

Visual Aids and Learning Activities

Visual Aids

We live in a world of words—we are bombarded by information. Picture yourself at home or work. If you are typical, these are stacks of notes, lists, papers, memos, articles and brochures—all competing for a moment of your attention.

When you speak in front of a group, you need to do more than contribute to this constant barrage of words. You need to present your information so that it is powerful, clear, convincing, straightforward, and believable. Good visuals are mental shorthand. They can communicate your ideas imaginatively—without adding extra words. Well planned graphics and visuals will literally help your audience to "see what you mean."

When you use high-quality visuals, people enjoy taking notes on your presentations. And when you speak to diverse groups of people, a variety of media is especially important. Some prefer text, others, pictures, others hands-on activities.

Computers make the creative process look simple, but design takes skill and practice just like anything else. Read up on the subject. Talk to professionals. Watch tutorials. Start simple and then slowly add advanced techniques as you master the skills.

What counts as a visual aid?

1. Your face and your body are the primary visual aids. Use them!
2. Presentation software
3. Flip charts (Written on the spot)
4. Posters
5. Handouts
6. Real objects (brought in or out in nature)
7. Videos
8. Lighting effects

When to use visual aids

1. Use a visual to:
 - a. Clarify a point
 - b. Emphasize or reinforce a point
 - c. Add variety
 - d. Change focus
 - e. Make your presentation memorable
 - f. Illustrate factors that are hard to visualize.
2. Avoid using a visual when it
 - a. Distracts or detracts from the focus of your presentation
 - b. Is poor quality
 - c. Is irrelevant (though interesting)
 - d. Is solely a time filler
 - e. Is outdated
 - f. Does not suit your purpose
 - g. Does not fit your audience

Why use visual aids?

1. Visuals make you more persuasive
2. People can grasp more information
3. Visual aids add variety and emphasis to you presentation
4. Your message is presented both orally and visually
5. Visuals help you to be concise
6. Visuals can help to facilitate meetings

Visual media

Choose the medium in which you can produce the most professional visual given your resources. It is better, for instance, when the audience is small, to have neatly lettered flowcharts than slides.

You and your face

Your body is your best visual aid. Use it!

1. Enter the speaking area dynamically, either walking briskly or even running. You want the set a tone of expectation of something good. You are excited to be there!
2. Act out what you are talking about.
3. Exaggerate facial expressions so they can be seen in the back of the room. You may need to practice ahead of time.
4. Use big hand and arm motions, so there is no question about your point.
5. Leave the stage and enter the audience when you want to be more personal or to shock them.
6. If you in a large space and they are projecting your image on a screen, talk with the camera people ahead of time about any limitations on your movement. Warn them that you may leave the stage, or better yet, tell them exactly when you will, so they will be ready.
7. Vary your vocal volume, tempo and speed to emphasize your points.

Presentation software via projector or large TV

This system works well for any size group. But it does have several disadvantages.

1. Because it's so easy presenters tend to do too much of everything. Too many slides, too much info, too many words on a slide, too many type styles, too many animations, too many colors.
2. Its ease also makes us lazy and we don't look at other presentation methods that might be more effective for our topic.
3. It is very linear in organization and limits spontaneity and flexibility based on the audiences stated needs.

Setting up the room

Arrive early to confirm projector/computer connects and possible audio setup. Set up the projector so you get the largest image possible. You will be most effective standing in front of your audience, connected to the computer/phone/tablet by remote control.

Be sure the screen is high enough that it can be seen above the heads of your audience without interfering with anyone's view. The bottom of the screen should be at least four feet above the floor. Consider putting it in a corner and angling it toward the center of the room.

Lots of options

Power Point is not the only option. Also consider:

- Keynote
- Prezi
- Vyond
- Zoho Show
- Google Slides
- Haiku Deck
- Slidedog
- Custom Show
- Visme

Check out this link for a comparison: https://www.vyond.com/resources/the-6-best-business-presentation-software-alternatives-to-powerpoint/?creative=435145545078&keyword=&matchtype=b&network=g&device=c&gclid=EAlaIqObChMI8b_CgLCZ6wIVhL7iCh2WfwkOEAAyAiAAEgLaqfD_BwE

