Opening Strong Worksheet

Designing the first moments
that determine whether people lean in or check out

The opening moments of a presentation do more work than most speakers realize.

Before you make your first point, the audience has already begun forming judgments—about relevance, credibility, and whether paying attention will be worth the effort.

Those decisions are often made quietly, quickly, and without your awareness.

This worksheet is designed to help you be intentional about those first moments—so your opening establishes the right conditions before you move into content.

Important: An opening is not a warm-up. It is a signal.

Five Ways to Open Your Presentation

There is no single “right” way to open a presentation.

What matters is whether the opening earns attention and prepares the audience for what follows.

Below are the five ways to open a talk described in the book.

1. Pattern Disruption

Interrupts expectation and forces the audience to re-orient before settling in.

2. A Question

Invites mental participation by opening a gap in the audience’s thinking.

3. A Short Story

Creates context or connection before information appears.

4. A Compelling Statement

Challenges an assumption or reframes how the audience sees the topic.

5. A Relevant Statistic or Fact

Grounds the topic in reality—when it clearly connects to the audience’s world.

Which opening approach am I choosing for this presentation?

(Check one — this should align with your purpose and audience.)

- [ ] Pattern Disruption
- [ ] A Question
- [ ] A Short Story
- [ ] A Compelling Statement
- [ ] A Relevant Statistic or Fact

Why is this the right opening for *this* audience?

What signal do I want my opening to send immediately?

"I want my audience to understand, within the first minute, that this presentation is..."

Write the exact words you intend to use to open this presentation.

Reflection & Integration

Before you move on, pause and reflect on what this opening is doing.

What feels clearer to me now about how I want to begin?

What, if anything, should I now do differently or more deliberately in my opening?

How does this opening shape what my audience will expect from me?