

Visually Speaking

*Tips for effective
presentation visuals*

Louisiana Transportation Research Center
4101 Gourrier Avenue
Baton Rouge, LA 70808-4443
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Introduction

Good information design has been described as “clear thinking made visible,” and today’s technology offers a wealth of communication products from which to choose - computer-generated slide presentations, video tapes, traditional slide shows, audio-slide shows, flip charts and overhead transparencies. However, whether the presentation targets a live audience or a “cyber” one, careful planning and organization are essential for the success of the presentation and the successful delivery of information.

Why include visuals?

Presenters often think of visuals as backdrops to reinforce their speaking points. Many do not realize that presentation visuals have a power all their own, and they are for the audience, not the speaker. Visuals, in fact, can make or break a presentation.



Because people tend to be “eye-minded,” clear pictures or illustrations increase the audience’s level of understanding and the amount of material they will retain.

Studies have shown that when the information is presented by **visual as well as oral means**, audience members, three days later, are six times more likely to retain the information than when the information is presented simply by the spoken word alone. Those presenters using visual aids are 43 percent more effective in persuading audience members to take a desired course of action than presenters who don't use visuals.

The more senses involved in receiving information; the more information is retained.

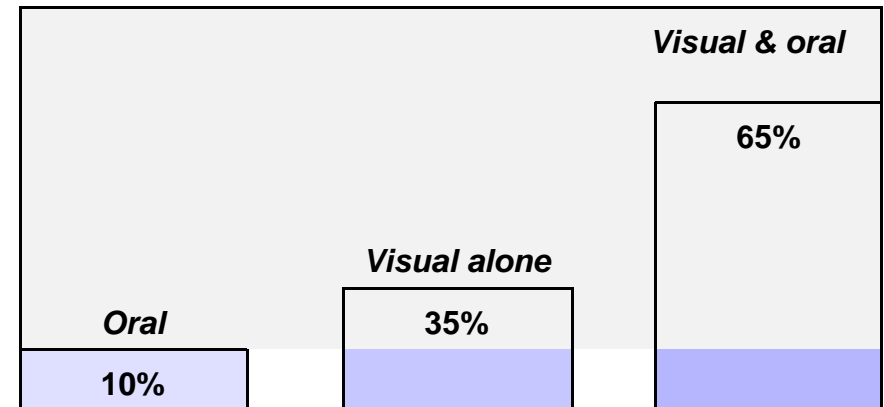
Other studies suggest that:

- **83%** of human learning occurs **visually**
- the remaining **17%**, through other senses
 - * **11%** through **hearing**
 - * **3.5%** through **smell**
 - * **1.5%** through **touch**
 - * **1%** through **taste**.

An important rule to remember is that **an effective presentation is driven by content, not design**. If the first thing that people notice about your presentation is the whiz-bang design, you haven't given your content enough weight.

Good information design can never salvage poor content. To be considered "good" content, it must have 1) quality (you can't overcome bad data), 2) relevance (the need for presenting the data), and 3) integrity.

Retention of Information



This booklet will give you basic, comprehensive information and assist you in developing effective presentations.

*Don't tell me;
show me*

Organize your message

There are no secrets to developing an effective presentation, simply a recipe calling for three essential ingredients in this particular order:

- Establishing your **objectives**
- Planning, organizing, and creating your **material** and **visual aids**
- **Delivering** your message.

By **establishing your objectives** first, you can prepare supporting material for each objective. Ask yourself, “What does my presentation need to accomplish?” Most answers will fit into one of three categories:

- **Awareness** – introducing a topic or educating an audience
- **Attitude** – promoting a change or reinforcing your subject
- **Action** – persuading an audience to act.

Now, with an objective in mind, you can better decide what segments of information to include. First, prepare a brief overview: What’s the problem? Who cares about it? What solution is being presented?

By working backward from the big picture to the small details,

you'll spend your time more efficiently and produce a more powerful presentation.

Secondly, **analyze the audience:**

- Who is in your audience?
- What information are they hoping to get from your presentation?
- Why are you presenting?
- When or where is your presentation?

What's in it for me?

Once you've determined the main points of your presentation, mentally “test out” each major point by putting yourself in an audience member's shoes. After reading each point, ask:

- "So what?"
- "Why are you telling me this?"
- "What am I supposed to do with this information?"

