

VISUAL AIDS

- I. Visual aids are important -- 85% of our learning is visual, 11% is oral. Remember, "You are the presentation, not your visuals." Good AV materials:
 - a. Center the attention of your listeners.
 - b. Make your ideas easier to understand.
 - c. Emphasize your information and ideas.
 - d. Help your listeners remember your talk.

- II. Types of AV materials:
 - a. *Overhead transparency*: easiest, most workable aid.
 - b. *Slides*: several pluses and minuses. Pluses: clear and vivid, controlled, best way to show pictures, most realistic. Minuses: can't change order, no eye contact, formalism limits exchange, dimmed lights after a meal is deadly, only vocal dimension of presenter is experienced. Don't let anyone else operate the slides!
 - c. *Prepared photos and exhibits*: excellent tools -- make sure everyone can see what you're talking about.
 - d. *Flip charts or chalkboards*: the most flexible, inexpensive tool. Flip charts can be prepared beforehand (write on very other sheet to create an "unveiling effect"). Emphasize important words with bold colors.
 - e. *Videos*: very exciting if properly edited.
 - f. *Props*: anything that can accentuate your point. Use them dramatically and creatively.
 - g. *Handout*: effective as a "leave-behind" but can be distracting during presentation. Do not hand out materials until you are finished or until you can read through it with the audience.

- III. Do's and Don'ts in using visual aids:
 - a. Every visual aid should be clear, large, legible and brief.
 - b. Do use color -- people respond to it. This is easy with flip charts. You can highlight transparencies with color pens as well.
 - c. Don't rush anything you display. Don't be afraid to allow a moment of silence while the audience reads your slide or transparency.
 - d. Each visual should make a single point.
 - e. Don't talk to your visual -- always face the audience.
 - f. Try not to stand in front of what you are showing.

IV. Tips for overheads:¹

- a. **Titles:** well-placed titles help viewers focus. Try to limit these to less than five words. Leave out unnecessary words as "Graph of . . ." (people will see it's a graph).
- b. **Subtitles:** use when you need more than a few words to describe an image or idea. Always read your slides from the audiences perspective.
- c. **Punctuation:** keep punctuation to a minimum -- especially parentheses and quotation marks. Avoid too many capital letters, they make sentences hard to read.
- d. **Abbreviations:** avoid abbreviations and acronyms unless everyone knows what you're talking about.
- e. Use cardboard slide frames and write notes to yourself above and below the slide for comments to be made before the slide and after the slide, respectively.
- f. **Type alignment:** 1) flush left -- establishes solid visual anchor, easy to read; 2) Flush right -- strong visual effect, but decreases legibility due to poor eye tracking, use when only a few lines of type; 3) centering -- formal, conservative, safe, uninteresting; and 4) justified -- doesn't work on AV's.
- g. **Design elements:** 1) rules -- horizontal and vertical lines add clarity, especially when space is tight, don't use for emphasis (rely instead on color or type style); 2) borders -- greater impact than rules, use to convey the message that whatever is inside the box doesn't belong with what's outside, borders don't make statements look important and can actually lessen impact by cluttering the visual field; 3) boxes -- solid color box without a border, like borders but better when color is used, don't use gray scale boxes since type is too hard to read; 4) blank space -- space is very effective in directing people's attention, keep images clean.
- h. **Colors:** Use to identify like and unlike elements, indicate importance in a progression of points, emphasize points. Color can set a mood. Cool colors appear to recede; warm colors seem to approach. Suggest distance by putting blues behind your subject and oranges and reds in the foreground. Use bold colors in the foreground and pastels in the background. **Transparencies:** keep colors dark so they won't wash out, use white background with black or dark blue type for greatest contrast, red is good for highlighting, stay away from yellow, gray is good for background, light type against black or dark background also works

¹Adapted from Margaret Y. Rabb, *The Presentation Design Book*. Chapel Hill, NC, 1990.

well, blue type on a black background is going to be illegible. Don't use too many bright and vivid colors, "Speak, don't scream."

- i. **Typefaces:** Helvetica is the most widely used, it has a simple appearance and is not distracting. Times is more effective in print than on projection media. Don't set type too small or too thin. Stick with one, at most two, typefaces. Use the same typefaces in the same functions on your slides.