TIPS FOR SPEAKERS • VISUAL AIDS

This tip sheet has been compiled by the staff of the Tutoring Center. It highlights suggestions for creating a good PowerPoint and also illuminates common mistakes. It is **not** intended to be inclusive of all required or recommended elements. Students should consider this to be some general rules for using visual aids and should always defer to an instructor's specific examples and guidelines. Questions about those requirements should be brought to the instructor.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A VISUAL AID?

Typically speaking, a visual aid can include such things as models, charts/graphs, visual demonstrations, videos, handouts, objects and of course, PowerPoint presentations. An important thing to consider is the word "aid." It is only considered to be a visual aid if it is used during the presentation, not after. For example, if I bring a handout and say, "Pick one up on your way out," my visual aid did NOT aid me during the speech. Another key concern is how relevant the visual aid is to the presentation. Is it something important to the information? Is it something people don't see every day? Is it something that will help people to understand the topic? Is it visually appealing?

We have put together a list of eight common do's and don'ts for dealing with visual aid

1. Get on your feet and practice with the visual aid.

- To accurately time the speech
- To answer questions about where things should be kept and displayed
- To answer questions about lighting and electrical conditions

**2. Show the visual aid only when you are ready to talk about it.**

- To prevent splitting the focus of the audience
    * With posters, turn backward
    * With handouts, leave facedown
    * With PowerPoints, use blank slides
    * With models, keep covered

3. Talk about the visual aid when you finally do show it.

- To keep the visual from having to explain itself
- To make the visual relevant

4. Develop an audience eye (Imagine yourself as an audience member watching the visual aid).

- Color and size
    * Is there enough contrast in the colors to be seen?
    * Is the lettering large enough to be seen?
- Sightlines (imaginary peripheral lines drawn between the audience's position and the position of the visual)
    * To ensure everyone can see the visual without obstruction
    * To ensure that the speaker is not blocking the view of the audience
    * To ensure that objects and furniture are not blocking the view of the audience
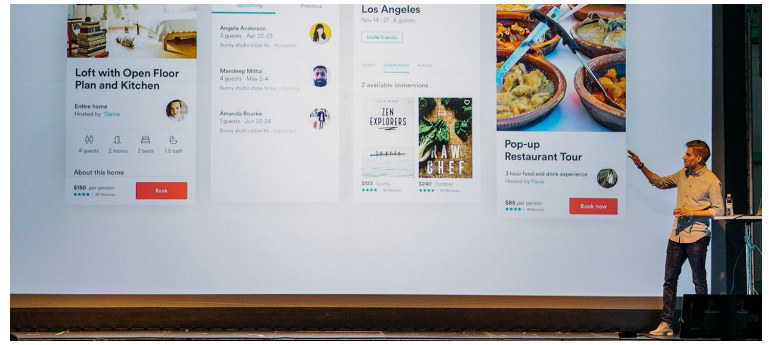
5. Don't overdo the visual aids (bring the best and leave the rest).

- To prevent clutter
- To ensure that the speaker doesn't have too many things to manipulate during the speech
- To ensure that the speaker talks about each visual aid

6. Do not pass visual aids around the room.

- To prevent losing control over the amount of time spent on the visual aid
- To prevent people who have had it, have it and or going to have it from diverting their attention away from the speaker
- To prevent traffic control issues such as people having to get up and walk over to the next person, or people not getting it at all because of the direction in which the aid went

7. Have a Plan B for live visual aids.

- **Do not use volunteers**
  - * Whenever possible, bring someone you have had an opportunity to work with
  - * Make sure the person knows what you expect from them
- **Children**
  - * Remember to bring a backup (maybe a doll or poster) if child is not being cooperative
  - * Make sure the child knows what you expect from them
- **Animals**
  - * Bring someone the animal knows and have that person handle the animal
  - * Bring in and the appropriate time (see Rule 2)
  - * Remove the animal after the demonstration

8. Warn people before the speech if the visual could cause physical or emotional stress to certain audience members.

- Graphic pictures
- Graphic models
- Animals (some people are phobic)