Design for impactful communication

Presentation design principles

Creating effective slides in a presentation involves **more than just visually appealing design**. It also **requires a clear and logical flow of information**.

An effective presentation is a **harmonious combination of your narrative, visuals, and the slide design,** all working together to convey our message persuasively and memorably.

To accomplish all of this, we need to ensure the **clarity**, **visual appeal**, **consistency**, and many other principles of the presentation slides we create.

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The key principles

Audience engagement

A **clear and logical flow** of information **allows viewers to stay engaged** with the content and **understand the information** being presented.

Clarity

Slides should convey **information clearly and concisely**. **Avoid clutter**, and use a **minimal amount of text**. Each slide should have a **singular, focused message or idea**.

Visual appeal

Visually appealing design elements, used thoughtfully, can **reinforce our message and make the content more engaging**.

Consistency

Consistency helps **create a cohesive and professional look**. Use the **same font, colours, and formatting** for headings, bullet points, and other text elements.

Storytelling

Organise slides in a **logical sequence that tells a story**. Each slide should build on the previous one, **creating a narrative** flow that helps the audience follow our presentation more easily.

How do we implement the principles?

> Implementing the key principles for **impactful communication requires a combination of** what we've learned about:

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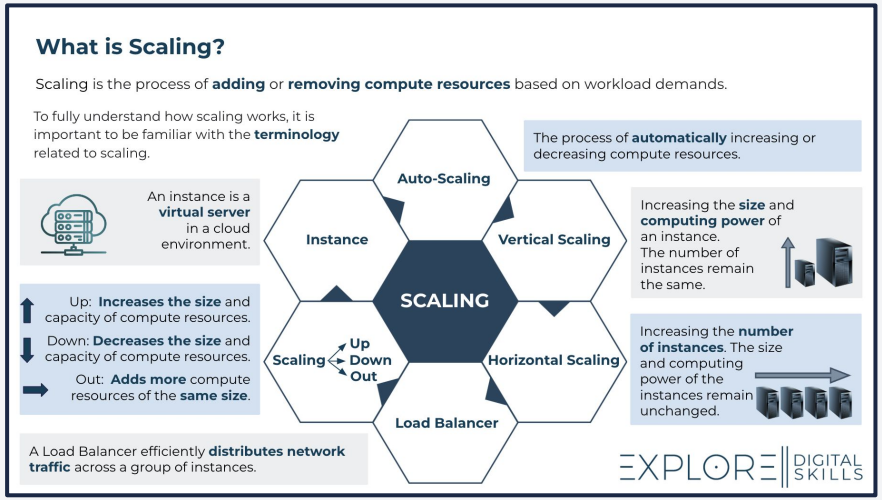
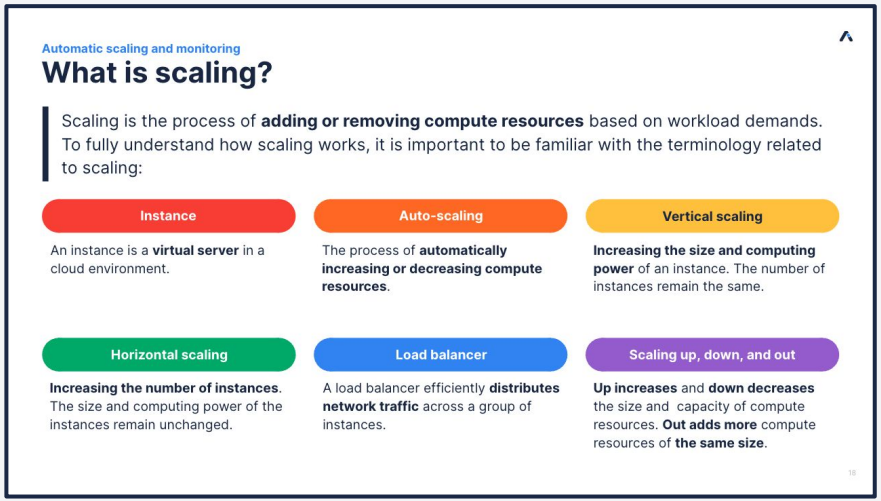
How do we implement the principles?

- Layout and composition
- Text and typography
- Colour, contrast, and harmony
- Images and graphics
- Transitions and animations

Layout and composition

Simplicity: Keep slides uncluttered. Avoid overcrowding with excessive text or graphics. A clean and minimalistic design ensures that our audience can focus on the key message.





These two examples include the **exact same information**, however, there's a **trade-off**: simplicity makes it easier to follow but fewer visual representations of a concept might make it harder to interpret at first.