These are honest, unspoken reactions of many audience members. If you find it difficult to give a straightforward, concise answer, perhaps that bit of information isn't necessary.

In developing your presentation, keep in mind these unofficial “rules” to hold the audience’s attention:

Every two to four minutes, change your pattern, either a nonverbal change in tone or volume, a movement, a new slide. This “interruption” in your pattern will bring attention back to you.

- **The attention span of an average audience member is eight minutes.** So, every 8-11 minutes, shift activities. Change your room position from one side to another; walk around. Give the audience something to write down or give them an opportunity to ask a question. Any change, again, will return their attention to you.
- **Every 15 minutes, introduce a content change.** Provide an exercise or summarize every 15 minutes.
- Afternoon audiences require additional breaks because they have a reduced attention span.
- **Show intensity through your voice and facial expressions.** Raise or lower your voice, even whisper. Change your rate of speech; emphasize key phrases.
- Audiences focus on a speaker’s eyes and face; therefore, **use appropriate eye contact and facial expressions.** Move your eyes from one individual to another; don’t look over their heads.
- Be attentive to all sides of the room and walk around to bring people back into the conversation. Move toward your audience to encourage participation. **Keep moving**, but be aware that too much movement can turn them off.

Creation of visuals

Visuals should always, with rare exception, be as simple as possible. Whether you're using the latest in presentation technology with a multimedia projector and your laptop or relying on the old "tried and true," remember that visuals are worthless if they can't be read. You **must** target that guy way in the back on the last row. Take into consideration that 30 to 40 percent of the audience are not only hard of hearing, but also do not have the eyesight of 20 and 30 year olds.



Visual presentation guidelines

With today's software programs such as **Corel Presentations**® and **MS PowerPoint**®, it's easy to create good looking presentations that can be easily revised at a moment's notice. Unfortunately, it is very easy to create slides much too dense with text and/or graphics.

The **title** of the slide helps keep audience members on track and **bullet lists** reinforce key points and sub-topics. Visual aids increase audience retention dramatically; however, be careful to avoid allowing the visual presentation to overshadow or distract them from what you are saying.

Based on reading research that attempted to answer the question, “How much information can a person absorb visually at one time?” the conclusion was no more than **six lines of six words each**.



Use the Rule of Six

Thou Shalt not Use More Than Six Lines,
and Thou Shalt not Use More Than Six Words
Per Line

- # **Keep the slide information minimal**, and include **only three or fewer main ideas per slide**.
- # **Don't crowd your slides with too many bullet points**. Just because it's readable on paper doesn't mean it's readable on a slide.
- # Write only **MAIN ideas** on the slide; **SPEAK** the details.
- # **Don't use a white background for slides**. It takes the eyes of your audience about 30 seconds to adjust to a white background, especially if the room is dark. By then you may

be on to the next slide. Go with at least a 10 percent gray or blue background screen and reverse the type so that it becomes a lighter text. With color transparencies, however, a white background *can* work.

- # **Remember, text reads from left to right**. Show no more on one slide than can be assimilated in 30 seconds. Captions and details need not be shown; eliminate extraneous information.
- # Choose chart and graph types that make the data clear and easy to read. Keep them simple. Drawings, tables, etc., that are intended for publication are not always appropriate for slides. Printed illustrations usually have too much detail and lettering that is too small to produce good slides. If the graphic is too complex, the audience will spend more time trying to figure out the graph than listening to your explanation. **Use no more than 10-15 words in a table**.
- # **Be sure that the copy fills the visual area** so that the image will properly fill the screen. Choose the right output format when creating the visual. For 35mm slides, you need to change the “format” from 8 ½ x 11 to 35mm. (If you leave it in the paper format, when it is output as a slide, you're left with an ugly black band on the edges of the slide).
- # Use good business writing style and **check your spelling!** Many programs have a spell-check feature but they are not always infallible (i.e., the program would not catch using “form” instead of “from.”) Mistakes are understandable in anyone's book; however, in a presentation, **it cuts down on your credibility**.

- # Choose specific words to communicate with a few strong words.
- # Choose an organizational pattern that best fits your material.
- # **Don't mix horizontal and vertical slides.** Horizontal generally works better with audiences.
- # Use **no more than one or two slides per minute**, but be careful not to go over your allotted time.

