

Presenting Your Research (even) Better

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Today's Plan

Warm-up

Foundations:
The Essentials
of Presenting

Slide Design

Storytelling
Practice

3MT & Hooks

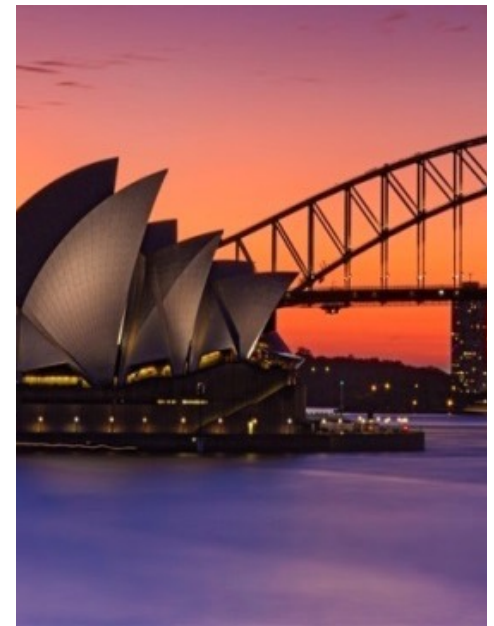
Elevator Pitch
Challenge: AI
vs. Human

Narrowing
Your Research

Q&A
Simulation

Wrap-Up &
Reflection

Who am I?



Warm up!



Icebreaker with a “hook”

- Instead of the usual “name/field of study,” each student will introduce themselves with a *mini hook*. Options could be:
 - A surprising fact about themselves.
 - A thought-provoking question they often get about their research.
 - A short, vivid story (20 seconds) from their student life or research journey.
- Example: “*Hi, I’m Keiko from Applied Linguistics. Did you know most Japanese high schoolers use fewer than 1,000 English words in everyday communication? That’s part of what I research.*”



Think!

*“What made you pay attention?
What techniques did they use?”*





Mini reflection

- Respond to the following questions:
 - *What kind of presenter do I want to be today?* (e.g., clear, confident, creative, funny).
 - *What do I usually worry about when I present?*
- Turn to a neighbour and share one aspiration and one worry.
- *Remember: Good presentations aren't about being perfect, but about intention—deciding how you want to come across, then practising toward it.*

Foundations: The Essentials of Presenting





Why presenting matters

- Presenting your research effectively is not just about sharing findings—it's about amplifying your impact, fostering collaboration, and advancing your career in academia.
- A strong paper might get read by 50 people; a strong presentation might inspire 500.

Why presenting matters



Knowledge

Sharing: Presentations spread research beyond the page, contributing to the wider field.



Feedback &

Collaboration: They invite constructive critique and open doors to partnerships.



Professional Growth: Strong presentation skills support funding, publishing, and career advancement.



Visibility &

Recognition: Presenting boosts profile, credibility, and future opportunities.



Impact & Influence:

A compelling talk can inspire, shape research directions, and extend impact.



Confidence Building: Regular practice strengthens public speaking and self-assurance as a researcher.

Verbal presentation skills

- Public speaking is a skill that can be improved.
- Always consider your audience.
- You must think about your language choice, rhythm, flow, pitch and timing. Use pauses strategically.
- Use a conversational tone and make eye contact with the audience to keep them engaged.
- Remember, to breathe!
- Avoid scripts and try talking **to** your audience not **at** your audience.



Non-Verbal presentation skills

- Posture
- The way you walk
- Your eye gaze with the audience
- Paralinguistic behaviours
- Facial expressions (match them with your presentation)
- Your conscious/unconscious movements (e.g., playing with your hair)
- Gestures (illustrators and emblems)

Who looks more confident?



DIANE



CARL



CHERYL



SIMON



Example

Think!

- Which presentation held your attention more, and why?
- What one thing made the engaging presentation stronger?
- If you were giving the talk, what would you change in the awkward version?



Quick Activity – Fix the Bad Intro

- **Read it** – What makes it hard to follow?
- **Find problems** – Too much jargon? Too long? Too abstract?
- **Rewrite it** – Make it clearer, shorter, and more engaging (add a hook).
- **Share it** – Read your version to the group.