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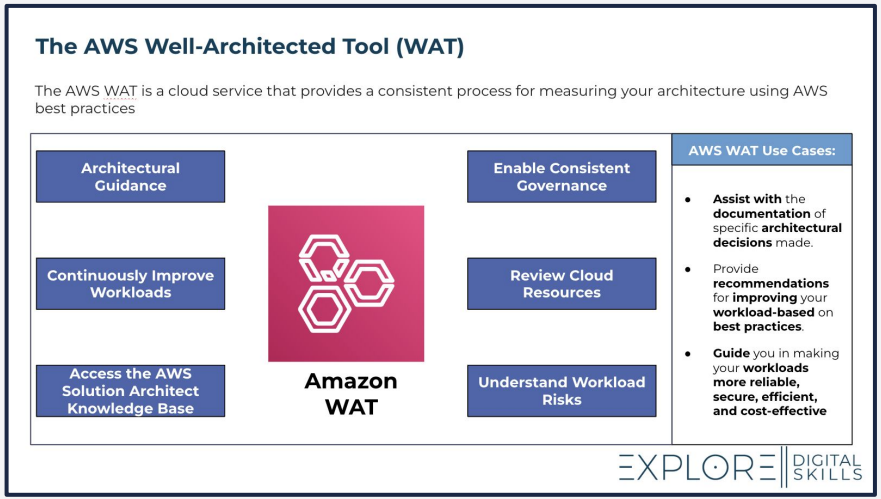
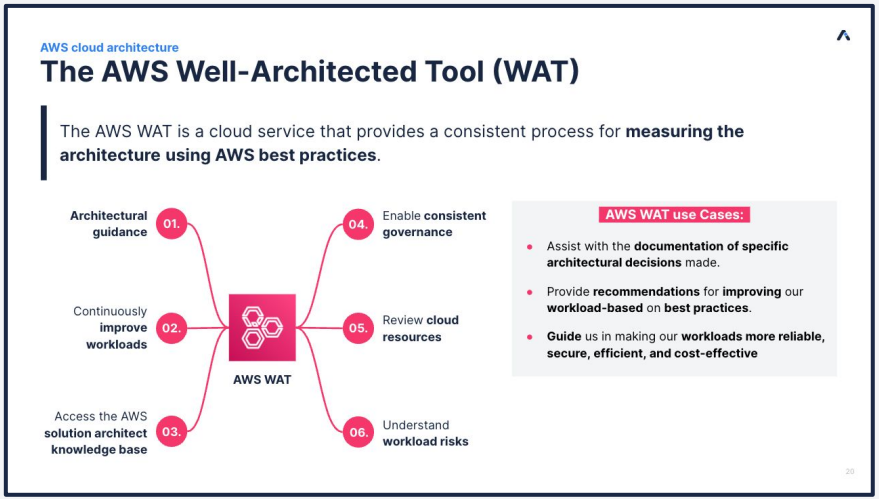
Layout and composition

Balance: Distribute elements evenly across the slide. Achieve balance by arranging content in a visually appealing way, avoiding heavy concentration on one side of the slide.





Balance can also be achieved by using **consistent font and element sizes**.

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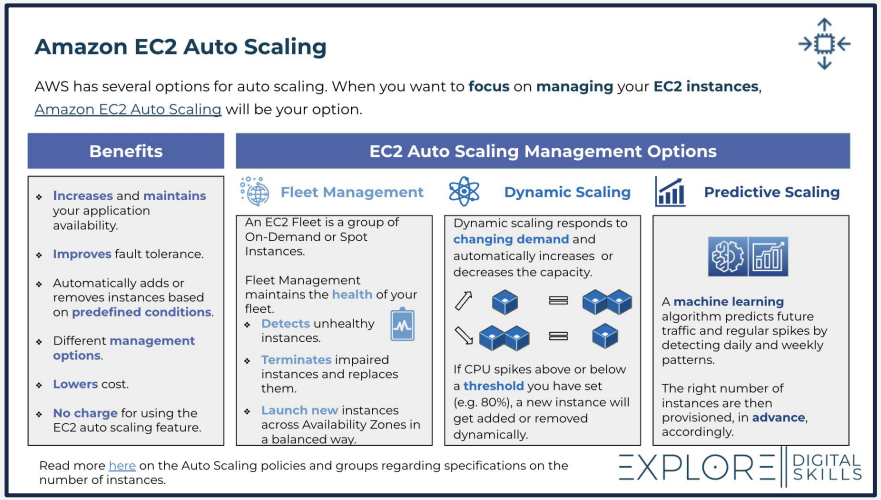
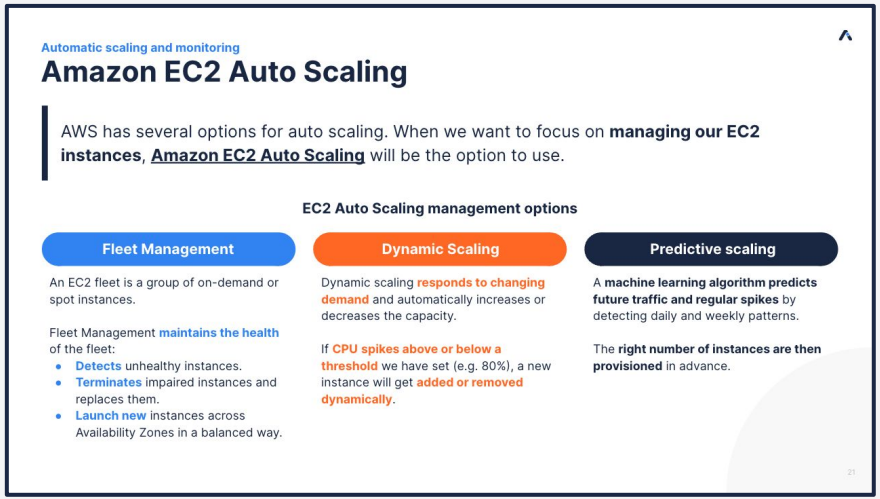
Layout and composition

White space: Make effective use of white space (empty space) around elements on the slide. It provides visual “breathing room” and helps guide the viewer's eyes to the most important content.





