷





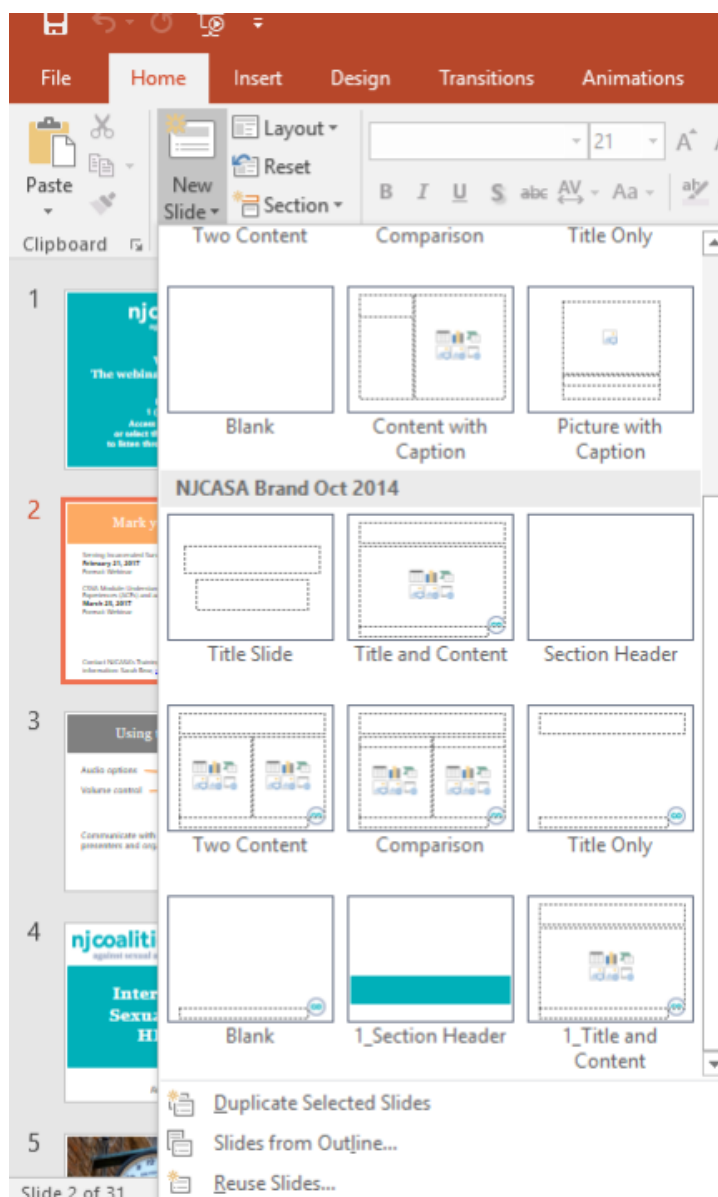
TIP:
Transition features
and animations
are not accessible.

POWER POINT

Creating a slide:

Use placeholders that are included in the master slides. The placeholders help a screen reader know that something is there and that it needs to be read. This also helps establish reading order.

TIP:
Do not have
duplicate slide
titles! This is
confusing for the
screen reader.

