

Pitch Deck Design — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a finished deck. Alongside the four modules, you will write a one-page deck brief, outline your whole story as headline messages, rewrite slides into the assertion-evidence pattern, design honest traction and financial charts, lay out and pace the deck in PowerPoint or Keynote, and rehearse the ask. Use the templates to keep your story arc, numbers, and slide specs in one place so the finished deck is investor-ready, not just attractive.

The Story Arc: What a Pitch Deck Is For

Define the decision, the audience, and the full slide-by-slide story before you open any software.

Worksheet: One-Page Deck Brief

Choose the real pitch you will build through this workbook. Fill in each field. The single decision sentence is the contract you will test every later slide against, so make it specific and outcome-focused.

Deck name / company

Single decision this deck must produce (one sentence)

Primary audience and stage (e.g. pre-seed angel, Series A partner, enterprise buyer)

Context (present-live / send-alone / both)

Belief 1 the reader must hold to say yes

Belief 2 the reader must hold to say yes

Belief 3 the reader must hold to say yes

What is explicitly out of scope for this deck

Worksheet: Headline-Message Outline (One Sentence Per Slide)

Write your whole deck as a sequence of one-sentence headline messages, one per slide, following the standard arc. Each title must be a claim, not a label. When you read the messages top to bottom, they should tell a complete, convincing story on their own. Use the story-arc template to capture this.

Slide 1 Title — headline message (assertion, not 'Title')

Slide 2 Problem — headline message

Slide 3 Solution — headline message

Slide 4 Why now — headline message

Slide 5 Market size — headline message

Slide 6 Product — headline message

Slide 7 Traction — headline message

Slide 8 Business model — headline message

Slide 9 Competition — headline message

Slide 10 Team — headline message

Slide 11 The ask — headline message

Exercise: Storyboard and Cut on Sticky Notes

Write each slide's headline message on a separate sticky note and lay them in order on a wall or table. Walk the sequence and pressure-test the flow, then cut and reorder physically until the story is tight.

- Reading only the notes in order, does the story make a complete argument without you explaining it?
- Which note is a label rather than a claim, and how do you rewrite it as an assertion?
- Which slide does not earn its place or fails to set up the next one, and can you cut it?
- Is the why-now message genuinely present, and is traction early enough in the sequence to matter?

Checklist: Story and Structure Readiness

- I have written a single decision sentence and named the specific audience and their stage
- I have decided whether this deck is presented live, sent alone, or both
- Every slide has a one-sentence headline message that is a claim, not a label
- Reading the headlines alone tells my complete, convincing story
- The deck follows the need-then-answer-then-proof logic of the standard arc
- The deck is around ten to twelve slides, with anything non-essential cut

Slide-Level Craft: One Message, Made Visual

Turn each headline into a single-message, assertion-evidence slide, and sharpen the slides investors read most.

Exercise: Kill the Bullets: Single-Message Rebuild

Take three bullet-heavy slides from a draft (or three messages from your outline). Rebuild each as a single-message slide: one headline claim and one visual that shows it, moving the detail into speaker notes.

- What is the single core idea of this slide, and does the headline state it in plain language?

- What one visual (chart, diagram, screenshot, or big number) proves the idea better than text?

- What detail did you move off the slide and into the speaker notes to say aloud?

- If the slide still needs the word 'and' in its headline, is it secretly two slides?

Worksheet: Assertion-Evidence Slide Sheet

For each slide, write the claim as a complete-sentence title and name the single strongest piece of evidence for it. Reach for the strongest evidence you have on the quality ladder. Use the slide-spec template to record this for every slide.

Slide / purpose

Claim as a complete sentence (the title)

Single piece of evidence (chart / metric / screenshot / quote / logo)

Evidence strength (named customer or real revenue is strong; generic claim is weak)

What was removed (decorative bullets restating the title)

Can you defend this claim if an investor probes it? (yes/no)

Worksheet: Key-Slide Framing: Traction, Team, Market

Design the three slides investors scrutinise most. For each, record the exact metric or proof, how it is shown, and the honesty check that keeps it credible. Use the key-slides sheet in the slide-spec template.

Traction metric shown and time range (real growth metric, not a vanity total)

Traction chart type and zero-baseline confirmed (yes/no)

Team: the one credential each member that proves unfair advantage

Market: bottom-up TAM, SAM, and SOM figures (not just a top-down number)

Why-now: the specific external shift that opens the window today

Competition: real named rivals and your stated defensible edge

Checklist: Slide-Craft Integrity Check

- [] Each slide carries one core idea, and lists are short parallel fragments, not stacked sentences
- [] Every slide title is a complete-sentence claim, and the body is evidence for it
- [] On-slide text is minimal; the detail lives in speaker notes, not on the screen
- [] The traction slide shows a meaningful growth metric over time, not a vanity cumulative total
- [] The team slide shows unfair advantage, not full resumes
- [] Market size is bottom-up and credible, not a 'one percent of a huge market' claim

Data, Charts, and Numbers on Slides

Make every chart and number on the deck honest, glanceable, and credible.

Exercise: Chart Autopsy and Five-Second Rebuild

Take three charts from your draft deck. Identify the encoding each uses and whether it misleads, then rebuild any that rely on angle, area, a dual axis, or a truncated bar baseline into a single-message slide chart that reads in about five seconds.

- What single message should each chart land, and does the chart prove only that?

- Does any bar or column chart use a non-zero baseline, and what does fixing it do to the story?

