

Center for Speaking and Presentation

Visual Aid Tips & Tricks

Visual Aids in Public Speaking: Why Use Them?

There are numerous benefits to using visual aids in a presentation. No matter which type of visual aid you choose to enhance your presentation, creating and effectively designing visual aids can serve multiple purposes, including:

- Clarifying of difficult points
- Capturing audience attention
- Increasing audience memorization of points
- Increasing speaker credibility

Types of Visual Aids

While computer software tends to be the primary choice for those of us creating a presentation, we are not limited to slide shows when presenting to an audience. Other common types of visual aids include:

- Physical objects
- Poster boards
- Graphs (line, bar, pie, scatterplot, histogram)
- Handouts
- PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.

Visual Aid Pointers

- **Keep audience's attention your number one priority.** Steer clear of using flashy text, images, gifs, or any other things in your slide shows that will take attention away from you as a speaker. Remember, visual aids are meant to supplement your speech, not replace you as a speaker.
- **Think about your images.** Limit the number of images used in a particular slide or page. Does the image you chose add to the presentation's content in any way? Did you choose it because the screen looks empty without it? If so, delete it. White space is not always a bad thing.
- **Limit your text used.** Remember that a presentation is the combination of speaker and visual aid. You, as the speaker, should be doing more than what is on the slide/page. Reading your presentation word for word on the slide is a quick way to lose your audience's attention. They will know how to read.
- **Design for the back row.** Make images as big as possible. Increase the size of your text. You design your visual aids for the audience to see; make sure they can.
- **Increase readability.** Find the biggest contrast in your slide/visual aid design so everyone in the room can read them. Sticking with black text on a white background or white text on a black background is safest.

Learn More

- Toastmasters 101. "Visual aids: Make your speech visually stimulating." Podcast.