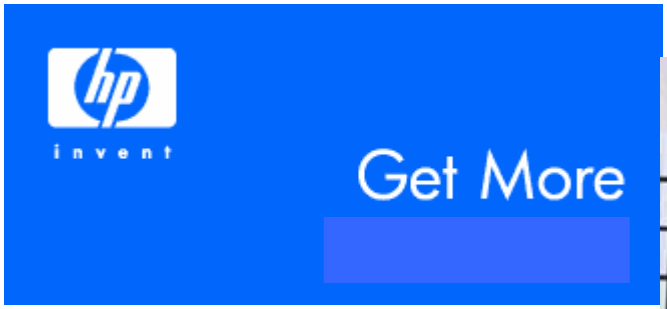
How to give a great presentation!



From the HP Learning Center

Planning your presentation

Identify your goals

You probably give more presentations than you realize. Updating your boss on your recent accomplishments, giving a status report during a project meeting, and calling on a new sales prospect are all examples of public speaking opportunities. In the business arena, your ability to clearly communicate to your clients and coworkers will lead people to perceive you as credible and capable, and may even improve other people's evaluation of your skills. Although some presentations are more important than others are, the better you understand how to prepare for a presentation, the better results you'll get following your presentation.

In this lesson, we'll concentrate on pre-presentation planning. Planning helps you to target your presentation to meet the particular demands of the time, place, and listeners.

Determine your purpose

Most of the presentations you're asked to give in a business setting aim to achieve one of two purposes:

1) To inform
2) To persuade

In an informative presentation, the audience learns about a new subject or learns something new about a familiar subject. In a persuasive presentation, the speaker attempts to change the audience's attitudes or behaviors.

For example, if you are asked to stand up in the company meeting and summarize the status of a project you are working on, your goal is to inform. Your objective is to present the facts relating to the completeness of the project. However, if you are asked "how things are going" on a project you are currently working on, your goal is to persuade. Your objective is to present your opinion of the project— and tacitly, to convince others that your opinion is correct.

Let's say you're the CEO of a company and every month you must give a status report to the Board of Directors. The facts you choose to present to the Board will shape their impression of the success or failure of your operation. For example, if you highlight activities that have gone well over the past month like decreases in operational costs, savings in payroll, and increased sales, the Board is likely view your status in a positive light. However, if you touch on issues such as attrition, pending lawsuits, and business-process inefficiency, the Board is more likely to question the success of the company. As you plan your presentation, you must decide what your goals are. If your goal is convince the Board that the company is doing well, then you might choose to present only

achievements. However, if you want the Board's help in overcoming obstacles, you will need to inform the Board on all the facts.

Whether your purpose is to inform or to persuade, your presentation will include many of the same elements. It's important that you know your own purpose before you give a presentation, however, or you risk giving away details you did not intend to expose or leaving a weak impression on your listeners. If you begin a presentation with the intent to inform, but decide halfway through that you need to persuade your listeners instead, then you've wasted half of the opportunity you had to convince your audience. Assess your goals before the presentation -- your presentation will be stronger as a result.

Opening the presentation and capturing in

Lesson 2
Set the tone and build rapport

Most public speaking skills trainers -- and most professional presenters -- focus on specific techniques and procedures for presenting. While it's important to have such tools, ultimately the audience reaction is a human reaction. People listen to people they like, period.

Your goal -- especially in the first seven to ten seconds -- is to be the most likable speaker that your audience has ever encountered.

Most presentations start before the formal presentation begins. A bit of time usually elapses while people filter into the room and select their seats. Use this time to your advantage. If this is your first time presenting to the group, use the time to introduce yourself, shake hands, and learn people's names. If you're already familiar with the audience members, then use this time to catch up and ask how things are going.

Even if you're presenting to a room of 300, small talk is appropriate. Get down from the podium and mingle with the audience.

Speaking one-on-one with your audience members will reinforce, refine or correct impressions you made during the audience assessment phase of planning. Take mental notes and shift the emphasis of your planned presentation as necessary. Often, you'll learn something during your meet and greet with the audience you can bring up later in your presentation to demonstrate how well you understand your audience's situation. This will win you points.

By engaging in small talk with your audience, you encourage building a relationship with those audience members. You want to cultivate this relationship to develop rapport. What is rapport? According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, rapport is "relation marked by harmony, conformity, accord, or affinity." In presentation-speak, this

translates to audience members who trust you and feel that you care about them. Developing rapport with your audience early helps to build a good first impression, which will be important as you move into the first formal stage of your presentation -- the opening.

7 ways to sabotage a first impression:

1. Sloppy language. Using words like "anyways," or phrases such as, "That's a whole nother thing."
2. Lazy language. Using phrases such as "you guys," "okey dokey," "no problem."
3. Verbal fillers. Using "ums" and "ahs".
4. Hiding your hands. This demonstrates a lack of trust. Keep your hands where people can see them.
5. Being late for the presentation.
6. Throat clearing. The message sent here is that you think you are superior. Not a good first impression!
7. Lack of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm sells. If you're not enthusiastic and excited, why in the world should your audience get excited about your presentation?

Opening your presentation

Just like the essays you wrote in high school required an introduction, body and conclusion, your presentation should follow a similar structure. If you jump directly from introducing yourself to presenting reasons why everyone should agree with your point of view, you're bound to disorient the audience and may be accused of giving a tirade rather than a presentation.

The first part of your presentation is called the opening. You use the opening to get the audience's attention, build (or continue to build) rapport with the audience, introduce your topic, and prepare the audience for the rest of your presentation. The opening should take only a fraction of your total presentation time. For example, if you're giving a fifteen-minute presentation, you might dedicate two to three minutes to the opening. Your opening should set the tone for the rest of your presentation. Speakers use a number of different attention getting techniques to set the tone of their presentations. We'll discuss a couple in this lesson.

The introduction

Make sure everybody knows who you are. This step is especially important if you're presenting to a group for the first time. Whether you introduce yourself or have someone introduce you, the goal is the same. The audience needs to know who you are and why they should listen to you. Present your credentials and let people know why you're an expert on this topic. If someone else will be performing your introduction, it often helps to provide them with a few notes about who you are and why you're the right person to be speaking at this event.

Make them laugh

According to Bob Orben, former Director of the White House Speech Writing Department, "Business executives and political leaders have embraced humor because humor works. Humor has gone from being an admirable part of a leader's character to a mandatory one." Using humor in public speaking helps you accomplish the following:

- Arouses interest
- Helps you connect with the audience
- Disarms hostility
- Shows that you don't take yourself too seriously
- Makes a positive impression

For these reasons, humor is an invaluable attention-gaining technique.

You've probably heard speakers open a presentation by telling a joke or relating a funny story. In fact, this tactic is used so often some professional speakers consider the practice expected, staid and uninventive. I disagree on two counts:

1. most of us aren't professional speakers out to blaze brave new territory in public speaking,
2. just because something's "been done" doesn't mean it's "played out".

The truth is, people like to laugh. And in a business setting, we're not often privy to well-planned, well-executed presentations. Unless a speaker is presenting at a banquette or some other high-profile occasion, the tendency is to skip the steps necessary in delivering a professional quality presentation. Therefore, I continue to advocate the use of humor as an attention-gaining device in business presentations -- an arena in which fun can be sorely lacking.