Improved Example

- *Hello everyone. My research looks at how students stay motivated and engaged in the classroom. We all know some days it's hard to keep learners interested. I'm exploring the role of teacher support, peer interaction, and learning strategies in keeping that motivation alive. To do this, I'm combining surveys and interviews, and today I'll share what this means for improving everyday teaching.*

What differences do you notice?

- **Clear language** – avoids jargon, uses everyday words.
- **Concise** – shorter sentences, easier to follow.
- **Relatable** – connects to a common experience (“hard to keep learners interested”).
- **Engaging hook** – starts with a simple problem the audience cares about.
- **Audience focus** – talks *to* the listener, not *at* them.
- **Purposeful** – clearly states what the research is about and what will be shared.

Slide Design

- **We live in PowerPoint** – research, teaching, conferences
- **Impact matters** – great slides make ideas stick
- **Show, don't tell** – “images beat walls of text”
 - Audiences process visuals **faster and more easily** than text.
 - A single image can often communicate an idea more powerfully than paragraphs of words.
 - Slides packed with text overwhelm the audience and reduce attention.
 - A well-chosen picture, graph, or diagram makes the message **memorable**.
- **Two golden rules:**
 - Follow best practice
 - Know your audience

Slide Design

- **Less is more** – keep words to a minimum (one phrase or keyword is enough).
- **One key idea** – focus your slide on the *single* main point you want remembered.
- **Use contrast** – make the most important part stand out (colour, size, bold).
- **Keep it clean** – avoid clutter, multiple fonts, or too many colours.
- **Think emotion** – choose visuals that make people *feel* something, not just understand it.

About Images



About Images



About Images



About Images



About Images



Activity 2: Create your 3MT Slide



Choose one key idea from your research.



Design a single slide (no extra text or animations).



Keep it visual – use images or simple graphics, not paragraphs.



Test clarity – can someone understand your research idea just from your slide?



Save it — you'll use this for your final presentation today.

Break Time



Storytelling & Hooks



Think!

- Who likes movies?
Dramas?
- Why do stories matter?



Why storytelling matters

Research is not just facts
— stories make people
care.

A clear story helps the
audience remember your
work long after the slides.

Example: Disney stories
follow a simple arc
(beginning → challenge →
resolution). Your research
can too.

The Core Structure of Stories



Problem: What issue, puzzle, or gap does your research tackle?



Journey: How did you approach it? (methods, data, context)



Result/Impact: What did you find, and why does it matter?

Core Structure Broken Down



Problem = The Hook

Set the scene. Why should the audience care?

Use a vivid image, personal anecdote, or surprising fact to make the problem real.

In storytelling terms: this is the *inciting incident*.



Journey = The Struggle

Describe how you investigated the problem.

Highlight challenges, choices, or turning points in your process.

In story terms: this is the *middle*, where the “hero” (you, or your research) faces obstacles.



Result/Impact = The Resolution

Share the key finding or insight in simple terms.

Explain why it matters: who benefits, or how the field changes.

In story terms: this is the *reward*, or what the audience takes away.

Example

- **Problem**

- In Japan, izakayas are everywhere, yet they are rarely studied as sites of community building. We don't fully understand how language and interaction in these small spaces create feelings of belonging among strangers.

- **Journey**

- To explore this, I spent time in neighborhood izakayas in Osaka, observing conversations and recording how owners and customers interact. I focused on the small details of talk, gestures, and atmosphere that shape these encounters.

- **Result/Impact**

- What I found is that even ordinary exchanges such as a greeting, a joke, or a refill carry powerful social meaning. Izakayas function as miniature communities where language helps people negotiate identity and closeness. This shows that hospitality spaces are not only about food and drink but also about maintaining social ties in Japanese urban life.

