

9 ways to use space in your presentation

September 25, 2008 by [Olivia Mitchell](#)

<http://www.speakingaboutpresenting.com/delivery/9-ways-space-presentation/>

There are many benefits to movement in a presentation:

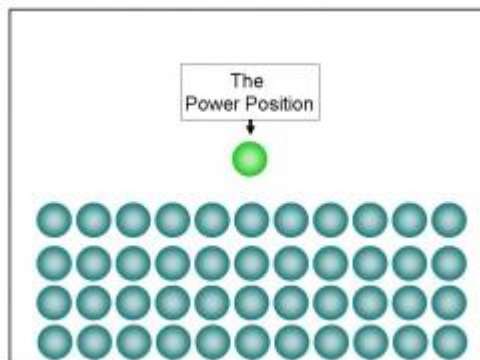
- It adds energy and variety to your presentation.
- It makes you look more confident - because people who are nervous are generally frozen in one spot.
- And as an added bonus, if you move, you may start to feel more confident. That's partly because movement will help dissipate the extra adrenalin in your system.

Movement got a bad name because of university lecturers pacing up and down. Audiences are distracted by mindless, repetitive movement. Movement should be interspersed with stillness. That way, they both have more impact.

Incorporate movement in your presentation by planning different positions on the stage (or front of the room) that you'll present from. In the theatre, this is called "**blocking**". Blocking is deciding on the position and movement of the characters as they move through the play. You can block your presentation too. Here are some ideas:

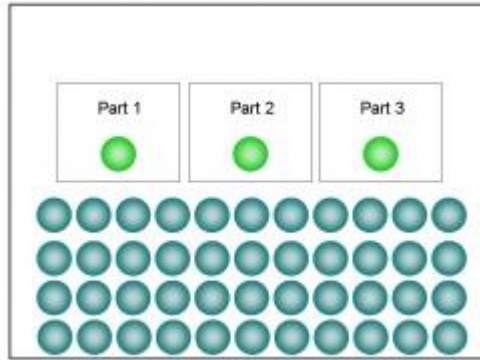
1. State your Key Message from the Power Position

Your Key Message is the core of your talk. Choose one spot where you will stand and state your Key Message. It should be dead centre, and close to the audience.



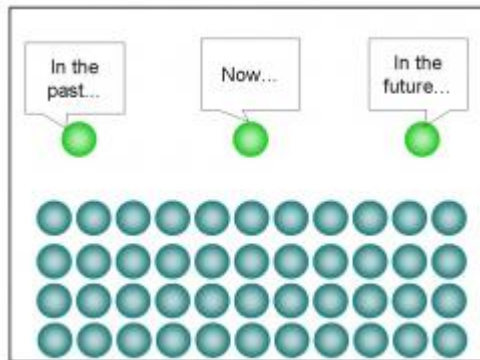
2. Map your structure on the stage

Using your physical space on the stage to map out your structure. It will help your audience anchor the different parts of your talk. Use these areas when you do a preview near the beginning of your presentation. Then return to that area of the stage for that part of the presentation.



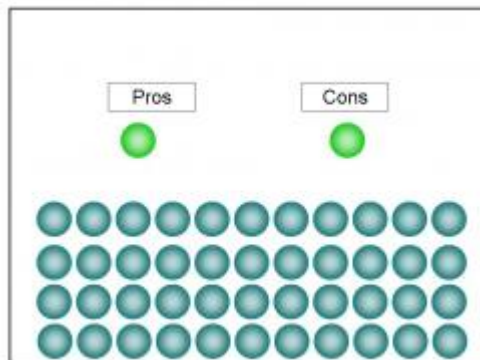
3. Use a stage timeline

Where a story or explanation involves the passage of time, imagine a timeline across the stage and move along it to show the progression of time. Remember to make the past to the audience's left - not your left.



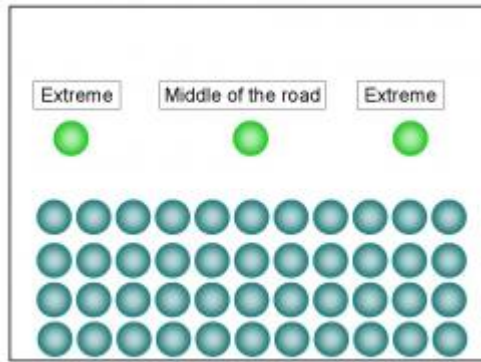
4. Argue the pros and cons as if you were in a debate

In a debate, the people arguing for each side will stand at different sides of the stage. Although there's only one of you, you can adopt this strategy. Stand on one side for the pros - and the other side for the cons.



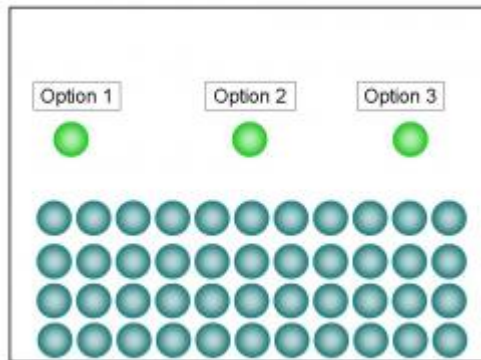
5. Physically reflect the continuum of points of view

Points of view on a topic often exist along a continuum - from one extreme - to middle of the road - and out to the other extreme. Reflect this with where you stand on the stage as you describe each point of view.