We often need to **move some of the information to a next slide**, **reduce the amount of text and/or graphics**, etc. to achieve effective “breathing room” on a slide.

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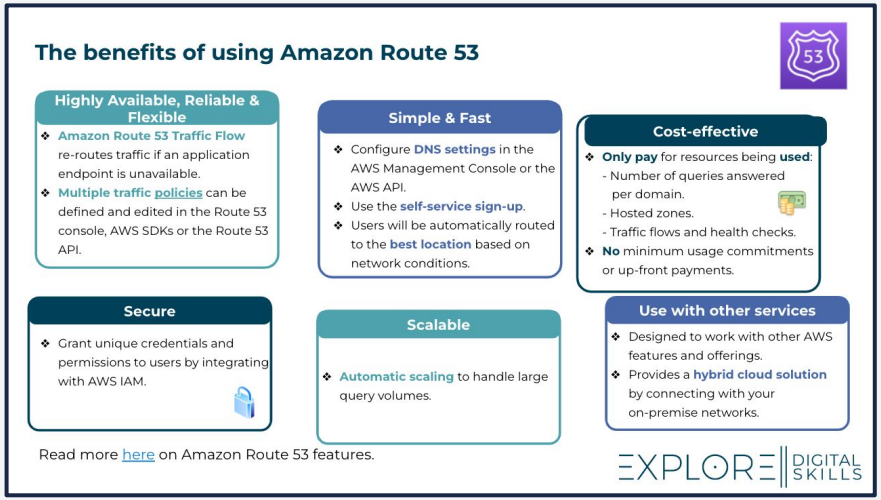
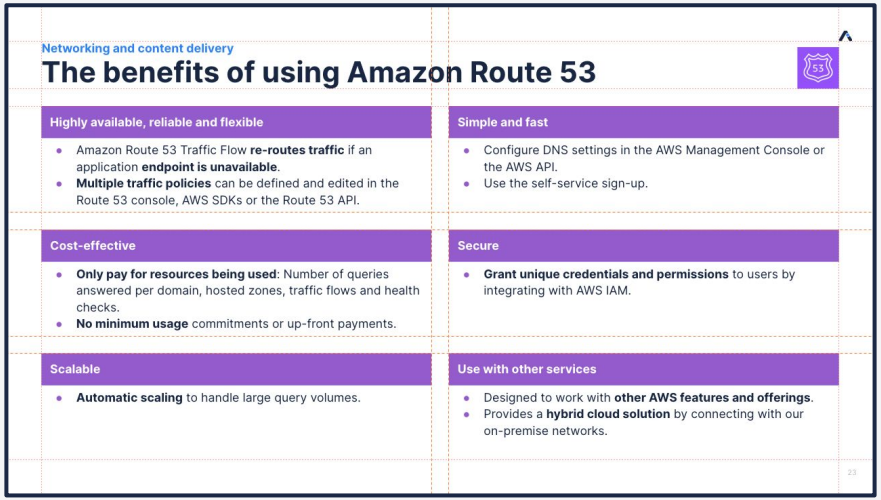
Layout and composition

Alignment: Ensure that text and graphics are aligned properly. Consider using grids and guidelines to assist in aligning elements precisely. This can help us create a structured and organised layout.





The example on the right has the **guides option activated**. This allows us to see whether or not our **elements are aligned properly**.

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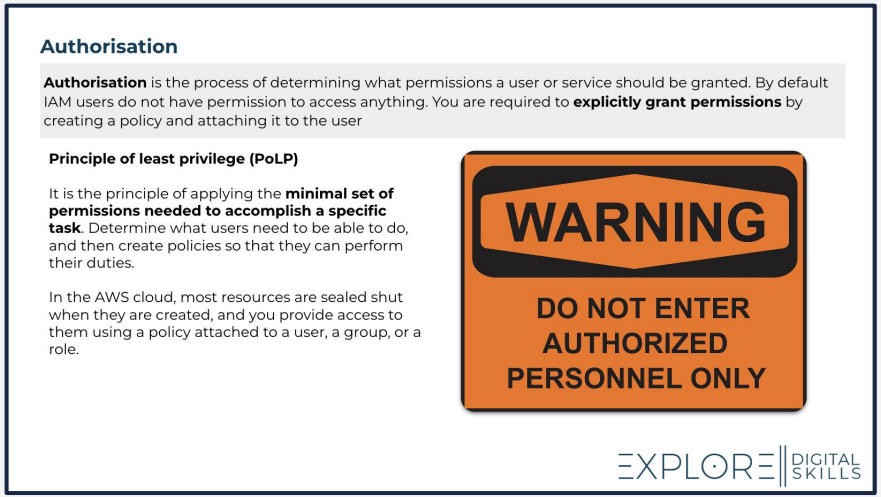
Text and typography

Hierarchy: Use a clear visual hierarchy to highlight important points. Larger fonts, bolder text, or different colours can be employed to distinguish main ideas from supporting information.