Also take into account your production time when planning and selecting the process to be used. Slides must be developed; videotape must be edited. While you can often get production work done in 24-48 hours, it is much more expensive than work that is done on an extended schedule.

Graphs and charts can support numerical information. Sketches and drawings can convey various designs and plans. However, make sure they are not too crowded with detail. Make sure that line detail, letters, and symbols are bold enough to be seen from the back of the room, but be careful not to overuse colors.

Do not use visual aids for persuasive statements, qualifying remarks, emotional appeals, or any type of rhetorical statement.

If you have handouts to provide reinforcement following your address, keep them from becoming a distraction during your

presentation. Consider giving them out after the session, unless the audience needs to use them during the presentation or will need to review them in advance.

Practice presenting the full program using your graphic materials so that you are familiar with their use and order. If you use audio-visual materials, practice working with them and using the equipment to get the timing down right.

Seek feedback on the clarity of your visuals and do so early enough to allow yourself time to make needed adjustments.

Continuity

All slides, transparencies, posters, or web pages in one presentation must have the same graphic elements (e.g., font, color scheme, and background art).

Changing design or style during a presentation will jar the viewers.

Text

Make the type large enough to be seen from the back row. Make type 26, 36, or even 48 point type. Readability is the key. Standard typewriter type and computer type are much too small for a slide.

**Distance vs. Letter Size
& Line Thickness**

Distance	Letter Size	Line Thickness
10 ft.	1/2 in.	3/32 in.
20 ft.	3/4 in.	1/8 in.
50 ft.	2 in.	5/16 in.
100 ft.	3 1/2 in.	11/16 in.
300 ft.	11 in.	2 in.

Use a simple, easy to read font. Helvetica, Univers, and Arial are recommended. Software programs provide many fonts, but very few of them are readable on a visual aid. Don't use them just because they are available! Too many font changes confuse the audience and leave them wondering if the new font has significance as far as meaning.

Avoid using fonts with serifs (the little lines at the end of the letters) on visual aids.

Text style

- # Use italic type for titles of complete works only.
- # **Never underline text.** On Web pages, text hyperlinks are automatically underlined, so underlining any other text causes confusion.
- # **Avoid using all CAPS as they make text harder to read.** You are not screaming at your audience.
- # Use boldface type or a different color type or to indicate emphasis.

Amount of text on one visual aid

- # Fewer than **25 words per visual aid**
- # The rule of thumb is **4 to 6 lines of text** per visual aid with no more than **4 to 6 words per line.** (Remember the Rule of Six?)
- # Avoid putting so much information on your visual aid that your audience is busy reading your poster or transparency instead of listening to you speak.
- # **Maintain wide margins.** Text or graphics very close to the bottom of the visual aid may not be visible from the back of the room.

Proofreading and editing

- # Make bulleted text parallel in structure (e.g., all bullets start with verbs or all bullets are subject-verb).
- # Be consistent with verb tenses (e.g., all in present or all in past).
- # Use consistent punctuation.
- # Double-check data.

Straight-shooting bullets

Bulleted phases or sentences

The bullet, like its metal counterpart, is a powerful device. It shoots through muddled text, creating a crisp page that is easier to read. Used effectively, bullets will get your documents read more often and more easily.

For example, examine the following examples to see the difference bullets can make in a handout:

Why You Should Exercise

Daily vigorous exercise promotes many things: improved agility, reducing injuries Such as pulled muscles; greater strength, which can help you when you have to carry grocery bags; better digestion and fewer upset stomachs; alleviation of stress; a higher energy level; and faster metabolic rate, reducing weight fluctuations during holiday binges



1) Here is a dense block of text in an unformatted form.

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Why You Should Exercise

Daily vigorous exercise promotes many things:

- ! Improved agility, reducing injuries such as pulled muscles
- ! Greater strength, which can help you when you have to carry grocery bags
- ! Better digestion and have fewer upset stomach
- ! Alleviation of stress
- ! A higher energy level
- ! Faster metabolic rate, reducing weight fluctuations during holiday binges

2) Compare that with this example in which the bullets “hang” outside the text. The piece now has a much stronger feeling of organization and appeal due to more white space around each unit.

Notice all the white space.
Which would you rather read?