Always wield humor wisely. Although this should go without saying, telling a sexist, racist, or ageist joke will get people's attention – but not the kind of attention you want when you're trying to get the audience on your side. Observe all the normal human resources.

Get funny
If you're not funny now and would like to be, or you'd like to learn more about developing the use of humor in presentations, visit the Advance Public Speaking Institute web site.

sanctioned rules.

The joke you tell should have some relationship to the rest of your presentation or to your audience. For example, if speaking to a group of lawyers on the topic "updates in probate law," you might tell a lawyer joke (which relates to your audience) or a probate joke (which relates to your topic). Your opening is, again, an introduction to the rest of your presentation and a means of building rapport with your audience. If your joke is

completely off-topic, then you'll fail to accomplish the goals of a good opening. If you don't know a joke or a funny story that relates to your topic, but you want to use humor in your opening, then make something up. Humor is funny because it exaggerates or distorts the truth. It's not disingenuous to make up a funny story to illustrate a point.

Finally, make sure your "humorous" opening is actually funny. If you're starting with a joke, try it out on a practice audience (a friend, a family member) first. And remember that humor is in the delivery. Deliver your punch line with a punch – then pause to allow people to laugh. If you can't tell a joke to save your life, opening with humor isn't the best idea. Luckily there are a variety of other opening techniques that work equally well.

Make them think

If you can't make them laugh, then make them think. Two key strategies will help you get your audience thinking:

- Present facts, figures and expert opinions
- Invite the audience to participate

Show what you know

Once again we return to the idea of building rapport with your audience. Your audience will be much more likely to listen to you if they believe you are an expert on the topic you're discussing. One way to demonstrate your expertise is to open your presentation with data, exact figures, latest developments, and interesting little-known facts. Provide the audience with some "ah-ha" evidence of a problem or need with which they can relate. If you don't feel like an expert in your own right, then borrow from the expertise of others. Give a quote from a recognized expert (someone your audience has heard of, or someone whose credentials are impressive) that illustrates your opinion or drives home a point you want to make. Select relevant information that will fascinate or surprise the audience.

Invite participation

Get the group involved from the beginning. One great way to encourage involvement is to take an audience poll:

- How many of you have experience with this?
- How many of you have had problems in finding...?
- Has anyone found a really effective way to...?

By getting a show of hands, you will demonstrate that your topic has relevance to people in the group. In addition, you'll get people thinking about how your topic relates to them personally, and will interest them in hearing your proposed solution. Another way to get the audience involved is by holding a mini-brainstorming session. It's best if you have a

white board or flip chart to write down the audience suggestions. Select your brainstorming topic carefully – ask a question that you know will generate answers that you intend to touch on during your presentation. Let's say your planned subject is "buying a new home" and you want to cover topics including evaluating your credit, getting a pre-approved loan, and locking in a mortgage rate. If you ask a question like, "What are the main things you should consider when buying a new home?" you'll get answers that include price, location, resale value, etc. These really aren't the answers you wanted. Instead, you should ask a more focused question like, "What are some key issues to consider when financing a home loan?" This way, you'll get suggestions from the audience that mirror topics you already plan to discuss, and you'll get points from the audience later in the presentation when you touch on topics they suggested.

The set-up

One you've introduced yourself and gained the audience's attention, you're ready to complete your opening by clearly stating your topic, giving an overview of your presentation, and transitioning to the body of your presentation.

Define your topic

Defining your topic works a little differently depending on whether your goal is to inform or to persuade. If you intend to give an informative presentation, then make sure you've set clear parameters regarding what you intend to cover within the time constraints of your speech. You won't be able to discuss everything ever thought on your topic within fifteen or thirty minutes. Instead, you'll touch on the highlights, or a specific subsection of the overarching subject. For example, you're not going to be able to discuss everything to do with air quality during one presentation. Instead, you can talk about recent improvements in air quality, recent changes to air quality legislation, or changes to emissions standards adopted by the transportation industry. Your opening is your promise to the audience about what they'll get out of your presentation – make sure you promise something your can actually deliver.

If you plan to give a persuasive presentation, use the opening to tell the audience:

- What's the problem?
- Who cares?
- What's the solution?

Be clear about why we should care about this topic at this time, and how you intend to solve this problem. Take a stand. Don't be wishy-washy.

Provide an overview

Tell them what you're going to tell them. Give a brief outline of the topics you intend to cover. In a presentation, repetition is your friend. If you say something once, people may forget; if you say something twice, more people will remember. At a new job orientation you receive a description of your goals, and an outline of the business processes that will affect your day-to-day activities. It usually takes weeks of practice to understand how those details really come into play. Think of the overview as an orientation to the rest of your presentation. You're not going to give away specifics or details during the overview. Instead, provide a brief verbal map that identifies the organizational structure of your presentation and lets people know what to expect down the line. We'll discuss more about organizational structure in the next lesson.

Final notes

While I do not advocate manuscripting your presentation, I do suggest writing out and practicing your opening. If you're a nervous public speaker, or don't have much experience in front of a group, then knowing exactly what you plan to say at the beginning of your presentation will give you confidence and will help you through those first few difficult moments when you're warming up the crowd. If you're an executive who has staff available to write your presentation, you should still write your own opening. The opening gives the audience an idea about who you are and what you stand for. Those words should be your own.

Assess your audience

The audience itself will have an impact on your presentation. Consider the way you communicate with your friends, your children (or nieces/nephews), and your parents. Whether you mean to or not, you probably select different approaches when communicating with each group. While you may approach your parents with deference to their age and experience, you'd probably expect a young child to have less knowledge of the world and to respect your own wisdom. Thus, when presenting an argument to these groups, you're likely to differentiate your argument based on audience characteristics.

The same rules should apply to all presentations. Although you could chose to present the exact same message to all audiences, your presentation will be more meaningful to your listeners if you tailor your message to the attributes of the particular group with whom you're communicating. Remember – the success of your presentation lies in your ability to reach your audience. Even the most flawless speaker can fail to inspire listeners if the message isn't perceived as significant to their lives or their experience. Think back to sitting in your high school classroom wondering "when will I ever use this again?" Do not expect that simply because you work for the same company as your audience members your presentation will seem relevant and consequential to your listeners.

To help target your presentation to your audience, consider the following characteristics:

- **Size:** Will you present to a large group? A small group? A single person? Large group presentations often call for more formality and more structure, while highly structured presentations to small group may seem rigid and out of place. If presenting to a large group, you'll need to do more to make all audience members feel involved in your presentation. With a small group, it may be easier to encourage participation.
- **Demographics:** Demographic factors to consider include age, occupation, ethnic or cultural background, socio-economic status, educational background and gender. Presenting to a group of older politicians will require more deference to age and experience than presenting to a group of recent graduates. When speaking to a group of doctors, you can assume a certain level of medical knowledge. When speaking about college admissions to a lower socio-economic status audience you might want to include information about financial aid, grants, and scholarships. In contrast, audiences with members of a higher socio-economic status who don't qualify for aid will perceive such information as useless.
- **Knowledge Level:** What does your audience already know about your topic? Are you presenting to a group of water engineers on the topic of water safety? Or are you presenting to the city council on the topic of water safety? With some audiences, you may need to provide more background/historical information about your topic before you can effectively persuade them of the correctness of your position.
- **Motivation:** Why is your audience listening to your presentation? Are you a consultant giving feedback to a group who has paid a lot of money for your opinion? Or did you call a meeting to voice your own opinion? If the audience is not inherently motivated to listen to you, then you'll need to give them reason to listen within the presentation itself.