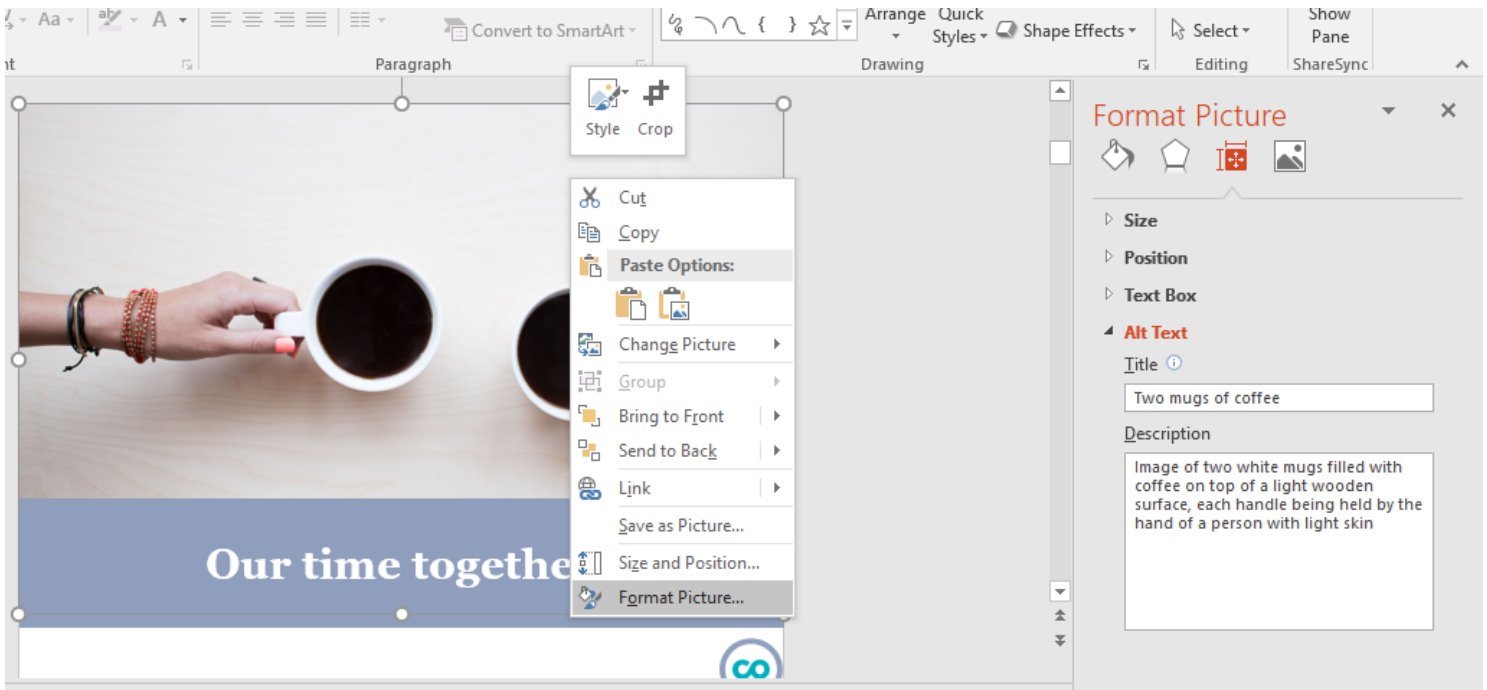


Images:

Ensure all images have “Alt Text.”

Right click on the image, select “Format Picture...” and then “Alt Text.”

Different versions of Microsoft PowerPoint have different layouts.



First, enter a title with a brief overview of what is in the picture. This allows the person with the screen reader to decide if they would like to hear the whole description. Next, write out a detailed description of the image so that a person with a screen reader will have a good idea of what the image includes. (See example.)

Text:

On slides, use 24 pt. font at minimum in a sans serif font (Helvetica, Open Sans), not a serif font (Georgia, Times New Roman).



Diverse learning styles

People, including youth, have a wide range of learning styles. It is important that we are aware of different learning styles and incorporate elements of each for neurodiverse people and people with learning, intellectual, and developmental disabilities.

Traditional approaches to presenting information may not be the best way for neurodiverse people to learn. The VARK model identifies four ways of learning:⁸

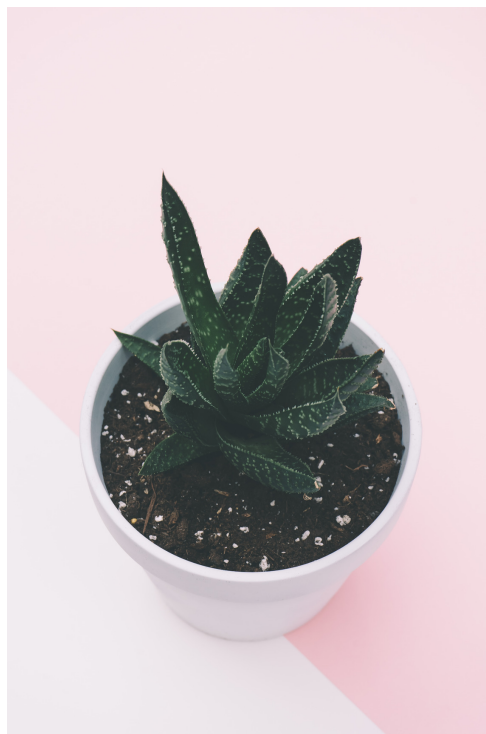
- **Visual learners** learn best through visual representations of information. This may include graphics, charts, maps, and other visual displays.
- **Auditory learners** learn best through lecture and discussion. Not all auditory learners are comfortable with large group discussion. A combination of small group and large group work will help ensure all learning styles are accommodated.
- **Reading/Writing learning styles** use the written word to learn. They may prefer to read material, take notes, and process information through writing.
- **Kinesthetic learners** learn best by putting the information into practice. These people may also be prone to boredom during lectures, so incorporating physical movement into lecture and discussion can help keep them engaged.