Critical Points

1. As stated earlier, you are the presentation. The “Slide Show” is an aid. If everything you have to say is on the slides, they don’t need you.
2. The best slides have little text on them. Just a point or two. If you have 10 points, make a slide for each and illustrate each point with an applicable photo or other illustration. Better yet, just show the illustration. They can listen to you and view a picture, but they cannot listen to you and read. They will read and ignore you.
3. Make sure you have rights to any photos or illustrations you use. There are websites that offer free pictures such as Pexels.com. Better yet, take your own pictures.
4. Practice your presentation so you know you can get through it in the allotted time.
5. Be very selective with color, font variety, and motion. Most of the time, less is more.
6. Establish a consistent theme of color, type, and layout for all your slides in a given presentation.
7. You don’t have to put your ministry logo on every slide. It wastes space and may conflict visually with your picture or text.
8. The jury is out on which is more legible, Serif, or san serif type, but there is no debate that upper and lower case text is much faster to read than all caps.

Charts and graphs

Charts and graphs help to clarify complex concepts and show relationships between numbers. There are four tips for planning charts and graphs.

1. Make sure your headlines are clear and comprehensive
2. Label every element of a chart or graph clearly
3. Some people do not relate to charts and graphs. Even if you think it's perfectly obvious, plan to explain thoroughly:
 - a. What the chart shows
 - b. What each of the elements is
 - c. What abbreviations or symbols stand for
 - d. What relationships are represented
4. Don't overload your presentation with charts and graphs.
5. Use the right kind of chart:
 - a. Bar charts—emphasize relationships and show how items compare.
 - b. Flow charts—clarify complex relationships.
 - c. Line graphs—illustrate trends, relationships, comparisons (pathfinder club membership growth)
 - d. Pie charts—help convey percentage relationships. The entire chart always represents 100 percent of the total number.

Flip charts or Post-It self-stick charts

Advantages of flip charts

1. Flip charts are inexpensive and adaptable to a variety of situations.
2. They make a great medium for facilitating meetings. By graphically catching ideas, suggestions, and complaints on paper, you can lead shorter meeting in which people feel they are heard.
3. They can be produced on the spot.

Disadvantages

1. Flip charts are rather informal.
2. They require good handwriting.
3. They don't handle large amounts of wording well.
4. They do not work well for more than about forty people, and those forty must be well-arranged so they can all see the flip chart clearly.

Design tips

1. If you prepare your flip chart before your presentation, leave a page or two (whatever it takes) between used pages to completely hide or cover the following information.
2. You can use correction fluid to cover mistakes.
3. Use a design theme as you would in presentation software
4. Use bold color markers
5. Change colors for variety but make sure you do it with purpose, not just to be pretty.
6. Write with the fattest part of the marker

Delivery tips

1. Stand to the side of the flip chart as you speak, and make sure you don't block your audience's view.
2. If you face the flip chart and talk at the same time, double the volume of your voice. It has to project off the flip chart and back to your audience.
3. Make light pencil notes to yourself at the top left corner of the flip chart. As you are speaking, you will have reminder notes to refer to.
4. If you want to appear that you're producing a written sheet spontaneously, lightly pencil in the upper left-hand corner the main points you will discuss. Using your pencil notes, write down your main points and expand on each.
5. Use symbols and abbreviations. Keep things simple.
6. Get help from the audience. Have someone from the audience tape the flip chart sheet to the wall while you are putting a heading onto the next sheet.
7. You can come across as a real artist in a presentation if you lightly pencil in a diagram or picture before your presentation.
8. If there's a particular page you'll be referring to a lot during your presentation, put a masking tape tab on it so you can flip to it quickly.
9. Use lowercase for details
10. Print neatly and clearly
11. Underline for emphasis
12. Check off items as you discuss them.
13. Circle numbers as you talk about them.
14. Use caps for headings
15. Highlight with boxes
16. Lettering on flowcharts needs to be one inch tall for each fifteen feet between the flowchart and the back row.
17. During your presentation, you can write problems in black, hot issues in red, and positive comments in blue.
18. If you speak and write at the same time, stand to one side of the flowchart, or write, then speak.
19. Remember to breathe!

Posters

Advantages

1. Preprinted posters allow you to use electronic design software with many of advantages of presentation software, and use it where there is no electrical power available.

Disadvantages

1. They get tattered with use.
2. Only work well for small groups as their size is limited.
3. They can be expensive to print.