Plan ahead

You too can create a professional image with free, easy office templates from HP. Find what you need to create winning presentations, direct marketing materials, business cards, and much more.

If you're not personally familiar with the attributes of an audience for which you plan to present, ask around. Maybe you're new to the company, presenting to a client, or acting as a guest speaker for an event -- your coworkers, business contacts or presentation organizers will be able to provide you with information to help you correctly assess your audience as you prepare for your engagement.

Set the stage

Planning the space

The space in which you present will impact both you and your audience. If you're forced to give your presentation in a hot, cramped room with bad lighting, your listeners are more likely to be thinking about their own discomfort than what you're saying. If you've reserved an auditorium, but only ten people show up to hear you speak, you'll have some other challenges to face. Issues to consider when booking your presentation space are:

- **Size:** How many people will the space comfortably seat?
- **Number of chairs:** Are there enough seats for the number of people invited to hear you present, or will you be asking people to stand or sit on the floor?
- **Seating arrangement:** Are chairs set up so that everyone can see you, or is the space arranged such that some listeners have their backs toward you or must contort themselves to see your face?
- **Audio/visual equipment:** If you plan to use presentation aids, does the room you've booked have the appropriate equipment/hook-ups/internet connections?
- **Distracters:** Does your meeting space provide the audience views that compete for their attention? Can you hear other people talking in their cubes during your presentation?

Sometimes, you have little control over space constraints. Maybe your company only has one conference room available to you, or the company culture dictates that all corporate presentations are given outside on the front lawn. Take these factors into account as you plan your presentation. If space constraints make sitting for long periods distasteful, for example, consider breaking your presentation into shorter chunks or handing out "pre-work" so you can limit the duration of your presentation while maximizing its impact. If you've never seen the space in which you plan to present, you may find it helpful to arrive early to review the layout.

What's the best time to set a presentation?

There are some times and days that are better for presentations. And they are (drum roll, please!):

- **Mornings:** As early in the morning as possible. Presentations made later in the day often get pushed back or pushed aside because of "crises" that occur.
- **Any day of the week:** That's right – the day doesn't matter! Let me repeat that: THE DAY DOESN'T MATTER! I used to manage a group of people who would tell me that Mondays weren't good to make presentations because people were trying to catch up from the weekend. My associates also said Wednesdays weren't good because it was "hump day" and people's energy was down; therefore, they weren't inclined to listen to a presentation. They also informed me that Fridays weren't good because people were focused on the weekend. Oh, and Thursday wasn't a good day either, because people were trying to get all of their work done so that they could leave a little early on Friday. That left one good day for presentations – Tuesday.

Be conscious of call time

When you set presentation time, if you tell the audience the meeting will take about 30 minutes, honor that timeframe! If you get to the 30-minute mark and you're on a roll (and the audience seems interested!) simply say, "I know we agreed to 30 minutes and I've noticed that time is up. Would you prefer to continue now, or schedule another time to reconvene?" The listeners will appreciate you, and thank you for being respectful of their time!

Oh please! The bottom line is that any day is a good day. If you've done your planning, done your homework, and have a compelling message, the audience will be receptive.

Dress the part

A study by Albert Mehrabian at UCLA shows that 55 percent of our total message in face-to-face interactions is communicated through body language. A big part of body language is how you dress.

Listeners form an initial impression about you within the first seven seconds of meeting you. They decide whether they like you, trust you, and want to do business with you. We'll discuss non-verbal communication as it pertains to presentational style in more detail in a later lesson. For now, we'll concentrate on attire.

Dress for your audience!

In this era of business casual office attire, the lines are blurred as to what is appropriate dress for a presenter. As a general rule of thumb, you should dress slightly better than your audience. For example:

- If you are presenting to a board of directors, you'll want to dress in your best business suit. If you're presenting to a middle manager and the office dress is traditional business attire, again, you'll want to pull out the suit. If you're presenting to a mid- or upper-level manager in a business-casual environment, you may want to wear a sport coat and a shirt with a collar. For women, a pantsuit or dressy slacks and a sport coat work well in business-casual environments. Regardless of the environment, there are some general rules:
    - Conservative dress and solid colors are always winners in the business arena. Of course, if you're presenting to a highly creative group (such as ad agency creative directors), it would be appropriate to go a little out of the box. In general, keep it conservative. Remember: People will always forgive you for dressing too conservatively, but they may not always forgive you if you don't dress conservatively enough!
- Keep jewelry to a minimum. Excessive or large jewelry is usually more of a distraction than a complement to your clothing.
- Neatness counts! Regardless of what type of clothing you wear, always make certain that it is cleaned and pressed. This sends a subliminal message to the audience that you have a strong attention to detail.

Some truths about attire

There is no such thing as neutral clothing. Everything you put on represents a decision you have made and says something about you. Good manners require appropriate attire.

The body of a presentation

Lesson 3
Organization

In the last lesson, we talked about strategies for creating a strong opening to your presentation. Once you've grabbed your audience's attention with a short story, startling statistic, or other attention-getting technique and previewed your topic in the opening, it's time to move into the body of your presentation. Here, you'll discuss your topic in more detail. If your purpose is to inform, you'll use the body of your presentation to describe your topic and demonstrate how it relates to your audience. If you're goal is to persuade, you'll use the body of the presentation to define the problem and offer your solution. In this lesson, we'll discuss proven methods for developing the body of your presentation.

As we discussed in the last lesson, you have a limited amount of time in which to address your audience, therefore you must limit the number/breadth of main ideas covered in your presentation. Depending on the time allotted to you, it's best to stick to two to five main points. You need to provide supporting evidence for each main point, so allow enough time to develop each point in adequate detail. It's usually best to err on the

conservative side – if there's a question in your mind about how many points you can reasonably discuss, go with the lower number.

Once you've determined the most important issues to illuminate during your speech, the next thing you should plan is the appropriate organizational structure for your speech. Yes, you really do need to plan your presentational structure. There's nothing more frustrating than listening to a speaker who jumps from one topic to another without explaining how the topics are related, repeats herself often, and never seems to get to the point. These are just a few the side effects of poor organizational structure. You should organize the body of our presentation in a manner that makes sense for your subject. In fact, most subjects naturally lend themselves to a particular structure.

The most common organizational patterns are:

- **Topical** - use when several ideas relate to your theme, each distinct idea becomes a main point. This structure is useful for informative speeches.
- **Chronological** - uses time sequence for a framework. This structure is useful for both informative and persuasive speeches, both of which require the presentation of background information
- **Spatial** - organizes material according to physical space. This structure is useful for informative speeches.
- **Classification** - organizes material by putting things into categories. This structure is useful for both informative and persuasive speeches.
- **Problem/Solution** - organizes material by describing a problem and then presenting a solution. This structure is useful for persuasive speeches.
- **Cause/Effect** - organizes material by describing the cause of a problem and then presenting the effects of the problem. This structure is useful for persuasive speeches.