All four of these approaches should be incorporated throughout your presentation. The chart below provides some examples of how to incorporate these styles:



There are several ways to design presentations that will make it easy to incorporate all learning styles.

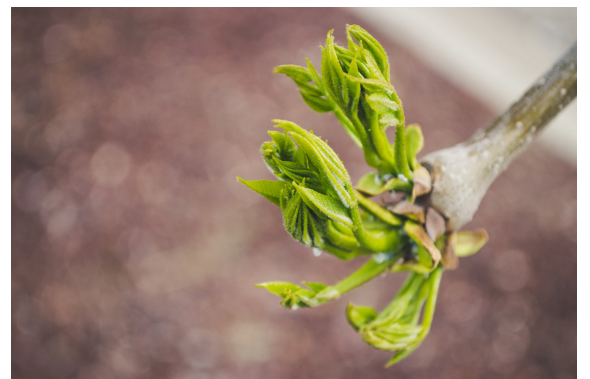
- **Ask questions** to prompt group participation
- Use a **game** to demonstrate a concept, such as the privilege walk⁹
- **Limit lecture** to 15 minutes or less
- **Create** visually appealing slides
- **Take breaks** for stretching or movement
- Encourage **peer-to-peer learning** through small group activities
- **Provide reading material** related to the topic
- **Develop reflection questions** and have students write a few sentences during the presentation for the question. This can be followed up with a group discussion that will support auditory learning styles
- Place **small items** around the tables for students to play or fidget with
- Allow students to **stand** around the edge of the room for movement



Be aware of what images and material represent

Visual representation is a significant part of how we reinforce or dismantle the biases and stereotypes socialized into people. Using images and material that reinforce stereotypes only strengthens those stereotypes. An example is using rap music to demonstrate sexist values and country music to demonstrate a healthier alternative of masculinity. Although it may not be intentional, these options reinforce the stereotype of Black men as sexist and white men as safe without critical thought to the presence of sexist values and healthy values in both musical genres.

It is not only important to avoid reinforcing stereotypes, but also to include representation of a wide range of people. Using images that portray a range of abilities, races, genders, etc. is one way to create healthy and positive associations with historically marginalized communities. This de-centers whiteness as the norm and widens the circle of who we're talking about in presentations.



FREE STOCK PICTURES

Death to the Stock Photo
Unsplash
Pixabay
Gratisoraphy

Resources

Practicing intersectionality and being mindful of power imbalances is an ongoing and important journey, especially as preventionists. Ending sexual violence means uprooting all forms of oppression, and our presentations must reflect these values.

Continue your learning journey with these resources.

Plain Language Network

<https://plainlanguagenetwork.org/>

Learning Styles

<https://teach.com/what/teachers-know/learning-styles/>

Vera Institute of Justice

<https://www.vera.org/>

Training for Change

<https://www.trainingforchange.org>

Racial Equity Institute

<https://www.racialequityinstitute.com/>



References

- ¹ McIntosh, P. White Privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. Excerpt from: White Privilege and Male Privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies. (1988). Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. Wellesley, MA.
- ² Crosely-Corcoran, A. Explaining white privilege to a broke white person. Huffingtonpost. May 2014. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/gina-crosleycorcoran/explaining-white-privilege-to-a-broke-white-person_b_5269255.html
- ³ Johnson, M. 6 Ways Well-Intentioned People Whitesplain (and why they need to stop). Everyday Feminism. February 2016. Retrieved from <https://everydayfeminism.com/2016/02/how-people-whitesplain-racism/>
- ⁴ Edell, C. Here's What a White Savior Is (And Why it's the Opposite of Helpful). Everyday Feminism. June 2016. Retrieved from <https://everydayfeminism.com/2016/06/white-savior-problem/>
- ⁵ Erlbaum, J. Confessions of a (former) White Savior. Thought Catalogue. August 2015. Retrieved from <https://thoughtcatalog.com/janice-erlbaum/2015/08/confessions-of-a-white-savior/>
- ⁶ Plain Language Association International. (2019). Retrieved from <https://plainlanguagenetwork.org/>
- ⁷ Microsoft. (n.d.). Test your document's readability. Retrieved from <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Test-your-document-s-readability-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2>
- ⁸ All Students are Created Equally (and Differently). Learning Styles. Teach: Make a Difference. Retrieved from <https://teach.com/what/teachers-know/learning-styles/>
- ⁹ Ehrenhalt, J. Beyond the Privilege Walk. Teaching Tolerance. June 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/beyond-the-privilege-walk>