Delivery techniques

1. Many of the same as flip charts, plus...

2. Avoid passing the poster around among the participants. This distracts from the presenter. If you must move the poster around the group, carry it to strategic places throughout the audience as you talk.

Handouts

1. Handouts give you an opportunity to provide lots of additional material:
 - a. Lists of resources
 - b. Contact information
 - c. Additional content
 - d. In session activity instructions
 - e. In session and post session Worksheets
 - f. Follow up activities.
 - g. Quizzes & Puzzles
2. Handouts should be designed for print, not for the screen. They are totally different formats.
3. Never print out mini versions of your slides with lines next to them for notes, as your slides are visual aids, not the text of your presentation.
4. If possible, print on both sides of sheets as it saves paper and is more professional.
5. If possible, have your handouts three-hole punched for possible inclusion in a binder or portfolio

Real objects

Everyone loves “Show and Tell. Real objects can be powerful visual aids. They can be brought into a meeting room or pointed out in nature, if your session is outside.

1. Make sure they are clean and safe.
2. Do not pass them around until after the session, as they will distract from what you are saying.
3. Keep them hidden until they are needed.
4. After they are used, you may put them away, or set them out where they can be seen for the rest of the presentation. Consider their effect as you make this choice.
5. Don't bring valuables. That should be obvious. This includes one of a kind sentimental objects.
6. Having a small physical object that illustrates a key point that can be handed out to each attendee at the end of your workshop is an expensive, but powerful to keep a point in their minds.

Videos

Videos during a presentation or as stand-alone instruction are powerful as they stimulate so many senses at once. But they are not without dangers.

1. You must have permission to show them from the owner, especially if you are being recorded or live streamed.
2. Good video becomes the presentation, and your own presentation must match the quality and power of the video, or you lose credibility.
3. Sound quality is critical for the viewers.
4. Make sure you have watched the ENTIRE video before you use it, so you are not surprised by some offensive content.
5. Consider the tastes of your audience and how they will respond to the style of performance and music that are included in the video.

Lighting effects

The lighting in a room, be it ambient, outdoor, or spot lights and add to the drama of your presentation. A dark room with a brightly lit stage focuses all attention on the stage, but makes group interaction difficult. Flipping lights on and off can be distracting and in some cases difficult if lights are controlled at a distance from the presenter.

Good lighting is critical if notes are being taken, or group projects are part of the presentation. They need to be able to see what they are doing, and be able to avoid tripping over things if movement is required.

Learning activities

Most of us learn best by doing. If you want your audience to have an experience that changes their thinking or applies what you are teaching them, then you need to make opportunity for them to experience it. This can be done in a number of ways. Choosing the best will depend on the workshop setting, characteristics of the audience (age, physical abilities, etc.), time, and space available. Moving a group to a different space takes a lot more time than you would think, and needs to be considered in your sequencing.

1. Mind Mapping - Drawing pictures with your points
2. Group games - typically action or Initiative games. See <https://www.ultimatecampresource.com/team-building-activities/team-building-games-and-initiatives/>
3. Discussion groups
4. Polls
5. Q&A sessions
6. Small group projects
7. Small art or craft projects
8. Specially designed table games
9. Scavenger hunts
10. Role playing
11. Improv skits

Almost all workshops related to Youth & Young Adult Ministries should include one or more of these activities.

Self-evaluation

To improve your effectiveness in planning and using visual aids, it will be helpful to take a look at the expertise you have now. This evaluation will help you identify your strengths and weaknesses. Please read each statement on the following page and circle the number that best describes you. The focus is to be highly effective yet simple and professional in your presentation.