As you can see, some subjects could easily be organized by a number of different patterns described above. For example, if you are giving an informative speech on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, you could organize your presentation chronologically or topically. In the chronological arrangement, you would describe the sequence of actions necessary to build your sandwich. In the topical arrangement, you might cover three main ideas including ingredient selection, building the sandwich, and proper clean up and storage of sandwich materials. Chose a structure that supports the presentation of the supporting materials you plan to share with your audience. In the above example, if your goal is to talk about the speed or ease with which a sandwich can be made, the chronological structure is best. However, if you're more concerned with describing the number of choices necessary in a simple action like making a sandwich, then the topical arrangement is better. Whatever organizational structure you chose, make sure to stick with it throughout your presentation.

Evidence

To create a credible presentation, you must provide supporting materials to back up your claims. Although people might like you and want to believe you, a well-crafted presentation includes evidence demonstrating that what you say is true. Evidence serves a number of purposes including:

- Clarification of your position or main ideas.
- Proof that your claims are true.
- Creates a lasting and memorable impression

Evidence is the meat of your presentation. Without evidence, you are simply providing people with a verbal outline of main ideas. Evidence is the material that gives your subject life.

Types of evidence include:

- **Facts and figures**: information that can be verified by an outside source.
- **Statistics:** data explaining something in terms of size or frequency. Statistics are powerful because they sound like facts and figures. However, statistics can be easily manipulated. When evaluating statistics always consider the source. Compare your statistics to others – seek multiple sources – to ensure they are accurate. When presenting statistics, quote the statistic completely, and use only current information.
- **Statements by authority:** quotes from an expert on your subject. If the person you're quoting from is not well known, provide her credentials along with her quote. Statements by popular figures like politicians, television or radio personalities may be used, as well, but should not be confused with statements by authority, nor should they be presented as such.
- **Testimony**: supporting statements by others. Testimony can be expert, prestige or lay. Expert testimony is the same as "statements by authority" as described above. Prestige testimony is supporting statements made by an individual held in high esteem, like a well-liked politician, a famous business personality or a movie star. Lay testimony is supporting statements made by someone from the community who is not necessarily an expert on the subject. Lay testimony is often used to show that a problem or issue is prevalent, and is identified by others as a problem.
- **Narratives:** examples in the form of a story. Narratives should have a beginning, a middle, and an ending, and should be interesting without including unnecessary details.
- **Definitions:** terms can be defined in one of three ways:
    - The dictionary definition
    - The etymological definition
    - The operational definition. –The etymological definition describes how a word derives from the root word of its culture. The operational definition describes how the term relates to how it works or how it operates.
- **Humor:** jokes or funny stories relating to the topic. Although humor works well to gain interest and build rapport with your audience, there are some subjects for which humor is not appropriate.

Facts and figures, statistics and testimony are the only supporting materials that can prove. Without such types of evidence, your argument will be weakened. However, a well-supported presentation will also include narratives to demonstrate how the subject impacts the audience in human terms. Use a combination of types of evidence to build a well-supported argument that also interests your listeners.

Transitions

Once you have determined your organizational structure and fleshed out your topic with the use of evidence, you're almost done preparing the body of your presentation. Now it's time to plan how you will transition from your opening to the body of your speech, between your main points, and into the conclusion. Transitions help you move your audience smoothly from one point to the next. A transitional statement is usually one or two sentences long, wrapping up your last idea and moving into your next idea. Smooth transitions make for a polished presentation, and help your audience follow along.

I recommend that first time or nervous public speakers plan their transitions. Although I do not recommend scripting your entire speech, it's easy to forget little elements like Transitions when you're nervous and you just want to get through all of your material and sit down. If you plan and practice transitions ahead of time, you'll be less likely to leave them out on presentation day.

Transitions are the glue that holds the structural elements of your presentation together. They either should emphasize the organization of your speech, or should demonstrate how your ideas relate back to the theme of your presentation. The best transitions do both. A transition emphasizing organization can be as easy as "Now that you understand _____, let's move on to my next point, which is _____." Simple, right? Admittedly, not very creative, but it gets the job done by telling the audience that you've finished talking about main point number one, and now you're going to talk about main point number two. The transition alerts the audience to prepare to shift gears and listen for new information.

Without transitions, it's easy to confuse your audience. If your main points run together without a clear distinction, listeners may not realize that you've moved on to a new topic and may not understand why the evidence you're presenting doesn't seem to support your main point. This is dangerous in that audience members will have to take time to figure out what's going on instead of listening to you. In addition, if audience members feel confused, they'll blame it on you, and you'll lose some credibility. Although you won't win big points by including transitions in your presentation, you'll lose points if you don't.

Preparing an outline

As I've mentioned a few times throughout this course, I don't recommend scripting your entire speech. What I mean is, do not write out your presentation word for word and then attempt to either memorize it or read from it during your presentation. There are a

number of reasons I advocate against scripting your speech:

- If you attempt to memorize your speech word for word, and then you can't remember the exact words you had planned to use when you're in front of the audience for the live presentation, you're likely to panic, to lose your place and have to go back and repeat yourself, or to leave out an entire piece of your planned presentation.
- If you script your presentation and then bring your script to the podium, you're likely to read your presentation.
- If you have scripted your speech, you're less likely to integrate information you learn from or about your audience during your opening.
- If you have scripted your speech, you're more likely to sound formal and stilted when you speak.

Although I dislike scripted presentations, I do not intend for you to be ill prepared and poorly practiced. Instead, I suggest outlining your speech.

A good outline includes the main points of your presentation, plus reference to your evidence. I say reference to your evidence because an outline should be composed mainly of keywords. For example, rather than writing out the complete narrative about your dog in your outline, you reference the narrative with the words "dog story." This way, the broad organizational structure and key evidence is noted and ordered – but you're not tied to a scripted speech. There are a couple exceptions to this rule. I usually include statistics (or any other numbers) I plan to present directly in my outline, as well as any relevant source information. If I use a long quote in my presentation, I'll write that out word-for word, as well, so as not to misquote the source. If I'm afraid I might forget my transitions, I'll write those out, as well. But everything else in the outline should be in key word format.

The benefits of working from an outline rather than from a script are many:

- Allows for a more conversational flow to your presentation.
- Allows flexibility to integrate information you learn about your audience (just add a quick note to your outline).
- If you lose your place during your presentation, you can easily see any points you missed and can skip around to ensure you've covered everything you planned to present.
- If your audience seems confused about one of your main ideas, you can make a decision on the fly to spend more time on this topic before moving on to the next one.

Essentially, working from an outline allows you to be more responsive to your audience. Always practice your speech from your outline. You'll notice that the exact wording of your presentation shifts a bit each time you present. That's to be expected, and just demonstrates how an outlined presentation allows for a more conversational tone than a scripted one.

Although we talked about the opening of your presentation before we talked about the body, you should start by planning the body of your presentation. Once you know exactly what you plan to cover, you can go back and prepare your opening – and plan the conclusion – knowing exactly what will be expressed during the rest of your speech. In the next lesson, we'll talk about wrapping up your presentation with a memorable conclusion.

Closing your presentation

Lesson 4
When to close

One of the worst mistakes you can make in a presentation is talking too long. No matter how brilliant or funny you are, people will get bored, think of other things they need to do, and will start to wonder
when you'll be done. Ideally, you'll conclude your presentation before you're audience starts to drift. Get up, say what you have to say, and sit down. Never keep talking just because you had been allotted thirty minutes for your presentation and you only used fifteen. People will appreciate it if you end early because you've said all you need to say. This shows respect for your audience's time (and attention span).