Tips for bullets

- # Bullets work best with information that falls easily into a list or series, such as steps, tips, benefits, and to-do's.
- # Be consistent. Keep bulleted units **either all phrases or all sentences**.
- # Use no more than three lines for a bulleted unit on a slide. Beyond that, it becomes text again.
- # Place bulleted items in order of importance or in another type of logical order.



Tidbits About Typeface

Typeface, believe it or not, involves two basic issues: **emotion and legibility**.

Emotion is the non-verbal attitude or emotional response that typeface designs project. Some project a contemporary image, others an antique look. Some formal, others informal. Some convey jazzy energy or aggressiveness, while some are relaxed. Your choice of typeface is correct when it projects an image appropriate to your audience and your message.

Legibility is the ease in which the audience, particularly those in the back of the room, can read your visuals. Some typefaces are more easily read than others. A good rule of thumb, however, is to always design for the worst-case scenario, just in case the room is too bright or the screen too small.

- # A “**gray page**” is one that is entirely filled with text. Nothing turns a reader off faster than a solid block of text. The response? “I don’t have time for this!” That page is **less likely to be read** than one that has plenty of white space.
- # Jumping from typeface to typeface and design to design

makes the finished product hard to read. Use no more than two typefaces on a page. You may use variations of those typefaces such as italics, bold, etc.

Headlines

- # Set in larger and/or bolder type for emphasis.
- # Set apart by at least three spaces above and two spaces below.

Subheads

- # Smaller and/or less bold. Do not need to be separated from the words that follow them.

Parallelism

- # Keep items in lists parallel (make the items match each other grammatically).

*Avoid Monday mornings
and Friday afternoons*

Color

In today's world of ever-evolving technology and MTV mentality, color is an absolute must. In fact, color is one of the biggest reasons presentation visuals have such enormous power. Everyone responds to color. The information that an audience comprehends and retains is dramatically improved when black-and-white visuals are replaced with color.

Although color helps the audience sort out the information, its power goes beyond mere clarification. When used correctly, it can help evoke the desired response from the audience.

Overall, adding color to documents:

- # Accelerates learning 55-78%
- # Increases comprehension up to 73%
- # Improves recognition up to 78%
- # Increases motivation up to 80%
- # Reduces error count up to 55%
- # Sells better up to 88%

Limitations of the human eye

Beyond contrast, there are psychological factors that influence the legibility of visuals. Because of the way the eye works, colors sometimes take on lives of their own.

- # Colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel, for example, particularly red and green, appear to vibrate or move if they are placed side by side, especially when they are highly saturated with color. Avoid these color combinations as they are difficult to look at.
- # Also be aware of the red/green color deficiency which is most common in men. Between 15 and 25 percent of men have some form of this deficiency. It makes it difficult for them to distinguish red from green, brown from green, blue from black, and purple from blue. In presentation graphics with a pie chart, if you place a red slice next to a green one, for instance, some of your audience may have trouble distinguishing the two.
- # **Handle red with care.** It's one of the most influential colors, but it also carries negative cultural attachments, so use it carefully.
- # Arrange colors from dark to light because we perceive dark colors as being "heavier" than light ones. Arranging graphic elements from darkest to lightest makes it easier to read.

Good information design can never salvage poor content

Graphics and color

- # Contrast is vital. Use dark text on a light background or vice versa.
- # Add appropriate background texture or design.
- # Choose colors that coordinate/compliment each other.
- # Do not use more than 2 graphics on one visual aid.
- # Make sure graphics and colors are appropriate to the topic.
- # If using animation make sure it is appropriate. Too much animation is distracting.

Background colors: Your subliminal voice

- # Large areas of color, such as the slide background, have the power to influence the viewer's emotional state of mind.
- # Our response to certain colors is based partly on the complexities of our culture. For instance, many feel that pink is not a presentation-worthy color, even though there are many strong shades of pink – dusty rose to vibrant magenta. Yet, to use these shades of pink in a presentation, you will need to combine them with colors that emphasize their vibrant, warm qualities and play down their "frilly" associations.
- # Don't forget basic black. Black is a background color that has useful psychological undertones. It connotes finality and also works well as a transitional color. Green is another background color with positive associations.