- Is there a pie with more than three slices that should become a sorted bar or column chart?

- What chartjunk (gridlines, 3D, legend, background) did you remove, and what did you highlight in the accent colour?

Worksheet: Financials and Unit-Economics Sheet

Capture the numbers that make your financials credible. Fill in your actual unit economics and the assumptions that drive the model. Leave any ratio or derived figure blank to compute yourself from your own inputs. Use the financials template.

Customer acquisition cost (CAC)

Lifetime value (LTV)

LTV-to-CAC ratio (you compute from your LTV and CAC)

Gross margin %

CAC payback period (months)

Core assumption 1 (e.g. monthly price)

Core assumption 2 (e.g. monthly churn)

Core assumption 3 (e.g. visitor-to-paid conversion rate)

Worksheet: One-Big-Number Slide Planner

Plan the two or three moments where a single striking statistic is your whole argument. For each, record the number, its formatting, and the context line that turns data into a story. Use the financials template's One Big Number sheet.

The single number (formatted, e.g. 40K/mo, 1.2M, 3.4x)

Context line (compared to what / since when / against which target)

Which slide / moment it anchors

Why this number is impossible to misread as formatted

Checklist: Chart and Number Honesty Audit

- Every bar and column chart starts its value axis at zero
- No chart uses dual independent y-axes to imply a correlation that may not be real
- Each slide chart makes exactly one point and reads in about five seconds
- Headline numbers are rounded and abbreviated consistently (K, M, B) with units shown
- Every standalone number has context: compared to what, since when, or against a target
- Projections show assumptions and unit economics, not just an optimistic endpoint

Layout, Pacing, and Delivering with Confidence

Lay out and pace the deck in PowerPoint or Keynote, then rehearse delivery and ship both versions.

Worksheet: Master and Design-System Setup Sheet

Record the deck-wide settings you define once in the Slide Master (PowerPoint) or master slides (Keynote) so every slide inherits one standard. Fill in the type scale, palette, and alignment rules. Use the design-system template.

Tool (PowerPoint / Keynote)

Title font and body font (two typefaces maximum)

Type scale (e.g. body 18-24pt, titles 30-40pt; no live-deck text under 30pt)

Neutral text colour, brand colour(s), and the single accent colour (hex)

Title x-position and content margins (the shared rails)

Text contrast vs background meets WCAG AA 4.5:1 (yes/no)

Exercise: Thumbnail Consistency and Pacing Pass

View the whole deck at thumbnail or slide-sorter size. Check that it looks like one coherent piece and that the rhythm varies. Mark any slide that breaks consistency or drags the pace.

- Which slides have a title, font, or colour that jumps out of place at thumbnail size?
- Does the visual rhythm vary (dense vs sparse, chart vs image), or does it feel monotonous?

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- Where are your emphasis beats (one-big-number, full-bleed image), and do they land at the right moments?
 - At roughly two minutes per slide, does the deck fit the time, or must you cut slides rather than rush?
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Worksheet: Delivery, Ask, and Q&A Prep Sheet

Prepare the spoken layer of the pitch. Write the ask exactly, list your appendix backups, and rehearse answers to the hardest likely questions. Use the delivery template.

The ask in one sentence (amount + use of funds + milestone it reaches)

Opening hook (the first 20 seconds, rehearsed)

Appendix backup slides prepared (financial detail, cohorts, competition)

Hardest question 1 and my concise honest answer

Hardest question 2 and my concise honest answer

Timer rehearsal completed to a real listener (yes/no)

Checklist: Final Pre-Send and Pre-Pitch Check

- The deck inherits one master: consistent title position, type scale, palette, and spacing
- Two fonts maximum, one accent colour, and all images are high-quality and undistorted
- Transitions are minimal and consistent; build animations only serve the argument
- I can present without reading the slides, and the opening and ask are over-rehearsed
- The ask is stated in one clear sentence with amount, use of funds, and milestone
- Both versions exist: a sparse present-version and a stand-alone send-version exported to PDF

Your Action Plan

1. Write the one-page brief: the single decision sentence, named audience and stage, present-or-send context, and the three beliefs the reader must hold.
2. Outline the whole deck as one-sentence headline messages, one per slide, following the standard arc, and confirm the headlines alone tell the story.
3. Storyboard on sticky notes, cut anything non-essential, and tighten to around ten to twelve slides.
4. Rebuild each slide as a single-message, assertion-evidence slide: a complete-sentence claim title over one piece of strong evidence, with detail moved to speaker notes.
5. Sharpen the key slides: a real traction growth chart with a zero baseline, a team slide showing unfair advantage, and a bottom-up TAM, SAM, and SOM market size.
6. Make every chart honest and glanceable, force bar axes to zero, kill chartjunk, and format all numbers consistently with context, including two or three one-big-number moments.
7. Capture credible financials: CAC, LTV, the LTV-to-CAC ratio you compute, gross margin, payback, and the core assumptions behind the forecast.
8. Set up the Slide Master or Keynote master once: two fonts, one accent, a type scale with no live text under 30pt, shared margins, and WCAG AA contrast.
9. Run a thumbnail consistency and pacing pass at roughly two minutes per slide, with varied rhythm and emphasis beats at traction, why-now, and the ask.
10. Rehearse aloud to a timer and a listener, lock the opening and the one-sentence ask, build an

appendix for hard questions, and export both a present-version and a stand-alone send-version to PDF.