You're ready to close your presentation when you've covered all of your main ideas, and don't have any new ideas to present. You may offer new evidence in your conclusion, but should not attempt to develop any new ideas. Keep in mind that the goal of the conclusion is:

- To inform the audience you're about to close,
- To summarize the main points,
- To leave the audience with something to remember

I have heard numerous presentations in which the speaker used the "conclusion" to present yet another main point. Don't make this mistake. Think of the opening and conclusion as bookends, and the body of your presentation as the book. All the idea development happens in the body. If you have another main point to discuss, do so in the body. Once you've presented all the ideas you wanted to present, you're ready to transition into the conclusion.

Wrap it up

The opening and the conclusion have a lot in common, and utilize many of the same techniques. In the opening, your goal was to get people's attention, introduce them to your topic, and transition into the body of your presentation. In the conclusion, you transition out of the body of your presentation, quickly review what you've said, and deliver your parting shot. Since the conclusion is the last thing you say, it's often the most remembered, so spend as much time planning your conclusion as any other part of your presentation.

During your conclusion, it's a good idea to "tell 'em what you told 'em." Since you've taken the time to develop each of your main ideas in the body of your speech, take a moment in your conclusion to wrap it up – summarize each main idea one last time. Your summary should be succinct. Once you've reviewed your main points, the last thing left for you to do is deliver a parting shot – one final statement that leaves your audience something to think about. As with the attention getting techniques we utilized in the opening, you'll draw on those same techniques to deliver your parting shot. Use humor, present a challenge, restate your point in a new way, relate a touching story, present a final statistic, or state a final quote. This is your last opportunity to convince the audience that your topic is important so chose concluding evidence that makes an impact. You may want to save the most damming statistic or the most insightful quote to use in your conclusion. Always leave the audience with something to remember.

Call to action

Whenever possible, as part of your wrap-up, leave your audience with something to do. Giving your audience a call to action in your conclusion accomplishes two main purposes:

- Gives your listeners direction regarding what to do with all the information you've just presented.
- Gives your audience incentive to think about your presentation later, outside of the walls of the presentation room.

Keep the call to action simple enough to be something your audience can accomplish. If, at the end of your presentation, you ask your audience to complete a full analysis of operational costs company-wide over the last year, few people will have the time or the access to do so. However, if you ask people to keep track of all the office supplies they use over the next week, more people will be able to comply. Make your call to action meaningful to your audience. Let them know how taking one small step (as you advocate in your call to action) can produce impressive results over time or when completed by many. Now that you've learned about the aspects of a good opening, body and conclusion, you should be able to prepare an interesting, informative presentation that grabs and holds your audience's attention from beginning to end. However, it's not just what you say, it's also how you say it. In the next lesson, we'll talk about non-verbal elements of a presentation such as eye contact, gesture and vocal inflection, and how to use these elements to your benefit.

Presentation techniques

Lesson 5
Vocalics

The difference between a good presenter and a great presenter is often "presentational style." By style, I mean the intangible elements of a presentation including a speaker's poise, movement, projection of enthusiasm, and comfort in front of the group. A common misconception is that good presentational style is inherent – you have it or you don't. In fact, presentational style is made up of three main elements that everyone can learn to incorporate into their speaking: vocalics, body language, and use of space. In this lesson, we'll break down each component of style and discuss how to plan and practice stylistic techniques to improve your presentations. Non-verbal communication reinforces verbal communication, thus your words will have more impact if you utilize non-verbals to emphasize key ideas. Even the best prepared presentations benefit from attention to these non-verbal elements of style, which give your speaking a polished, professional edge.

Vocalics, or vocal techniques, are the way you speak your words to create emphasis and set the tone of your presentation. In Lesson 3, we discussed "conversational tone" as a desirable characteristic for your presentation. Although outlining your speech is a means to achieving conversational tone, incorporating the vocal techniques we will discuss in this lesson is a more direct means to impact tone. Practicing your presentation out loud is the only way to determine which vocal techniques to utilize. When integrating vocalics, it's helpful to think of yourself as an actor practicing your lines. Your goal is to suggest emotion and bring your words to life through the manner in which you deliver your lines. However, your delivery must remain believable and natural -- not forced. Again, this balance will be achieved through practice.

Vocal techniques to consider when practicing your presentation are:

- **Loudness:** the relative amplitude of your voice. Both loudness and quietness can be used to gain attention. First, determine the right level of loudness to use as a baseline. During the "meet-and-greet" period before your presentation begins, get a feel for the way your voice sounds in the room. If you're working in a small space, the walls may amplify sound, causing your normal speaking voice to sound very loud. In this case, you may need to speak more quietly than normal to avoid blasting your audience. If you're speaking in an auditorium or other large, open space, you'll need to speak more loudly than usual to project to the back of the room. However, if you use a microphone during your presentation, your normal speaking voice will suffice.

  Once you've determined your baseline amplitude, you can vary the loudness of your voice to draw attention to particular ideas. For example, one way to draw your audience into your presentation is to begin by speaking quietly, which forces your audience to settle down immediately and listen closely in order to hear you. (This approach can backfire in large rooms when a

microphone is not available, as people in the back of the room may not know that you've started speaking yet). Alternately, you could start your presentation by loudly listing a litany of startling statistics, then transitioning to your baseline amplitude to describe what those statistics mean in the context of your presentation. The point to remember is that variation from the baseline creates emphasis. Quietness works as well as loudness, and not all ideas are best emphasized by being loud. For example, softness is a great strategy for relating sad stories, giving asides, or presenting details to which you want the audience to believe they are especially privy.

- **Learn by listening:** Storytellers use vocal style to create characters, emphasize ideas, suggest movement, and add drama to their presentations. Listening to a storyteller in action will help demonstrate the power of vocal style can hove on your own presentation. Look for story hours, book readings, or poetry slams at your local library, bookstore or coffee shop.
- **Pitch:** the highness or lowness of a sound, such as the property of musical notes. Your voice box vibrates at a particular frequency, creating a pitch. You can vary the pitch of your voice to relate dialog between two or more people or to suggest a variety of personal characteristics such as sex and age. For example, a young person might speak in a higher pitch than an older person might, while a man would speak in a lower pitch than a woman would.
- **Rate:** the speed with which you speak. Speaking quickly can suggest speed, excitement or energy. Speaking slowly can suggest emotions like lethargy or boredom, but can be used to emphasize complex ideas or points of special importance.
- **Pause:** essentially, pause is speaking with a rate of zero. The silent pause provides time for ideas to sink in, and emphasizes what was just said.

All the vocal techniques described in this lesson add drama to your presentation. Deviations from "normal" rate, pitch and loudness emphasize the words you speak in comparison to words spoken at a "normal" rate, pitch or loudness. Since not every word you speak needs special emphasis, much of your presentation can be delivered in your normal conversational style. Add variations from the norm to support and enliven the key ideas and examples in your presentation.

Some people are naturally better public speakers than others, and tend to utilize the vocal style techniques identified here without much practice or pre-planning. For the rest of us, however, practice is key. I suggest practicing your presentation aloud; overemphasizing the vocal techniques you plan to incorporate. With practice, you're more likely to utilize your planned techniques even when your tendency may normally be to speak fast to get through the presentation quickly.

Body language

Body language is another non-verbal technique that can be used to enhance your presentations. By body language, I mean gestures, movements and mannerisms that people use to communicate. As with the use of vocal techniques, body language comes more easily to some than to others. Again, body language is something that can be learned.