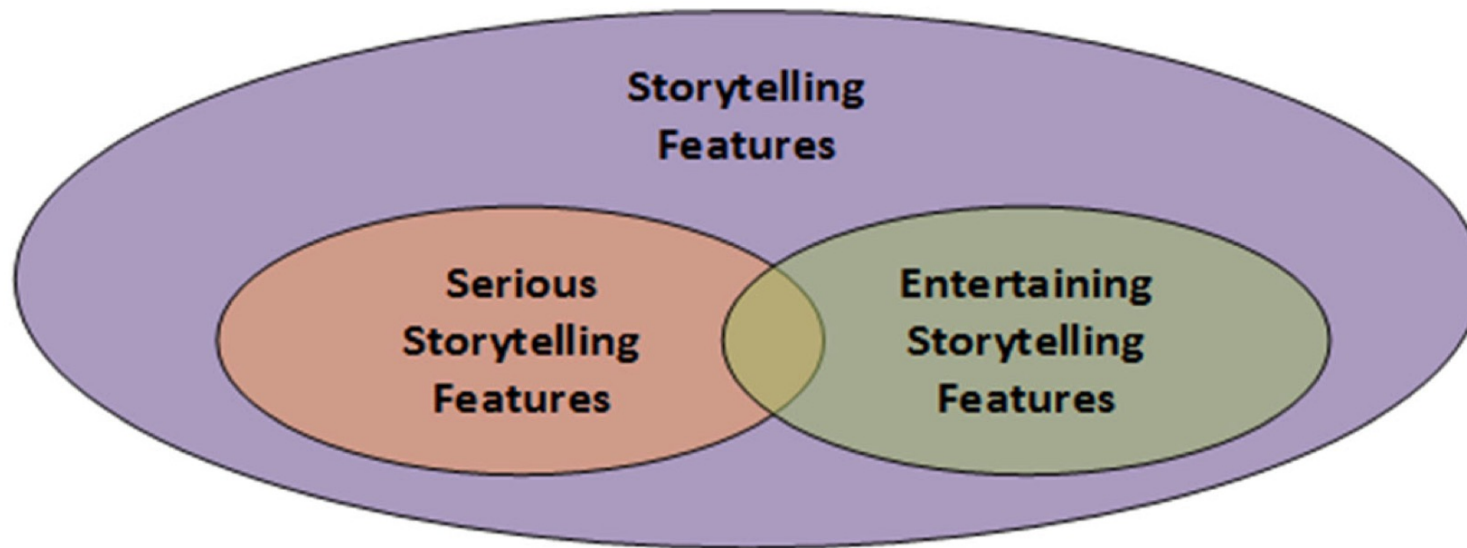


Fig. 1 Overlap between features of Storytelling, **Serious** Storytelling, and Entertaining Storytelling

Hooks: Starting the Story Right



A hook is the opening line or idea that grabs your audience's attention and makes them want to listen.



It sets the tone for your presentation.



It can be a story, question, fact, quote, or image.



A good hook makes your audience curious and ready to follow your research journey.

Hooks: Starting the Story Right

- To draw your audience in, begin with a “hook”:
 - A short story or scene (e.g., *“On a rainy night in Osaka, I stepped into a tiny izakaya...”*)
 - A surprising fact (*“There are more izakayas than convenience stores in some parts of Japan.”*)
 - A big question (*“What makes strangers in a bar feel like family within minutes?”*)
 - A striking image, metaphor, or quote (*“People don’t come here just to drink. They come here so they are not drinking alone.”*)

Contrasting Examples

- **Boring intro:** *“My research focuses on language policy in Japan.”*
- **Story-driven intro:** *“When I was teaching in a Japanese classroom, I noticed half the students avoided speaking English, even though they were capable. That moment made me wonder why.”*
- **Boring intro:** *“My research examines sociopragmatics in small hospitality establishments.”*
- **Story-driven intro:** *“On a rainy night in Osaka, I stepped into a tiny izakaya. Within minutes, strangers were laughing together like old friends. I wanted to know: how does that happen?”*

Think!

- Why is the second version stronger?
 - Creates an image.
 - Connects with human experience.
 - Builds curiosity.