Self-evaluation

Never Always

1. I spent far more time planning and organizing my presentation than worrying about it. 1 2 3 4 5
2. During my presentations, I notice my successes later, I focus on how to learn from the mistakes. 1 2 3 4 5
3. When my visuals contain text, there are no more than 36 words. 1 2 3 4 5
4. My visuals contain only the information that I am presenting in my presentation. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I am familiar with the basic principles of design and keep them in mind when planning visuals. 1 2 3 4 5
6. Everything on my visuals can be seen clearly from the back row. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I remember to have fun and enjoy giving my presentation. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I use a simple, easy_to_read typeface. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I have a logical plan for where and how to use the visual aids in the presentation so they have maximum impact. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I arrive early and check out the equipment until intimately familiar with the on/off switch, location of an extra bulb, focus, and other adjustments. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I locate my visual aids in an effective position in the room where i'm presenting. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I avoid getting caught between the visual aids and the audience. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I am skilled at maintaining eye contact and facing the audience while using visuals. 1 2 3 4 5
14. I avoid reading from my visuals. Instead, my visuals act as a back-up to my presentation. 1 2 3 4 5
15. I clear away visuals when they no longer apply to the subject i'm presenting. I turn off or black out the screen when it is not in use. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I take care that visuals are support—not the focal point—for my presentations. 1 2 3 4 5
17. To avoid detracting from my presentation, i limit the number of visual aids i use. 1 2 3 4 5
18. When using overhead transparencies, i put them in frames with centering marks. 1 2 3 4 5
19. I congratulate myself on a job well done! 1 2 3 4 5
20. I carefully analyze my audience before planning the visuals i will use. 1 2 3 4 5

- If you scored between 90 and 100, you plan to use visual aids very effectively and are probably known as an excellent and persuasive speaker.
- If your total score was between 80 and 90, you have the basic expertise to become highly adept at planning and using dynamic visual aids.
- If your score was between 30 and 80, this book has all sorts of information that will move you into one of the top two categories.
- If your score was below 30, you have lots of opportunities to improve you presentation. It takes some work and it can be done. Stick with it.

Creating visuals

This section primarily deals with designing for Presentation Software, Posters, and Handouts

Six basic design principles

A little knowledge of basic design goes a long way when you plan visual aids. You don't have to be an artist or spend a lot of time studying design. As a matter of fact, six principles give you everything you need to know.

1. Keep it simple.
2. Leave lots of white space or "empty space." Bunch things together, leaving plenty of unused space around them.
3. Keep it organized. Line things up.
4. Create a path for the eye. You can do this by organizing most important to least important, from left to right, and from top to bottom, using arrows and borders, or overlapping words and other elements.
5. Make something dominant. The audience ought to be able to pick out your most important element immediately, because it is the biggest, boldest, or brightest.
6. Divide space in an interesting way.

Design hints

1. Put a headline on every visual.
2. Each visual should present one idea.
3. Add interest to a words-only visual with a large first letter.
4. Photos and graphics face the middle of your visual.
5. Check carefully for errors.
6. Use a framing device to pull two elements together.
7. Contrast aids impact and legibility. Contrast in tone, color, size, shape, or pattern. In print, black on white works best. In projection, white on black works best.

Color psychology

1. When you choose colors for a visual aid, remember that people associate feelings and concepts with each color.
 - a. green - growth and movement
 - b. blue The most universally-liked color; can represent calm; institutional
 - c. red Stands for power, energy, or danger; red is difficult to see at a distance
 - d. yellow Thought of as positive; more people dislike yellow than any other color
 - e. purple Has spiritual meaning for some people
2. One, two or three colors are plenty—don't overdo it.

Use of text

Seventy five percent of all visuals are slides that show words alone. A visual aid almost always includes words.

1. What to include
 - a. Think of yourself as a headline writer
 - b. Distill your message to its absolute essence.
 - c. Use the fewest words possible
2. The rule of six—thou shalt not use more than six lines, and thou shalt not use more than six words per line.
3. Lettering size—how large should the words be? Consider the rule of six above, and then consider how far from the screen or poster your viewers will be. The size of the screen or poster will also need to be considered. Text should be clear and readable from the back row, no matter how big the room.

Tips on visuals

1. Remember that you're the presentation; the visuals are aids.
2. Position yourself so everyone in the room can see and hear you.
3. Face your audience and maintain eye contact when you use visuals. Speak to the back row.
4. Avoid reading from your slide.
5. Ask someone you know to keep notes on your presentation (continuity of information, presentation techniques, eye contact, voice), and to coach you at the end of your presentation.
6. When in doubt, do without. Simple is almost always better.
7. When the light goes on, there is drama.
8. If using presentation software, have the first slide up and ready to go before the presentation starts.
9. Use a pointer, especially an electronic/laser pointer, with presentation software as it double as software controller. There are several types of pointers:
 - a. The electronic with laser pointer
 - b. A 40-inch wooden pointer with a black rubber tip;
10. Have a collection of Pens and markers with you. You can buy permanent, water soluble, or dry erase markers for use on flip charts, tags etc.