Elements of body language to pay attention to as you practice your presentation are:

- **Eye contact:** look your audience in the eyes. The number one reason to use good eye contact is it involves your audience in your presentation. If you look directly at a member of the audience, they are likely to return your gaze, and keep looking at you rather than looking at a paper on the table, staring out the window, or daydreaming. The second reason to use good eye contact is it leads people to trust you. Studies show that when people are lying, they tend to look up or look down. Looking people in the eyes demonstrates that you're being sincere. The third reason to use good eye contact is that it shows confidence. Think about it – who are you more likely to follow? Someone who looks you in the eyes or someone who talks to their shoes? Listeners are more likely to believe you and trust you if you seem confident in yourself and your position on your topic.

  When speaking to a room full of people, you must speak to the whole room, not just one person. Thus, you must engage in eye contact with the whole audience, as well. Rather than staring down one audience member, scan the room, and be sure to include people sitting to your far right and far left who are often neglected.

  If you're worried about your ability to give good eye contact, I recommend practicing your presentation in front of a good friend or family member. We are often more embarrassed to perform in front of people who know us well than to speak to people we're not as familiar with. If you can get through your presentation looking your father in the eyes and not flinching, then you can definitely do so with an audience full of people you don't know as well. If, upon presentation day, you're so nervous you find yourself speaking to the ceiling tiles, try to bring your gaze down in stages. Start by looking at audience member's foreheads – this gives the impression of eye contact. It don't fool people for long, but it's a step in the right direction.
- **Gesture:** movement of your body or limbs to illuminate and emphasize the meaning of your words. Simple hand movements such as holding up the number one with your fingers when you say "my first point is," are appropriate. Gesture can be used to demonstrate how something looks or acts, as well. For example, you might demonstrate a proper golf swing, mimic a beauty queen's wave, or make tick marks in the air as you go through a shopping list. Some people naturally talk with their hands. Nervousness can accentuate this characteristic. Beware of gesturing too much as it can be distracting. On the other side, please use some gesture. I've seen presenters give thirty minute long speeches, desperately grasping the podium throughout. As with all the presentation techniques we've discussed, it's important to vary your gestures. If the only gesture you use is to pound on the podium when you're trying to emphasize your point, this gesture will lose it's meaning. Pounding on the podium once can be powerful. Pounding on the podium at 30 second intervals can become ridiculous.
- **Posture:** the bearing of your body, your stance. When speaking to an audience, stand straight with your shoulders back, your head centered above your body and your feet shoulder-width apart. Don't slump. Don't lean against the wall. If the situation absolutely calls for it (for example, you're asked to give an impromptu presentation during a business meeting), you may sit – but sit up straight.

- **Movement** your use of the speaking-space. When you are provided with a podium or lectern, the tendency is to remain directly behind the lectern for the entire presentation. This can be appropriate. However, do not be afraid to walk around a bit to get closer to the audience. If you're speaking to a particularly large audience, it may be appropriate to mingle with the audience talk-host style during your presentation. Your movement or lack of movement will help set the tone of your presentation. If you stand behind the podium, you'll be perceived as more formal, and possibly somewhat removed from the audience. If you move around the front or place the lectern off to one side rather than standing behind it, you'll be perceived as less formal, and probably more accessible to the audience members.

If you are concerned with your ability to integrate body language into your presentations, plan and practice gesture, eye contact and movement as you prepare for your speech. Gestures should look natural, not contrived, and should mirror or help explicate the words of your message.

If you're not sure whether you're using body language during your presentation, practice in front of a friend or family member and have them give you a critique. Better yet, have someone video tape a practice presentation – watching yourself on tape can be painful, yet very illuminating. If all else fails, practice in front of a mirror.

Use of space

As we talked about it Lesson 1, it's important to plan for the space you'll be speaking in. Although it may be unfair, the set-up of a room and comfort provided to listeners will reflect directly on you as a presenter. If someone is uncomfortable, they are more likely to believe you've talked for too long than they would if they were comfortable. If someone can't see your eye rolls from the back of the room, they won't know you were making a joke and won't think you were funny. Therefore, it's incumbent upon you to arrange the space to your benefit.

First, make sure everyone can see you. Sometimes it helps to arrange seating in a semi circle. Make sure the first row of seating is far enough back that people will not have to crane their necks to see you. If chairs can't be moved, you can adjust your own position to be closer or farther from the seating, as necessary. If the room is large and enough space is available, ask everyone to move close to the front of the room. Having the audience near you and grouped together will help with issues such as eye contact and loudness. If you're using an overhead projector, slide projector, television, or other visual aid for your presentation, make sure your audience can see both you and your aid, and that no one's view is going to be blocked by the equipment.

Second, make sure you have enough room to move around. If the room is cramped, and there's only enough space for you and the podium at the front, you may consider removing the podium from the room to give yourself more space. You may also consider removing the first row of seating.

Anything such as a table or podium placed between yourself and your audience will create a sense of distance between you and the audience and will accentuate the difference between your roles. When you stand behind the podium, you become "The Speaker," which gives you a certain amount of credibility and power. Therefore, if you feel you need to boost your credibility (for example you're younger, less experienced, or lower on the totem pole than your audience) you may chose to bring in a podium to reinforce your status as presenter.

Be aware of the impact of space on your audience, and manipulate the speaking space to your advantage. Arrive early to your speaking engagements to allow time to evaluate and rearrange the space as necessary.

Common Problems

Even the most experienced speakers can exhibit ticks and tendencies that interfere with their presentations. Some common problems to look out for as you practice your presentation include:

- **Verbal fillers**: the most common verbal fillers are "um" and "uh," though filler can take the form of any non-meaningful, repeated word, words, or grunt. For example, I once heard a speaker who said "yeah, so," each time she transitioned to a new idea. This phrase was completely unnecessary to the presentation, and repeated a number of times became an obvious nervous habit. Presenters often utter verbal fillers when nervous or when thinking about what to say next. Without a doubt, it's always better to pause than to say "um." If you're curious about whether or not you use verbal fillers, video tape a practice presentation and do a self-assessment. If you don't have a video camera available, practice your presentation in front of a friend or family member. Ask them to clap once every time you utter verbal filler. If the room erupts in applause as you speak, you'll know you need some work. The best solution to this problem is, of course, practice. If you notice yourself saying "um" or "uh" make a mental note to pause, instead.
- **Swaying and rocking**: even with your feet planted firmly on the ground, it's possible to sway like a tree in the breeze. Make sure all of your movements are purposeful. If your feet are shoulder width apart, you'll be less likely to sway. However, nervous habits like rocking back-and-forth or shifting weight from one foot to another are harder to break. The key is to be aware of your nervous habits and make a conscious effort not to give into them.
- **Pacing:** there's a difference between moving around and pacing back-and-forth. To avoid pacing, make sure you pause in one spot for a while before moving on again.
- **Hands in pockets**: if your hands are in your pockets, it's impossible to gesture. Keep your hands out of your pockets.
- **Lip smacking**: nervous speakers often experience cottonmouth. If your mouth becomes dry, you may make a smacking sound as you attempt to swallow to produce saliva. To avoid this problem drink plenty of water before your presentation, and keeping a glass of water at the front with you for emergencies.