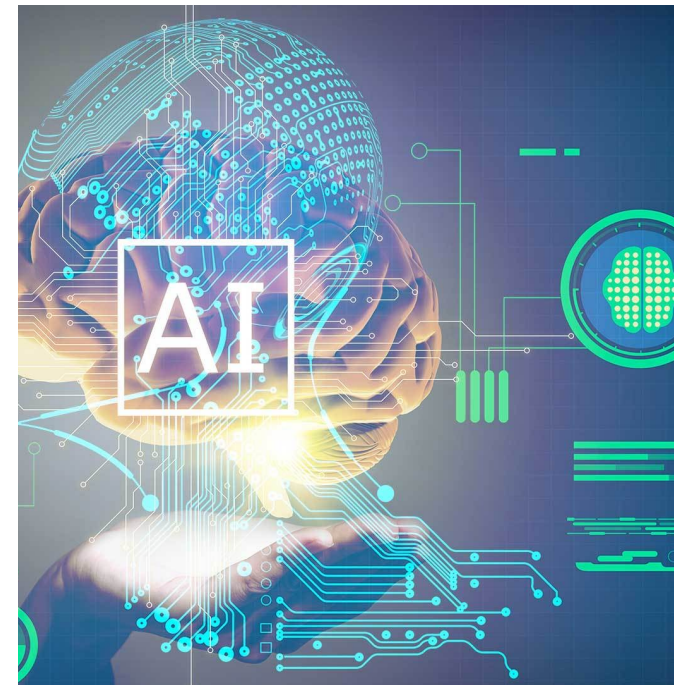


Activity 3: Your Hook

- Write a 2–3 sentence opening for your research.
- Start by writing the 'boring' version (dry and factual).
- Then, rewrite it as a 'hook' version using one of these strategies:
 - A vivid story or image
 - A surprising fact
 - A big question
 - A quote or metaphor
- Ask volunteers to read both versions aloud.
- As a group, discuss: **What made the hook more effective?**
- Write down some notes

Using AI

- Use AI to improve your hook by using the following prompts:
- **Generate ideas:** *“Rewrite this intro with a hook.”*
- **Simplify language:** *“Make this opening clear for a non-expert audience.”*
- **Explore styles:** *“Give me three different hooks: a story, a question, and a surprising fact.”*
- **Polish delivery:** *“Rewrite this so it sounds smooth and natural when spoken aloud.”*
- **Test for impact:** *“Does this hook sound engaging? Suggest improvements.”*
- **Think!** Together in your groups, think about the human and AI hooks. Which feels more authentic, which is clearer, and which one you would actually use.

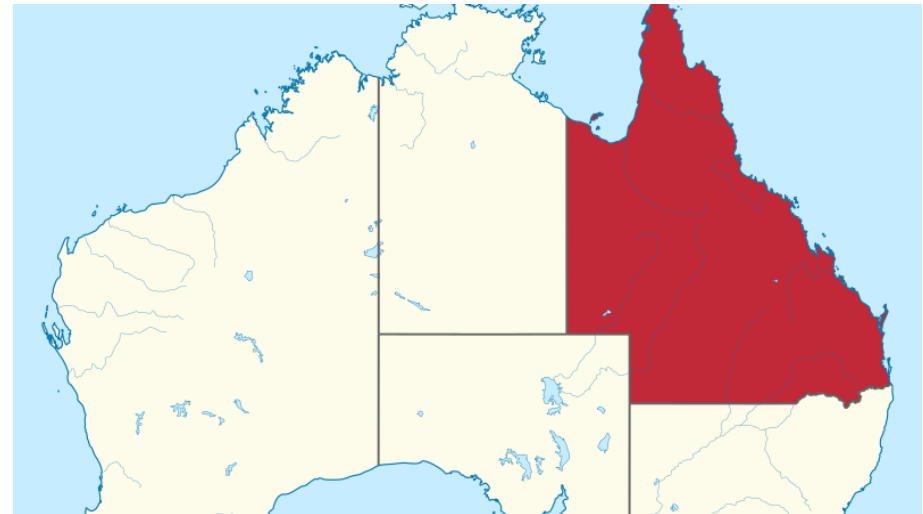


Three-Minute Thesis Competition



About

- **What is 3MT?** A research communication competition for PhD students
- **Origin:** Founded at the University of Queensland, Brisbane in 2008, now held worldwide
- **Purpose:** Showcase research and make it accessible to a general, non-expert audience
- **Skills Developed:** Academic clarity, engaging storytelling, and confident public speaking
- **The Challenge:** Explain an entire PhD project in 3 minutes using one static slide



Key Points of 3MT

What Makes a Great Presentation?

- Have you seen a really good talk?
- What made it memorable?

