



Visual Aids

LEARNING STYLES

We all have different ways of learning and absorbing information. Some of us learn best by *listening*—we close our eyes and concentrate hard on the presenter, in order to absorb the facts.

Others learn best by *seeing*—when presented with auditory information only we lose concentration and find it hard to take in. We may learn best by seeing lists of facts, or maybe through the use of an image that encapsulates the information.

Some learn best through *touching, tasting and smelling*—describe to us an orange and we don't understand. Show us a picture of an orange and we start to develop our understanding. But give us an orange to touch, feel, smell, taste—*now* we understand what you mean.

Generally most of us learn by a combination of all our senses—sound, sight, touch, smell and taste too.

In your presentation, aim to use tools that will engage *all* your audience.

THE SENSES IN COMMUNICATION

Sight.....73%
Sound.....13%
Touch6%
Taste3%
Smell.....3%



AIM & AUDIENCE

Before planning your presentation, well before you decide on your visual aids, you need to understand your aim and audience. These, together with an understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses as a presenter, will help you decide on the tools and aids to use.

BREAK IT UP!

In a formal presentation, you may struggle to keep an audience's attention using speech alone for more than about 10-15 minutes, unless you are a truly inspirational speaker. Break a longer presentation up into sections, using one type of visual aid for each section, and perhaps using two or three types during the course of the entire presentation.

CHART IT

During less formal briefings, flipcharts and overheads may be the most appropriate tools.

Team briefings often involve performance figures and statistics, which presentation graphics packages are well equipped to show as charts, possibly working in conjunction with your spreadsheet package.

PRACTICAL TRAINING

For training purposes, flipcharts are best for brainstorming and question & answer sessions, but they may be backed up with a few well-designed slides.

Don't turn your training course into a "death by bullet point" session—most people learn best by *doing*. Keep your talks to a minimum, perhaps spending 10 minutes explaining a new point, using a flipchart or a slide before moving into a practical exercise.

CHOOSING AND USING VISUAL AIDS

There are many types of visual aids that can be used to support a presentation or training session. Each has its strengths and weaknesses, and the choice of media depends largely on the aim and audience for the presentation.

35MM SLIDES

If you can justify the expense, and the venue has the appropriate equipment, 35mm slides can give the best result, particularly for large audiences. They can however be inflexible if you want to take slides out of sequence. In addition, most slide projectors are designed to work in low light levels.

PC-BASED SLIDES

PC-based presentations, with slides created using a specialist presentation graphics package, probably provide the most flexible solution for presentations. With a powerful multimedia projector, results can be seen by large audiences, even in normal light.

Remember that any special effects should support and enhance the message, rather than distracting the audience!

OHP ACETATES

Printed overhead projector (OHP) acetates are easy to carry around, and can be used when there only a basic overhead projector available. They can be used out of sequence, but they require skill to manage them well.

They are best prepared using presentation graphics packages rather than word processors. Use frames for your acetates, to protect them and to make them easier to handle.

VIDEO

Video is good for short sequences, but is remote and uninvolved when used for long periods. If you do choose to use video, make sure it is relevant

SOUND

Don't overuse sound in a presentation. It soon annoys the audience, and effects that seemed great while you were creating your presentation can become an embarrassment during delivery.

Carefully chosen music, played at key points or during intervals, can work effectively to set the mood and tempo.

FLIPCHART / WHITEBOARD

The flipchart is interactive and can encourage participation but requires reasonable writing / drawing skills by the presenter. The act of writing or drawing can help the audience remember better what has been said. Visibility may be a problem with a large audience, so flipcharts and whiteboards may be best used for training sessions and briefings.

HANDOUTS

Passing around handouts during a presentation will generally capture the audience's attention and help them remember that part of the presentation. Use handouts to create a diversion, start discussions and give a temporary break in the presentation.

BE PREPARED!