- **Fidgeting**: clasping and un-clasping hands, playing with hair, and tugging on clothing are more common nervous ticks. If you have long hair and have a tendency to flip it, or run your fingers through it, help yourself out by tying your hair back for your presentation. Keep your gestures meaningful.

The solution to these and other common problems is practice and experience. Nerves are usually the cause of such problems, so the more confident you feel, the less likely you are to engage in such habits. However, even experienced speakers sometimes exhibit these problem behaviors. Try to be aware of your body as you speak. You'll be able to self-monitor yourself better if you are very familiar with your presentation and do not need to concentrate all of your energy on remembering what to say next. If you catch yourself wringing your hands during your presentation, don't stress, just stop. Do not call attention to nervous ticks by apologizing for them. Correct the tick and continue with your presentation as if nothing was wrong.

The presentational techniques discussed in this lesson area a starting place. As you gain experience as a presenter, you'll develop your own personal style, and will overcome many of the nervous habits that may plague you at first. Practicing aloud and in front of a practice audience is essential in your efforts to develop and polish your style. By incorporating the stylistic techniques described in this lesson, you'll be well on your way to delivering a great presentation. In the next lesson, we'll talk about the final ingredient in professional quality presentations – visual aids.

Presentation aids

Lesson 6
How to use visual aids

Studies show that learning occurs three ways, through hearing, seeing, and doing. During a presentation, you can attack both the visual and auditory senses. Up to this point, we've discussed primarily the auditory aspects – the speaking part – of a presentation. We've only touched briefly on the visual dimension of presentations. Your body itself, including your attire (discussed in Lesson One), grooming, gestures (discussed in Lesson Five), and facial expressions make up one aspect of your visual presentation. The other aspect of your visual presentation is visual aids in the form of projections or handouts that you use to engage your audience. The goal of visual aids is to increase sensory contact with your audience. When used well,
visual aids:

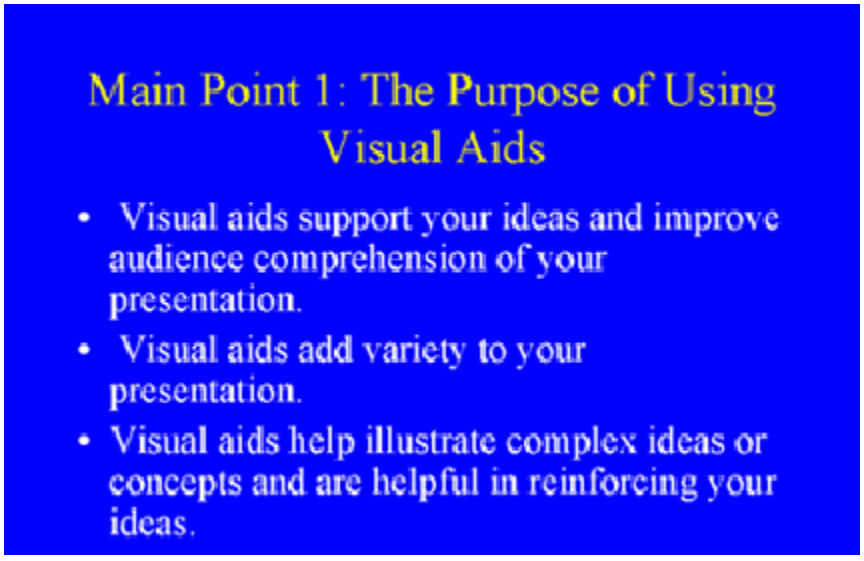
- Enhance understanding of the topic.
- Add variety.
- Support your claims.
- Reinforce your ideas.
- Give your presentation lasting impact.

Used poorly, visual aids become a distraction that upstage the presenter and bury the message. In this lesson, you'll learn to design visual aids that will increase audience comprehension and support your presentation.

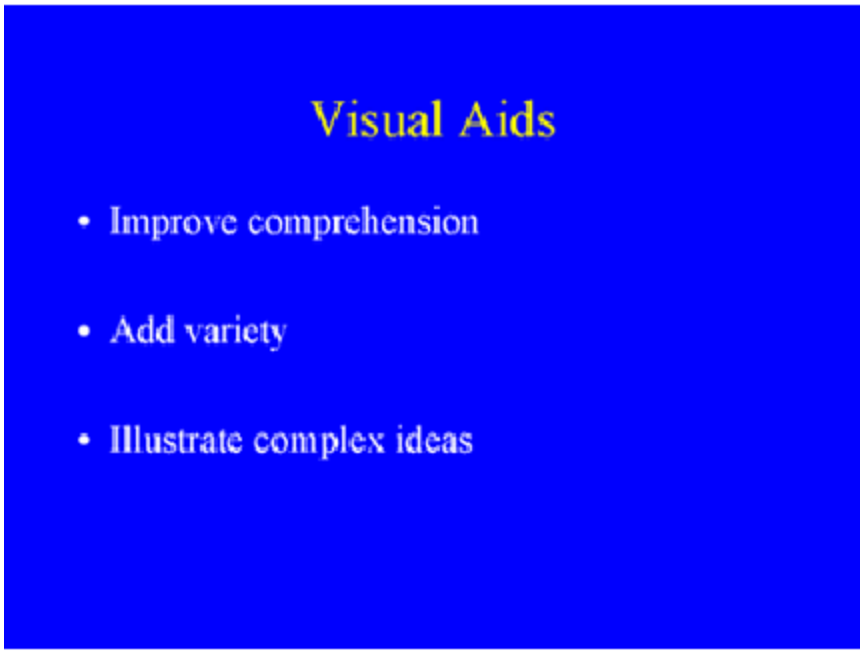
Visual aids come in many varieties. Select visual aids that are appropriate for your subject matter and help illustrate your ideas. There are a variety of visual aids:

- Sketches
- Maps
- Graphs - pie, bar, line
- Charts - Flow, tree, sequence
- Photographs and pictures
- Posters
- Objects or models
- Films or video tape
- Textual graphics or lists

Visual aids should supplement your presentation, but should not become the presentation, itself. Visuals should be comprehensible at a glace. This means visuals should be simple and clear, rather than dense and crammed with material. Information should be relevant to the audience. Remember that visuals should serve the audiences needs rather than the speaker's. Therefore, a visual aid should not include the script of your speech. Instead, it could include and outline of your main points to help your audience keep track of what you've discussed and what you plan to discuss next. If you do plan to integrate a visual aid outlining your presentation, use keywords only. Your visual aids should complement your spoken words, not replicate them. If you plan to read directly from your visual aid, the visual aid is a bad one, and should not be used.

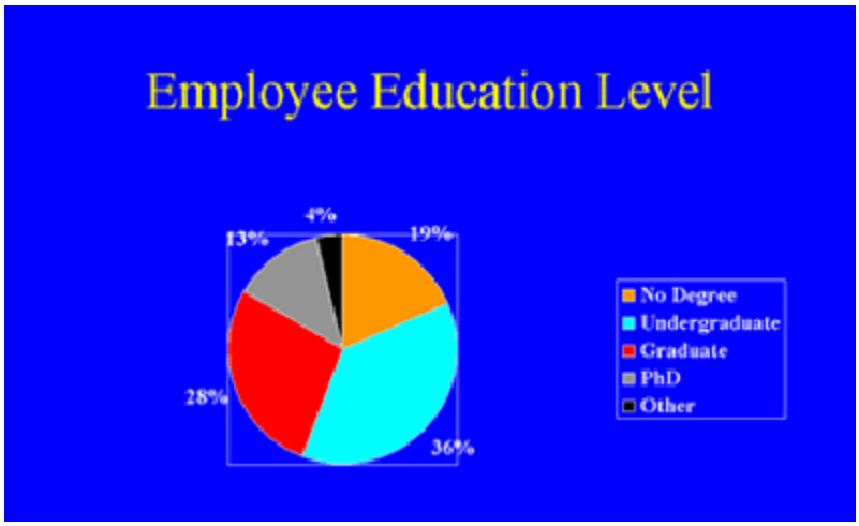


This visual aid requires the audience to read unnecessary text and cannot be comprehended at a glance.