Effective presenters use:

- Clear language and body language, often personalizing their work
- Hooks to connect with the audience (stories, humour, emotion)
- A conversational style that talks *to* the audience, not *at* them

Designing your 3MT Slide

- Less is more.
- Use pictures rather than text to describe your research (pictures stay in the mind; text doesn't).
- Use creative techniques to highlight particular areas of the slide (use black & white, color, contrasting, etc).
- Images can be universal (and humans are visual creatures).
- Pictures can change your mood, as they can invoke feelings of happiness, sadness, excitement, fear, etc.
- BE CREATIVE

3MT Rules

1. A single static PowerPoint slide is permitted. No slide transitions, animations or 'movement' of any description are allowed. The slide is to be presented from the beginning of the oration.
2. No additional electronic media (e.g. sound and video files) are permitted.
3. No additional props (e.g. costumes, musical instruments, laboratory equipment) are permitted.
4. Presentations are limited to 3 minutes maximum and competitors exceeding 3 minutes are disqualified.
5. Presentations are to be spoken word (e.g. no poems, raps or songs).
6. Presentations are to commence from the stage.
7. Presentations are considered to have commenced when a presenter starts their presentation through either movement or speech.
8. The decision of the adjudicating panel is final.
9. Take necessary care of intellectual property rights or any other legal rights of other parties to create a presentation slide. The source/attribution needs to be clearly indicated as necessary.

Judging Criteria

- Judging criteria is from two perspectives:
 - Comprehension and content
 - Engagement and communication

Narrowing Your Research



Narrowing Your Research

- Focus on **one main question or problem**
- Cut out **extra details** (methods, background, side topics)
- Choose the point that is **most interesting or impactful**
- Ask yourself: *“If my audience remembers one thing, what should it be?”*

Why Narrow Your Research?



Keeps your message **clear and focused**



Helps your audience **understand and remember** the key point



Prevents overload — too much detail can cause confusion



Creates space to **highlight significance** rather than drown in data



Builds a **stronger story** with a clear beginning, middle, and end

Why is Your Research Important?

- Figuring this out is a challenging but essential process
- Step back from the details to see the bigger picture
- Ask yourself:
 - What is **groundbreaking, innovative, or different** in my work?
 - What did I **find**? (Even a null hypothesis is a result)
 - What **implications** does it have for people, society, or the field?

Activity 4: Your Research Story

- Use the scaffold to shape your research into a short story
 - Write 1–2 sentences for each section:
 - Hook
 - Problem
 - Journey
 - Findings
 - Impact
 - Closing line
 - When you present, include the slide you created in Activity 2 as part of your story
 - Practice telling your story aloud (90 seconds – 3 minutes)
- Share with your group and give feedback. Focus on clarity, engagement, and structure, and offer one suggestion for improvement.

Break Time



Presentations Q&A



Think!

- Who has had an experience presenting at a conference?
- Did you answer questions? How did you feel? Was it easy? Difficult?
- Or have you ever asked a question at the end of a presentation? Was it easy?



Introduction to Q&A Simulation

- After a presentation, the audience often asks questions. These can be easy, but they can also be challenging, unexpected, or even critical. How you respond is just as important as the presentation itself.
- **Strategies for Answering Questions**
 - Listen fully – do not rush; make sure you understand the question
 - Acknowledge first – repeat or rephrase the question to show you have understood
 - Keep it simple – give a clear, concise answer without jargon
 - Bridge if needed – if the question is off-topic, link it back to your main point
 - Be honest – it's fine to say “I don't know” and suggest how it could be explored
 - Stay calm and positive – treat tough questions as a chance to show confidence and knowledge

Some Difficult Questions (Maybe)

- Why does your research matter?
- How is this different from previous studies?
- What are the limitations of your research?
- How could your findings be applied in practice?
- What would you do differently if you started again?
- How do you know your results are reliable?
- Who benefits most from your research?
- What's the next step in this project?