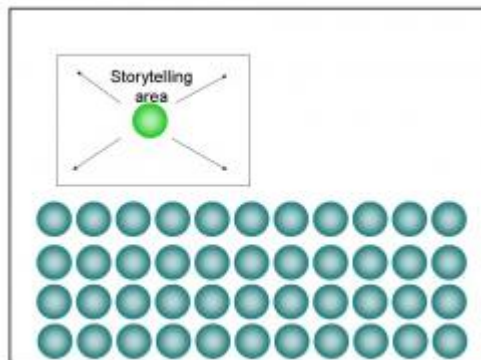
6. Give each option it's own spot

If you're discussing a range of options, stand in a specific spot for each option as you describe it. When you refer back to an option later in your presentation, go back to that spot.

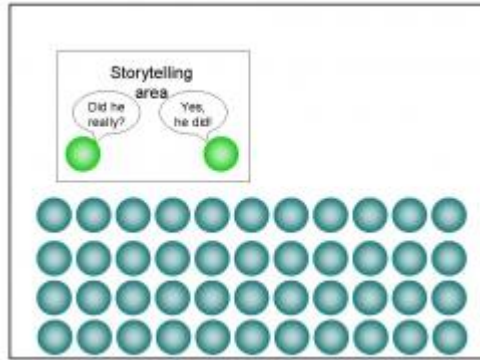


7. Story time

Have a general area of the stage for story-telling. When you're telling a light-hearted story, it can be effective to move around as you're talking. You'll come across as chatty and conversational.

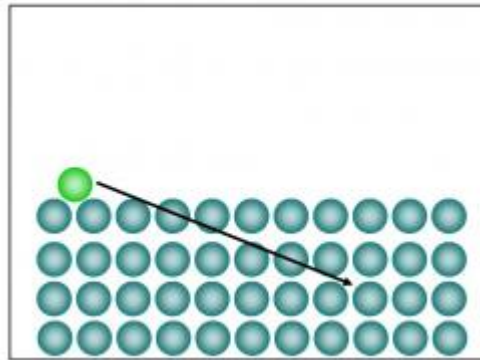


Where a story involves two or more characters in dialogue, have a specific spot where you deliver the lines of each character. Stay within the storytelling area.



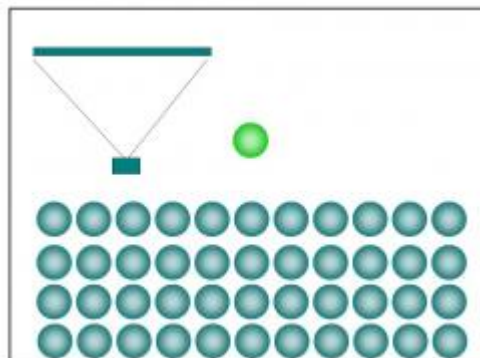
8. Move close for emphasis

If you normally stay a couple of paces back from your audience, you can then exploit closeness for emphasis. Moving close to people is powerful. Even intimidating. But you can stand really close to someone, and look elsewhere. You get the powerful effect without intimidation.

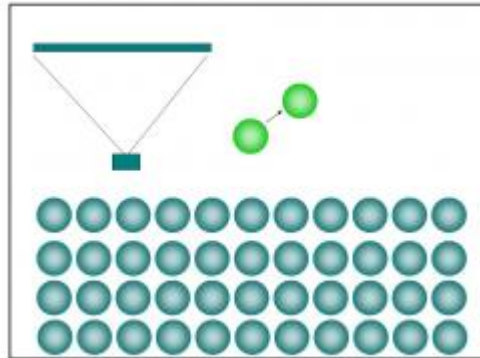


9. Dance with your Slides

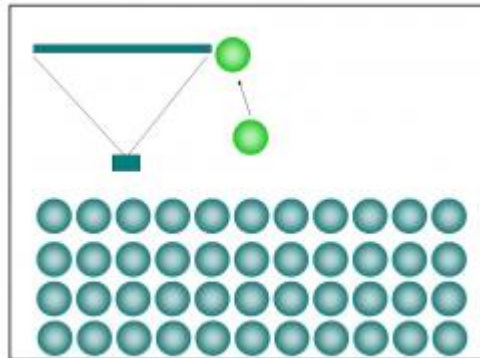
Adding the display of slides is a complicating factor. To keep as much flexibility as possible, I recommend placing the datashow screen slightly off to the side. If the screen is in the middle, it's easy to turn into a projectionist instead of a presenter. If it's to the side, then you can still claim the power position. To avoid stepping into the beam of the datashow, stick some duct tape on the floor as a reminder. (Note: I generally have the screen to my right because I also use a flipchart which I like to have to my left, so that when I turn around to write on the flipchart, I don't have to move to the other side of it. I'm right-handed - if you're left-handed, you'd flip this arrangement around).



You'll also need to be aware of blocking the view of some parts of the audience. With this arrangement if you move slightly back and to the side, it will allow everyone in the audience to see. When they've seen the slide, move back closer to the audience, as you'll lose impact standing further back for a long period of time.



When you want to draw attention to a slide, move back to your datashow screen.



Explain your slides physically. Get in the beam. For a great example of explaining slides physically have a watch of **Hans Rosling** explaining statistics like you've never seen before. You'll never use a wimpy laser pointer again! Choose one or two of these ideas to implement to begin with. If possible, rehearse in the room that you're presenting in, so that you can integrate the movements you want to make. Generally, it's more natural and conversational to keep talking as you're moving. But occasionally use the power of silence for more impact. Using your space will add a new dimension to your presentations.