We can use font **size**, font **colour**, **coloured text boxes**, and **other forms of formatting** to ensure that the more important concepts are highlighted.

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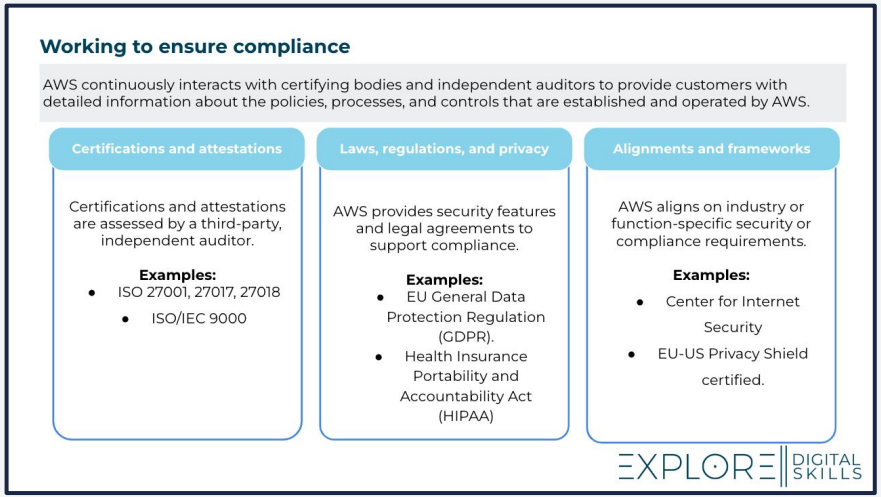
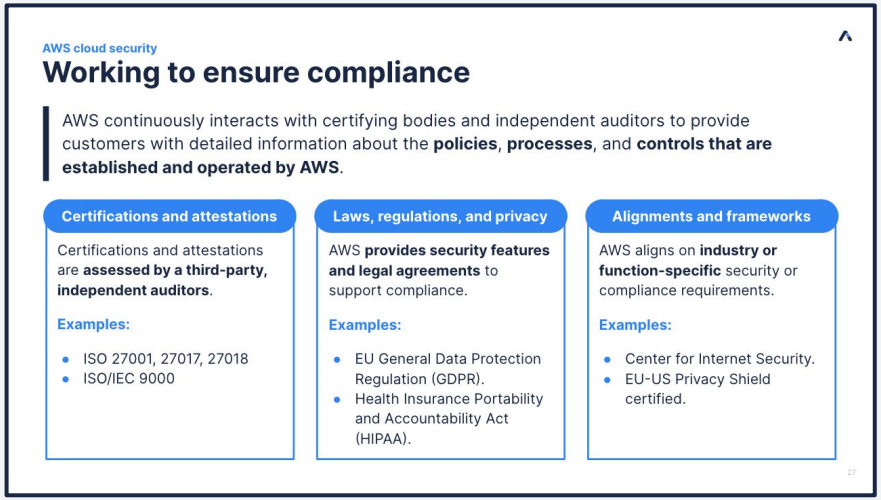
Text and typography

Alignment: Ensure that text and graphics are aligned properly. Left alignment is often preferred for text, as it makes content easier to read.





Although **left alignment is most preferred** for text, centre and right alignment can be used effectively in very specific situations.

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Text and typography

Typography: Choose legible fonts for your text. Sans-serif fonts like Arial or Helvetica are often easier to read on screens. Maintain a reasonable font size, typically around 24pt or higher for presentations, to ensure readability.