Color Combinations for Good Visibility

- # Black on yellow
- # Black on orange
- # Black on white
- # Bottle green on yellow
- # Bottle green on white
- # Emerald green on white
- # Emerald green on yellow
- # Navy blue on orange
- # Navy blue on white
- # Navy blue on yellow
- # Orange on purple
- # Orange on yellow
- # Purple on orange
- # Purple on white
- # Purple on yellow
- Scarlet red on orange
- Scarlet red on white
- Scarlet red on yellow
- White on black
- White on bottle green
- White on emerald green
- White on navy blue
- White on purple
- White on scarlet red
- Yellow on black
- Yellow on navy blue
- Yellow on purple
- Yellow orange on navy blue
- Yellow orange on black

If you apply the following color guidelines, you can't go wrong:

- # **Legibility should never be sacrificed** for the sake of a more pleasing color combination.
- # Colors for graphics need to contrast sufficiently with the background.
- # Use **darker colors for the background**; light backgrounds can cause an uncomfortable glare and make the audience restless.

Similarly, be careful about using highly saturated primary colors as backgrounds.

For presentation slides, **yellow text on a black background** provides the **ultimate contrast**; use this as a benchmark.

Color Psychology

Color can add to visual effect in three ways:

- To attract **attention** (for instance, red would signify danger)
- To **emphasize or contrast** (highlighting one trend versus another)
- To **create moods** (blue, as for a cruise line)

Colors also carry with them certain associations:

Green Signifies growth and movement.

Blue Most universally liked color; can convey calm. Can also look institutional. Also fades faster than any other color.

Red Stands for power, energy, danger. Means debit spending to accountants - on a flip chart, difficult to see from a distance.



Yellow Thought of as positive; works well for highlighting something against a dark background. As background color, remember that more people dislike yellow than any other color.

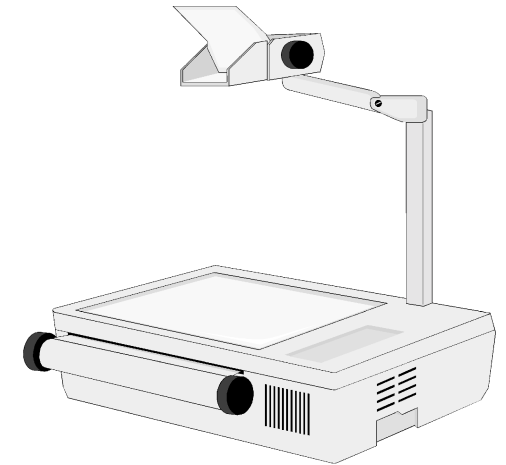
Evaluate your visual:

- # Is it necessary?
- # Does it stress or explain a point?
- # Does it emphasize what you wish to emphasize?
- # Is it easily designed?
- # Is it neat and simple?
- # Is it colorful?
- # Is it easy to use?
- # Is it on appropriate material that will not buckle or bend?
- # Is it large enough to be seen from the back of the room?

*Know your stuff,
know whom you are stuffing,
and know when they are
stuffed.*

Producing transparencies

The old technology of overhead projectors seems to be holding its own in the new age of multimedia. In fact, in the right setting, overheads can be the ideal presentation medium. Transparencies are easy, fast, cheap, and flexible, giving you the control you can't possibly achieve any other way.



- # **Follow the same rules, in general, as for slides;** that is, prepare separate copy, limit the information, provide contrast, and limit the number to the fill the time allowed.

- # List several points on a single transparency, then cover all but the first with a piece of cardboard, sliding the board down to reveal the others as you speak.
- # In general, **letters should be at least 30 points (about 1/4 inch)**. But test a transparency in a room that is the same size as the one you'll be using. Make sure the words can be seen clearly from the back row.
- # **Color is expected.** You *can* print black-and-white transparencies from your existing laser printer or even the copy machine. (Be sure to use a transparency that is specified for your copier.) However, in a world where dazzle has become the expected, black-and-whites are less than desirable. Ideally, output your transparencies on a color printer or use color transparency film. OR, you may take your files to a service bureau for color output.
- # **Consider your printer's resolution** when printing transparencies yourself - the higher the resolution, the better. If the printer's resolution is too low, you may get jagged edges on enlarged graphics and text or exaggerated flaws in color density. In that case, to minimize potential problems, keep areas of color small.
- # **Never, EVER, simply copy a typewritten page from a book or manuscript.** The ease and low cost of producing

overheads can lead to such undesirable shortcuts. ***This shortcut is totally unacceptable.***

With overhead presentations, **simple is best**. Overheads may be older and more basic than slides, video, and computer-generated presentations, but that is not always a bad place to be.

