



Visual Aids

Visual aids enhance presentations by helping audiences to understand complicated information and to stay engaged. Ideally, visual aids should be used to complement the speaker, not replace or distract from the speaker.

1. Designing Visual Aids:

A. Text:

- I. Only use text when it is necessary. Unnecessary text can encourage the audience to read your visual aid instead of watching your presentation.
- II. Avoid fonts with extensions on the ends. Instead, opt for a font like Arial (most commonly used and accessible presentation font), or another san-serif font.
- III. Your font size should be at least 30pt to ensure that your audience can read your slides. The smaller the screen, the larger your font should be.

B. Color:

- I. A visual aid should follow a simple color scheme. Stick to a single background color, a single text color, and a third color for highlighting or emphasis.
- II. Generally, the background of your visual aid should be a light color, and the text color should be the exact opposite color on the color wheel, though there are some instances when a dark background color and light text can be used.
- III. Especially when representing a company, consider branding when choosing colors and design elements for your visual aid.

C. Images:

- I. Use charts, graphs, or photographs to visually depict complicated information.
- II. The images should only be present if they enhance your presentation in some way, or give the audience something they could not get from hearing you speak alone. Unnecessary images can distract audiences just as much as unnecessary text.

D. Motion:

- I. Avoid using motion as a slide transition, and unnecessarily animating images or text to bounce or zoom across the screen.
- II. Motion can be used to enhance a presentation if it is not distracting. Enlarging or changing the color of images and text boxes as they are being discussed can help audiences to understand complicated charts or graphs, for example.

E. Balance:

- I. Negative (white/blank) space is good, so do not unnecessarily clutter your slides.
- II. The text and images you do include should be appropriately sized and centered.

2. Using Visual Aids:

A. Body:

- I. Move away from the podium when using a visual aid. When a room is large and an audience is big, you should walk during your presentation and engage with each side of the audience.



- II. Avoid turning your back to the audience to interact with your visual aid. You should practice your speech with the visual aid several times, ensuring that you know what is displayed while you are speaking, and when to change each slide.
 - III. When you need to explain a chart or graph, you should stand beside the image, facing the audience, pointing to the display as needed for effect.
 - IV. If presenting in a group, practice standing professionally while each group member speaks. Also practice smooth verbal and technology (remote) transitions between speakers.
- B. Technology:
- I. If possible, use a hand-held remote to advance your slides. This will allow you to move away from the podium.
 - II. Do not hesitate to blank the screen. If you are speaking about something that is not on the screen, you can push the “B” key, which will cause the screen to go black. When you are ready to turn the screen back on, hitting “B” again returns you to the exact point you left off. This eliminates the need to add empty slides to the presentation.
 - III. Be prepared for the technology to fail. Always have multiple copies of your presentation available (email, jump drive, etc.), but understand that circumstances often arise under which you will be required to deliver your presentation without the visual aid.