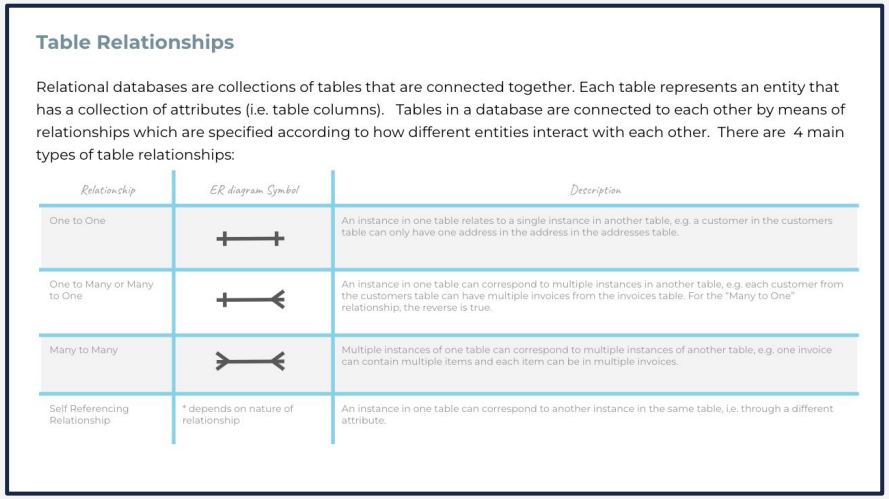
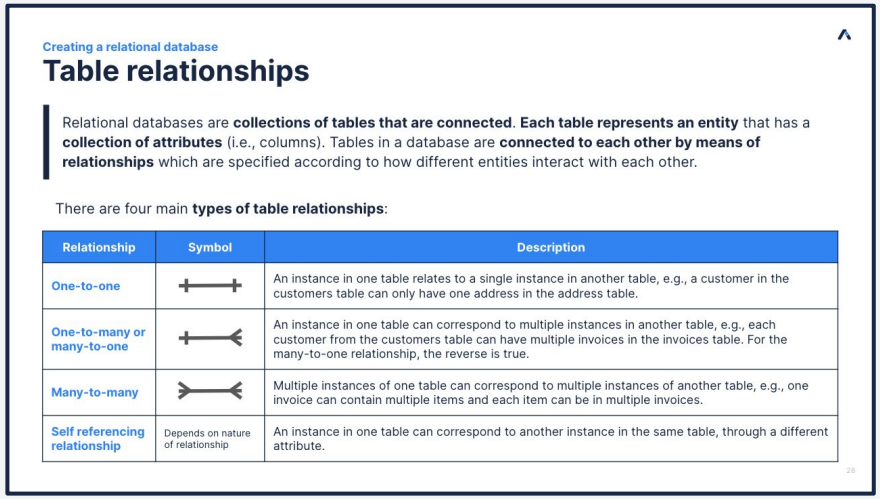


Table Relationships

Relational databases are collections of tables that are connected together. Each table represents an entity that has a collection of attributes (i.e. table columns). Tables in a database are connected to each other by means of relationships which are specified according to how different entities interact with each other. There are 4 main types of table relationships:

Relationship	ER diagram Symbol	Description
One to One		An instance in one table relates to a single instance in another table, e.g. a customer in the customers table can only have one address in the address in the addresses table.
One to Many or Many to One		An instance in one table can correspond to multiple instances in another table, e.g. each customer from the customers table can have multiple invoices from the invoices table. For the "Many to One" relationship, the reverse is true.
Many to Many		Multiple instances of one table can correspond to multiple instances of another table, e.g. one invoice can contain multiple items and each item can be in multiple invoices.
Self Referencing Relationship	* depends on nature of relationship	An instance in one table can correspond to another instance in the same table, i.e. through a different attribute.



Creating a relational database

Table relationships

Relational databases are **collections of tables that are connected**. **Each table represents an entity** that has a **collection of attributes** (i.e., columns). Tables in a database are **connected to each other by means of relationships** which are specified according to how different entities interact with each other.

There are four main **types of table relationships**:

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One-to-one		An instance in one table relates to a single instance in another table, e.g., a customer in the customers table can only have one address in the address table.
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Many-to-many		Multiple instances of one table can correspond to multiple instances of another table, e.g., one invoice can contain multiple items and each item can be in multiple invoices.
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Our choice of **font colour can also contribute to readability**.

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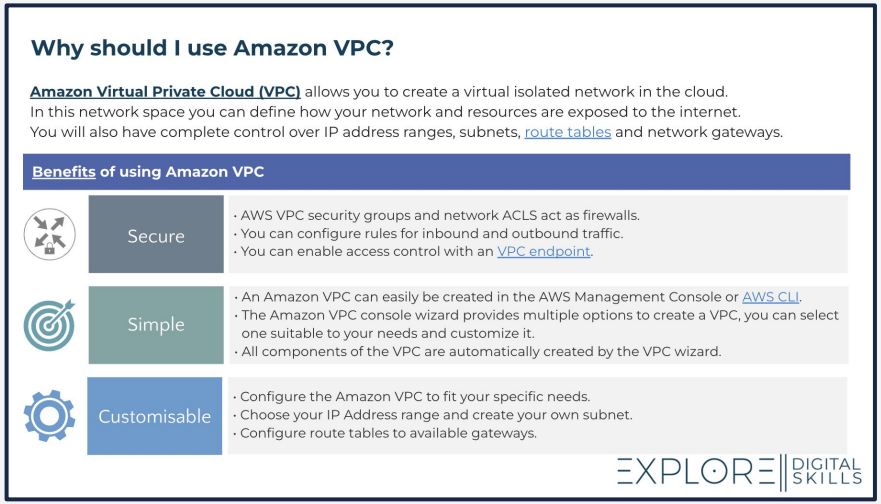
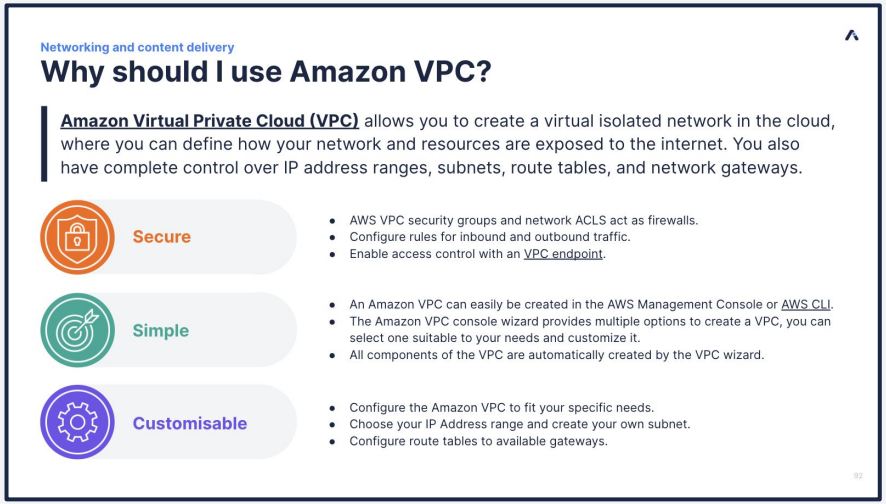
Colour, contrast, and harmony