- # Use a pointer, straw, or chopstick, ***not a finger***, to point. Rest the tip on the transparency to minimize movement.
- # **Preprinted color transparencies are available from specialty paper catalogs.** You may use your laser printer to add text to the existing design.
- # Store transparencies in sleeves. Dust and scratches projected on a 10-foot screen look monstrous.
- # **Use either slides or overheads.** Using both in the same presentation seriously disrupts audience attention as they must move from one projector to the other.



Flip charts, white / backboards, & posters

Letters should be **one (1) inch tall for each 15 feet** between the visual and the back row.



6 Basic Design Principles

Whenever you design *anything*, whether a slide, a transparency, or a publication such as a brochure or a handout, there are six basic principles to remember.

1. Decide on the format before you start. Keep in mind that the computer screen and video aspect ratio is 4:3, horizontal - slightly taller and narrower in proportion than the 3:2 slide format, but not as square as the overhead.
2. Keep it organized and simple. Develop a cohesive look for your overall presentation.
3. Avoid using punctuation if possible.
4. Divide space in an interesting way, and leave **lots** of white space.
5. Make something dominant. Your audience will focus on large, simple geometric shapes first, text last. A simple graphic can pack more punch than a wordy explanation.
6. Create a path for the eye and keep the eye moving.

Presentation Tips

What you do before people enter the room is important. If a speaker doesn't take the time to perform a thorough setup and run-through, technical glitches may delay the presentation and make it impossible to relax and play the role of congenial host. Although it's not always easy to work in the extra time needed to check over your presentation room before your talk, it's essential if you want your preparation to be truly successful.

The most efficient way to make sure everything is working as it should is to make a checklist.

First of all, take the time to **consider the room** in which you'll be presenting and who will provide the AV equipment.

- # Will you be connecting to a projector from your laptop, or will you need to load your presentation onto someone else's computer?
- # If it's the latter, are you prepared to move any linked files affected by such a move? This is especially crucial with PowerPoint where video files and many audio files are linked and therefore not part of the actual presentation file. If you expect to use them, be sure to move linked presentations and other documents.

*Successful presentations
and preparation go hand
in hand*

- # Does the person setting up the equipment know your preferences? Remember that you *are* the show with your message as the focal point of the event, you should be center stage. Make sure that the screen is put off to the side, with your laptop placed so that you can glance at the screen without being tethered to a podium.

Your next concerns should be **the audio and the visuals**, both of which need to be determined ahead of time, rather than a few minutes before the presentation:

- # What will you be using for sound?
- # Who will set up your lavalier microphone?
- # Is it properly connected to the house speaker system?
- # Who will be switching the audio between the microphone and the laptop's sound output?
- # Does this person have a slide list and a cue list? Have you tested your presentation and video on the projector you will be using? Pay special attention to how any MPEG movie

files will project; they sometime behave differently with certain projectors.

Next, consider your remote control.

Who will provide the remote mouse?

If you will use your own, have you tested it recently?

Are the batteries fresh?

Giving all these pieces of equipment a dry run will give you peace of mind at the podium later.

Plan B

Finally, if all else fails, do you have a disaster plan? Did you bring a backup of your presentation on CD or DVD, just in case? If your laptop computer freezes and you need to reboot, do you have an anecdote to tell to diffuse the situation?

Another minor but important detail is to be sure that all your **screen savers and virus-protection programs are disabled**, just to be safe.

Knowing how to make powerful presentations... will make you invaluable to your company.

Micki Holliday

Delivery

Good, solid content and good organization will only be effective with a strong delivery. You must exude confidence in front of an audience. Practice before

anyone or everyone who will listen in order to polish your presentation and use the visuals skillfully.

Practice makes perfect!

Show up early to make sure everything is ready. If there are any problems with the presentation setting, you can fix them. To second-guess any possible scenarios, come prepared for Murphy's law, "If anything can go wrong, it will."