This visual aid properly utilizes keywords. As the expression says "a picture's worth a thousand words." This axiom is certainly true of visual aids.

Whenever possible, use a picture, chart or graph to support or prove a point. For example, if you're describing the negative impact of water pollution on wildlife, displaying a picture of oil soaked sea gulls will emphasize your point. If you want to describe a certain population as made up of different percentages of different types of people, you might use a pie graph to illustrate your idea.



Example pie graph. If you need to use words to describe your picture, be as brief as possible. If the graphic requires many words to describe it, it's probably not an effective presentation graphic. Regardless of the medium you use to create your visual aids, certain guidelines apply.

Visual aids should:

- **Be visible:** Use the right font size. For flip charts, white boards and chalk boards, titles should be two to three inches high, other text should be an inch and a half high. For transparencies and PowerPoint Slides, titles should be 38-44 points, other text should be 28-32 points.
- **Fill the page:** White space is fine, but do not group all of your text in the center of the slide with a wide, blank border
- **Be balanced:** Make sure visuals are balanced top to bottom and left to right
- **Use color wisely:** use colors that contrast so the distinction between colors is easily discernible. Remember that yellow is difficult to see on a white background. Red often signifies negative information such as decreased revenue, green often signifies positive information such as an increase in sales.

These guidelines will help you design attractive visual aids that are both legible and attractive. Once you have created your visuals, to successfully integrate your aids into your presentation you must:

- Practice. Make sure you can smoothly move from one aid to the next. You should be familiar with each aid, and should not need to read from the visual to communicate your point.
- Plan use of your visuals before your presentation. You should know exactly when to display your aid and when to put it away. Display your visual aid only when you're ready to use it. When you're done referencing your visual aid, remove it or cover it.
- Stand to the side so you do not block your audience's view of the visual aid.
- When referencing your visual aid, point to it. Do not leave the audience wondering.
- Do not distribute materials during your presentation. Distribute materials either before or after your presentation.

Without practice, you are likely to put up visuals late and leave them up too long. Remember that when visual aids are out, the audience's attention will be on your visual aids. Although you want people to pay attention to your aids, their focus should always be you. Therefore, use only those aids that truly enhance your presentation.
Visual aid mediums Visual aids can be delivered through a variety of mediums. Each has advantages and disadvantages you should be aware of as you plan your presentation.

PowerPoint

PowerPoint is one of the easiest and most professional delivery systems for visual aids. If you do not have a computer available to you during your presentation, you can print out PowerPoint slides to use as handouts or transparencies, as well. PowerPoint software includes many standard templates that allow you to easily integrate images, charts and graphs with text. The templates also take care of many issues such as balance and text size on your behalf. With PowerPoint, it is each to integrate color into your slides, as well. PowerPoint also includes a number of features that, although tempting, should be avoided. For example, PowerPoint offers a library of clip art for your use. Before you integrate any clip art, ask yourself why you're using it. If the answer is "because it's cute,"

don't use it. Unless the clip art happens to perfectly illustrate a key point in your presentation, leave these out. Other features offered by PowerPoint are fly-ins and fade-ins/fade-outs for your slide shows. Such features are distracting. If you're tempted to use them, again, ask yourself why. If your answer is "because it's cool," don't use it.

Transparencies

If you do not have access to PowerPoint software, do not have time to learn to use slideshow software, or will not have access to a computer during your presentation, another option is to create transparencies for use with an overhead projector. Transparencies are created by copying a document onto a sheet of transparency "paper." If you do not have access to a copy machine, your local copy shop will be able to create the transparency for you. Transparencies can be prepared ahead of time using a word processor or can be hand written. Images can be copied from any source. If you use pictures from a book or other printed source, be sure to crop the pictures so that no extraneous words or markings are visible. If you plan to use an overhead projector during your presentation, get there early to test the equipment. Make sure the transparency bulb is working. Adjust the height of the projector so your image is displaying in a place that's visible to everyone in the room. Check the focus and adjust the projector's distance from the projection surface as necessary. There are a number of drawbacks to using an overhead projector. First, the room must be dark for the transparencies to be visible. This leaves you presenting in the dark – though the light of the projector will provide some illumination. Second, the projector's fan can be quite loud depending on the age of the projector. Be sure to consider this as you speak to your audience. Finally, the light from the projector display's in a trapezoidal shape. Since the image isn't perfectly rectangular, make sure nothing important on your transparency is being cut off.

Boards and flip charts

White boards, chalk boards and flip charts are excellent mediums to use when you want your audience to contribute ideas to your presentation or you want to demonstrate "how to" do something like solve a problem. If you plan to collect audience ideas and then refer back to them later, a flip chart is a good choice. This will allow you to cover up the visual aid when you want the audience's attention to return to you. If you want to refer to the aid only once, a white board or chalkboard is a fine choice, as you can erase material once it's served its purpose. Visual aids on flip charts and boards can also be prepared ahead of time. The draw back to using a pre-prepared board during your presentation is that the visual aid is always available to the audience, and you cannot easily cover things up before you're ready to refer to them. Size and penmanship are important issues when writing on a white board or flip chart. Take care to make words legible and visible at the back of the room. Beware of issues such as lines slanting down the or up the page, or letting becoming smaller. As with all visual aids, plan your aids ahead of time. Have an idea of how you want the page to look in the end, and use the space wisely. If spelling isn't one of your strong points, be especially careful or select a different medium entirely.

Handouts

Handouts are a good medium to use to provide the audience material for later reference. Unlike the other delivery systems for visual aids, you can get away with including more information in a handout. If you chose to do so, you should distribute the handouts at the end of your presentation or you'll have to compete with the handouts for your audience's attention. If you'd prefer to use the handout as a presentation guide and plan to refer to the handout during your presentation, use the same guidelines you'd use for all other visual aids. Since you cannot point to handouts during your presentation, if you use multiple pages, make sure your pages are numbered. Always tell your audience which page to look at as you reference your visual aid.

Goodbye and good luck

In public opinion polls, fear of death is second behind fear of public speaking. It needn't be. With preparation and practice, anyone can give a great presentation. The act of getting up in front of an audience imbues you with a certain amount of credibility. To be worthy of the audience's trust, follow a few simple guidelines:

- Be truthful.
- Give credit to your sources.
- Use current information.
- Do not rely excessively on appeals to people's emotions.
- Show respect for your audience's intelligence.

- Always, Always, Always have a plan B & C in case of unforeseen obstacles that prevent the successful completion of plan A.

With the information you've learned in the class, you have all the tools you need to deliver a high-quality presentation that will impress your audience. Best wishes, and may all your presentations be memorable, enjoyable, and informative!