Colour scheme: Select a colour scheme that is visually appealing and conveys the message effectively. We need to be mindful of colour accessibility, ensuring that our colour choices are suitable for all audiences.





Colours that are **too similar can make it difficult to differentiate** between key concepts and messages.

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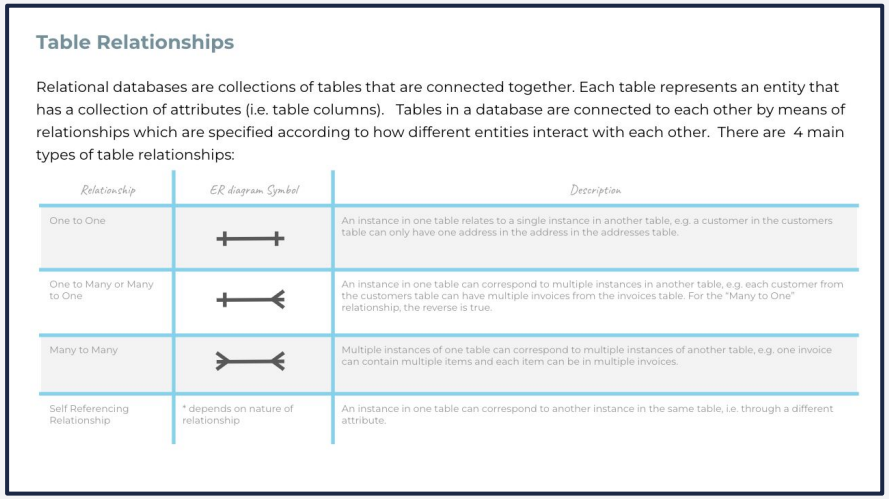
Colour, contrast, and harmony

Using contrast: Use contrasting colours for text and backgrounds to enhance interpretability and readability.



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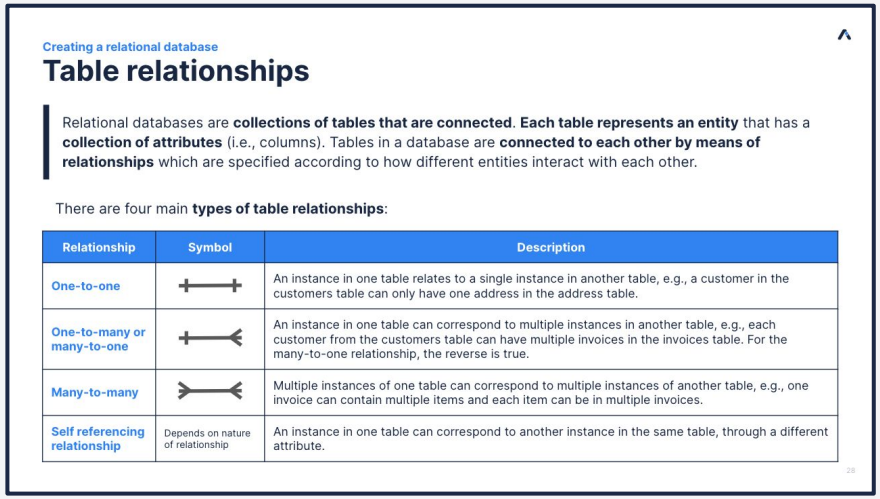