If you rely on any technology for your presentation, always be prepared for technical failures. For example, if you plan to present from a PC, print your slides to acetates as a backup

PREPARING YOUR VISUAL AIDS

- Remember the KISS principle (Keep it Short & Simple)
- Talk to the group, not to the screen / flipchart / whiteboard
- Keep text large and readable. No more than 2 fonts (one serif, one sans serif) across the whole presentation. Use bold and italic sparingly. Avoid “shouting” at the audience with UPPERCASE text
- Don't use too much technology just for effect. For each presentation, try to stick to no more than two or three types of visual aid
- Use aids appropriate to the size of the audience. Some work best with small groups; others can be very effective in large auditoria

TIME TO SPARE!

- Create your main presentation to allow some spare time for questions, but have additional materials available to pad out your presentation or to answer to anticipated questions
- Remember that projection results in an enlargement and therefore a dilution of line and colour
- Check your equipment before you start, and have backups available if possible
- Ask someone else to proof read all visual aids for you, even if you spell check your slides on a PC

NO OVERCROWDING!

- Don't overcrowd slides. It's better to have two easy-to-view slides, than one slide which is too crowded to read quickly, or difficult to understand
- Keep bullets concise, e.g. no more than 6 words per bullet and no more than 6 bullets per slide
- Give time for the group to read the information – and don't just read out to them what they can see themselves!
- A picture can certainly say a thousand words when it comes to visual aids. Use charts, drawings, clipart etc. to put your message across visually. You can provide the words to complement the visual message in your presentation
- Limit the number of aids you are going to use – for each one, ask yourself “What does it add to my message?”

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USING PREPARED FLIPCHARTS

- Use large print and bold images
- Use a variety of colours
- Build up complicated information over several pages
- Be creative, but keep it simple and understandable
- Ask someone else to check it for spelling mistakes
- If you have a point to make for which there is no relevant visual material, have a blank page to cover previous information

USING COLOUR IN YOUR PRESENTATION

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Take into account the conditions where the presentation will be delivered. A very dark lecture hall can make strongly coloured / contrasting presentation appear garish. Brighter conditions can turn a pleasantly coloured design into a wash out.

RED

This is the warmest colour in the spectrum, and the eye is immediately drawn to it. Use it to provide focus, but remember that it also has negative connotations, so only use it for statistics that are negative!

Red increases the human pulse rate and stimulates an audience. Use it as a background or dominant colour for adding impact where you want to excite. Overuse can leave your audience restless.

Only use high intensity (Pillar Box) red when maximum impact is necessary, otherwise tone it down.

BLACK

The absence of light projects objects so that they appear to be closer to the audience, helping to add life and dimension to the presentation.

Don't use black as a dominant colour in the presentation as it is a colour devoid of all emotion. Use it instead as a backdrop where additional concentration on separate images is required, or where additional life is to be given to those images.

BROWN

Brown is dull and earthy; it lacks energy and vitality, but can be a useful neutral colour for statistics.

GREEN

Green is useful when the presenter wishes to stimulate thought, but not excite, as it provides the perfect backdrop for discussion of issues. It's neutral enough not to lead, but strong enough to stimulate. Darker colours, e.g. Jade and those verging on a dark turquoise, are most suitable.

WHITE

White is clinical in the extreme. Use white behind detailed diagrams or clinical data that you want to disseminate. The occasional white slide will never be out of place, whatever your colour scheme, provided it has been chosen as best to portray that slide's content.

Avoid white as the main presentation background. It is the most powerful light reflective colour and will soon tire your audience if overused.

BLUE

Blue is the colour of the Corporates, serene, calm, exuding power. Blue is calming, reducing blood pressure. It increases sensitivity and creates an expectancy of peace and trust.

Creating every slide in blue lacks imagination. Remember the expectant nature of blue—if you don't facilitate this, all you'll generate is boredom!

PURPLE

Purple results from the merging of two opposites—Red (hot) and Blue (cold). It is the colour of fantasy and is useful for entertaining or amusing the audience. As a corporate colour purple projects a somewhat childlike image.