Activity 5: Simulation Q&A

- **What you need to do:**
- Form two groups: presenters and audience
- Audience asks tough or curious questions
- Presenters answer clearly and simply (no jargon)
- Switch roles so everyone practices both sides
- Use example or AI-generated questions if needed

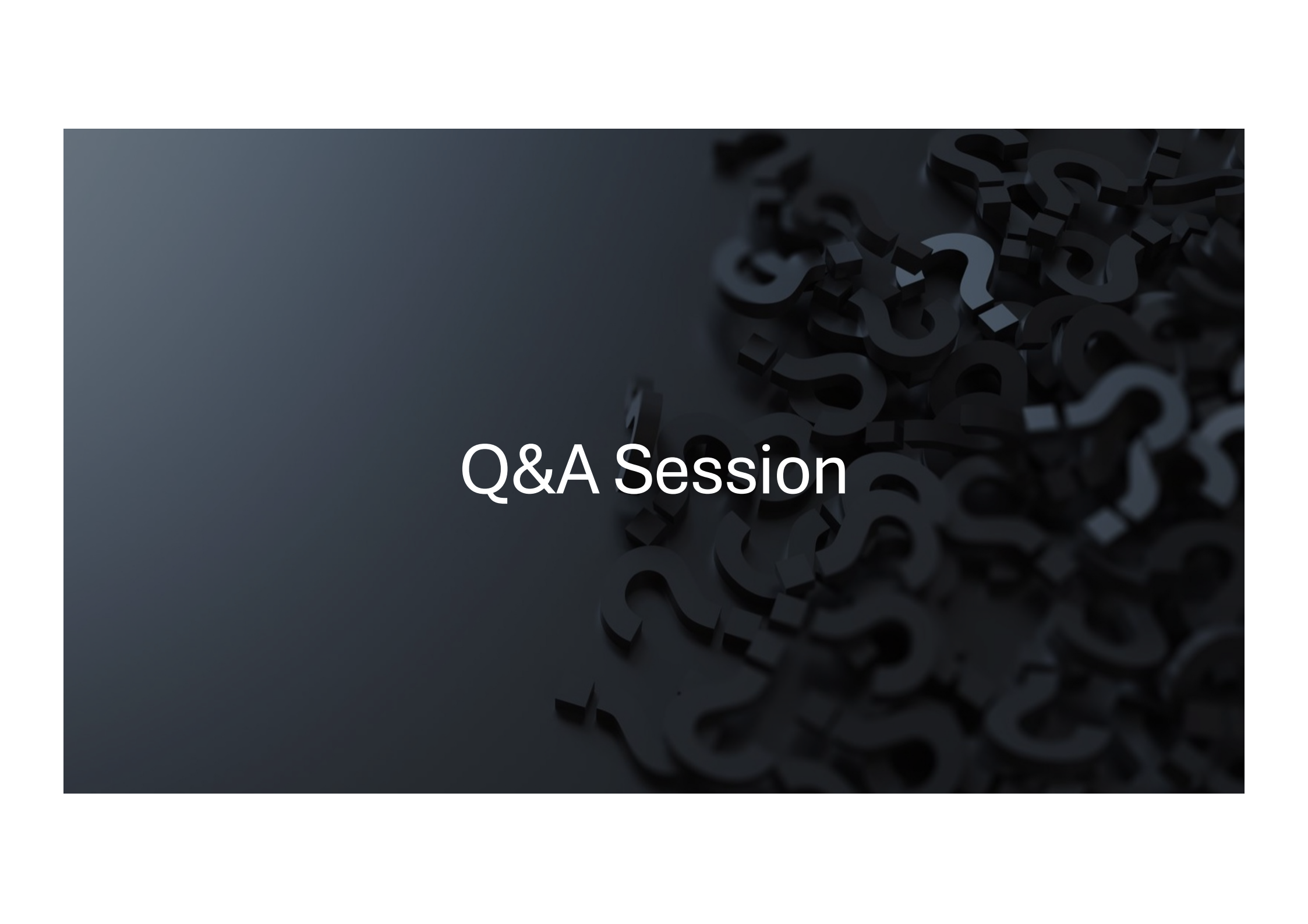
Wrap Up



What we focused on

- **Hook your audience** – start with a story, question, or striking fact
- **Tell a clear story** – Problem → Journey → Result/Impact
- **Design impactful slides** – keep them simple, visual, and purposeful
- **Engage with presence** – strong voice, body language, and eye contact
- **Be ready for questions** – listen, respond clearly, and show confidence

Q&A Session



Materials for Today's Workshop

<https://www.toddjamesallen.com/workshops>