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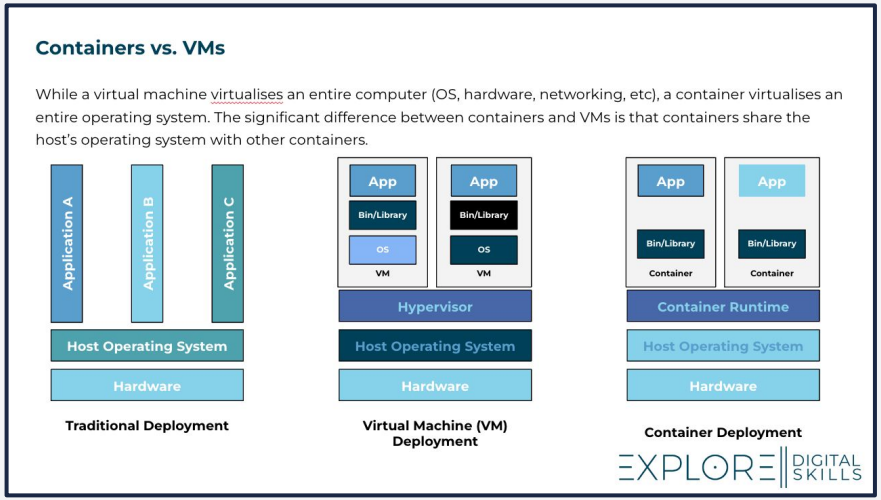
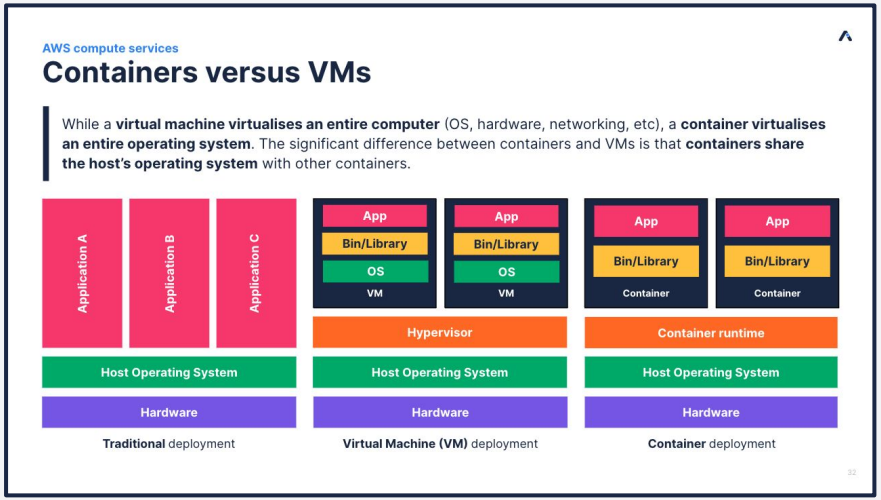
The use of contrasting colours is extremely important in **ensuring accessibility**.

Design for impactful communication

Colour, contrast, and harmony

Intentional colour use: Use colour to evoke emotion, create connection, and tell stories.



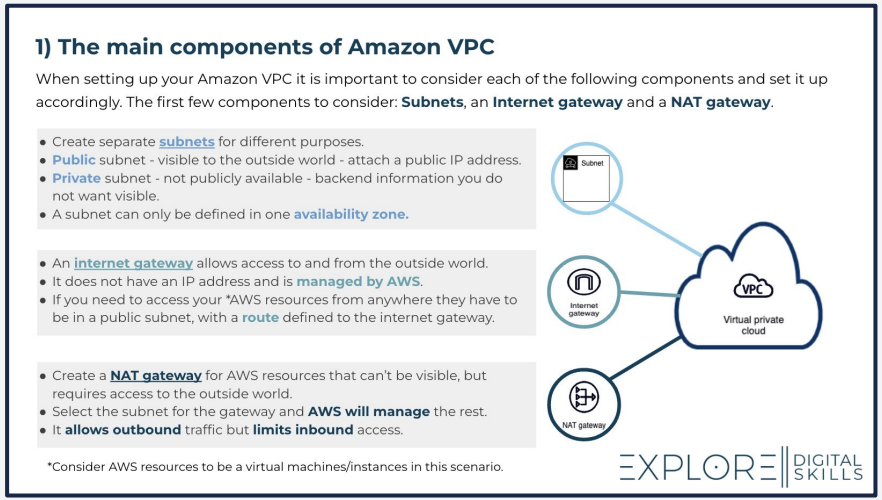


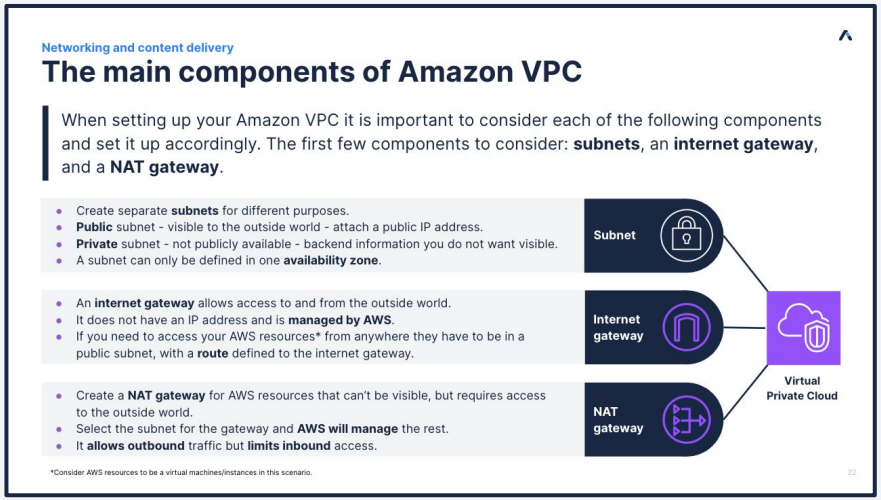
Colour stories can be achieved by **using the same colour for text and graphics that represent the same concept**. It is often even more effective maintaining this consistency throughout an entire presentation.

Design for impactful communication

Images and graphics

Quality and size: Use high-quality images and ensure that they are appropriately sized (with the correct aspect ratio) and do not pixelate when projected.