Remember, most people leave immediately afterward, so first impressions are important. Greeting audience members individually, asking



whether they're comfortable, making sure they can see the screen, and generally acting as the host of the event can do wonders for the reception a speaker eventually receives.

Never, ever, start the presentation by apologizing.

Early in the presentation, give an overview of what the problem is, who cares about it, and what solution is being presented.

- # Do things in a logical order. Remember your key points and work to find the best way to get them across.
- # Set up the visual presentation as quickly as possible.
- # Check posters, charts, and easels before beginning (for proper sequence and to see that each is secure). Do not talk when your back is to the audience. As you finish with the equipment and supplies, move them out of the way. Keep the space in front of you clear and uncluttered so that the view of the audience won't be blocked.

For an effectively presenting your visuals, here are some tips to keep in mind:

- # Use one visual for each idea.
- # Point to, circle, or underline text to stress the highlights of your message.
- # If you are using a laptop computer and a program such as PowerPoint or Corel Presentations, learn how to animate the text so that you can emphasize important points.
- # Explain complex topics by hinging several slides or transparencies, each with a bullet point, to the same frame. Begin with the first page and “build” by adding layers, one by one, as you speak. Again, you may do that by “animating” the bullet points to come in one at a time.

Concentrate on your delivery

Speak clearly and at a pace somewhat slower than normal conversation. Avoid a monotone. Can you be heard throughout the room? Are you facing your audience and the microphone, instead of looking at the visual aids?

Timing is of the utmost importance

Limit yourself to the amount of time allotted to you. Practice your talk beforehand and remember that the real thing usually takes longer than the practice session.

Present the visual several seconds before the narration

Studies show that an audience remembers your information best if they're given the opportunity to digest a new slide for a few seconds before you begin speaking, especially if the visuals are complex.

To the left, please

When presenting with a screen show, **stand to the left of the screen** from the audience's perspective. Because people in our culture read from left to right, standing on the left side allows the audience members' eyes to follow you. Naturally, their eyes will move to the right to view your visual and then return to you, as though they were reading.

Make eye contact one person at a time

Instead of allowing yourself to dwell on the size of the group facing you - a thought that adds to stress and tension - select a few people to talk to. By talking directly to five or six people, you are, in effect, covering the audience. This works most effectively in the beginning of a talk and will allow you to settle down to the task at hand. During the course of speaking, gradually include more people in other locations; this ultimately works well to provide eye-to-eye contact with many audience members.

Be careful to stay within the time limit

Today's accomplished speakers know the power of delivering good material in a short amount of time.

- # **Limit stories to less than two minutes** in length. Continually ask yourself, "How can I say this in fewer words and less time?" Include only information answering *who, what, when, where, and why*. If the information doesn't address one of these questions, leave it out.
- # When possible, follow the time-honored proverb, "**Less is more.**"
- # Avoid:
 - ▶ Clichés
 - ▶ Filler words
 - ▶ Verbal hiccups such as "You know," "OK" and "All right"
 - ▶ Phrases such as "Let me be honest"
 - ▶ Transitions such as "to put it another way" or "in other words."

SHORT is the key here.
Speak in short words, short phrases, short sentences.
Make every word count.

*There will
always be more
material than
you can cover*

Carefully pace your presentation. In a 20-minute speech, for example, spend no longer than **two and a half minutes on the introduction**. That should be adequate time to capture the audience's attention and to lay the groundwork for your message.

Spend the majority of your time in the body of the presentation, making your desired points and giving support or evidence for each point. One sure way to keep a speech brief is to **have no more than three points in the body**, and when organizing that material, simply accept the fact that there will always be more material than you can cover. Therefore, make sure you include only material that relates to the three main points.

Your **summary and call-to-action statement** is done in the **final two minutes**. Now is not the time to dawdle. When in doubt, follow the speaking axiom: "Have a powerful, captivating opening and a strong, memorable close, and put the two of them as close together as possible."

Questions

At the conclusion of your presentation, ask for questions from the audience. To be sure that you and other members of the audience understand what was asked, repeat the question before you answer it.

*Once upon a time...
the end*

When you've done your best, watched the clock, and given it your all. . . close.

To close your presentation with polish, you may adapt your opening visual, and in one or two frames, quickly summarize the time you have spent with the group.

Thank the group for attending

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