We can **maintain the correct aspect ratio** of images and graphics by **holding the SHIFT key** when we resize them.

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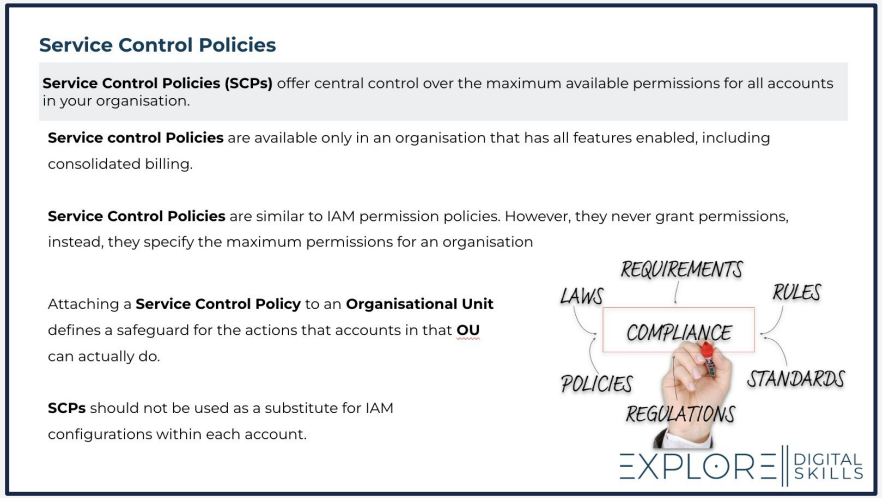
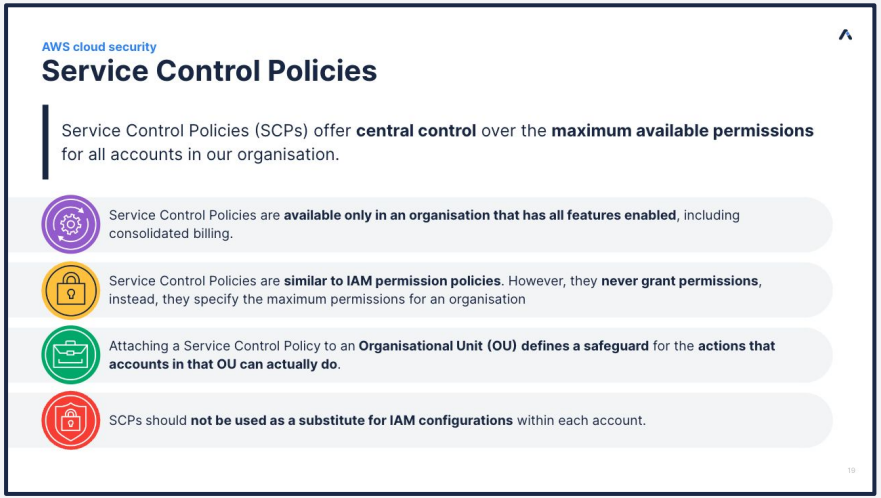
Images and graphics

Purpose: Images should enhance our message, not distract from it. These images or graphics should also be relevant to the message we are trying to convey.





Rather than using images to fill gaps on our slide decks, we can **increase the size of our font**, **add more whitespace**, **add a subtle background shape**, **and/or decrease the proximity** between text paragraphs.

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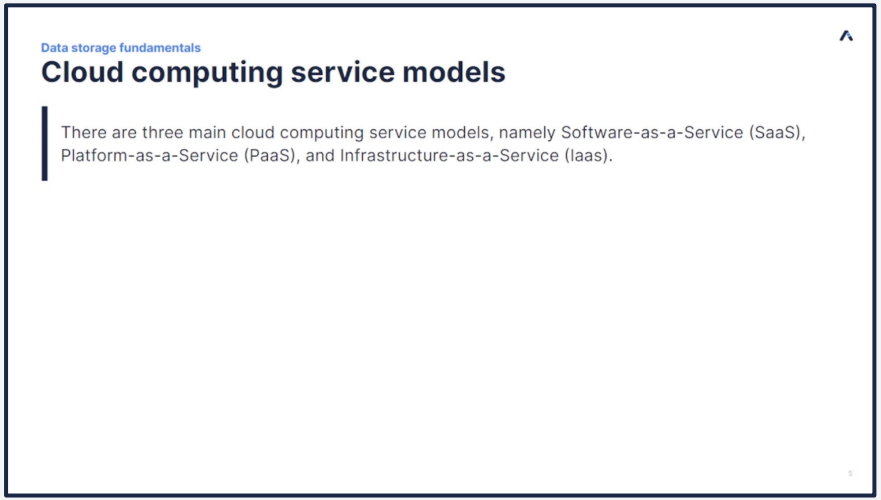
Transitions and animations

Transitions and animations: Use slide transitions and animations sparingly and purposefully. They can enhance engagement but should not distract from your message.



We naturally read from **top to bottom, left to right**, so it is important to time each animation after one another in a flow that does not break the way we consume the information.

Summary

In this train, we looked at the key principles of creating an effective presentation and how to implement them.