

TIPS FOR SPEAKERS

2008 Concrete Bridge Conference

ABOUT THE DESIGN OF YOUR VISUAL AIDS

After all is said and done, keep in mind that YOU are your best visual aid. Start with the idea that you don't need visual aids, and then convince yourself that using them will indeed make for a clearer presentation. Remember -never mix visual aid types in a short presentation; decide which type is best and go for it.

The virtue of visuals is that they can demonstrate relationships, emphasize ideas, and clarify structure-more quickly and more clearly than doing without them. If the visuals you're thinking of using meet these criteria, then here are ideas for making sure they work.

1. Make Them Legible

No matter how much time and money you've put into the production of your visual aids, it's wasted if your audience can't read them. If it's important enough to be a visual, it's important enough to be legible. We promise you that no one in your audience will complain if the lettering is too big. You should never have to say "I know you can't see this, but" Please respect your audience by using quality visual aids or they may leave your presentation.

Here are simple ways to ensure that your visual aids will be legible:

- Use 24-point type for lettering done in ALL CAPITALS and 32-point for lettering in Capitals and Lowercase
- The projected height of letters (including lowercase) and numbers should measure at least 25 mm (1 in.) on the screen.
- Print your visual on paper and measure the text. The height of letters (including lowercase and numbers) should be at least 1/50 (2 percent) of the longer dimension of the paper. Here are some examples:

Paper Size (cm)	Minimum Letter Height (mm)	Paper Size (in.)	Minimum Letter Height (in.)
22 X 28	5.6	8.5 X 11	0.22
25 X 38	7.6	10 X 15	0.30

Improve visibility with a sans serif typeface such as Helvetica, Arial, or Universal instead of a serif typeface like Times.

The minimum height of the smallest letters on *transparencies* (including lowercase) is 5 mm (3/16 in.). Note: Overhead projectors supplied at most meetings have a 10" x 10" aperture opening (viewing surface).

2. Keep Them Simple

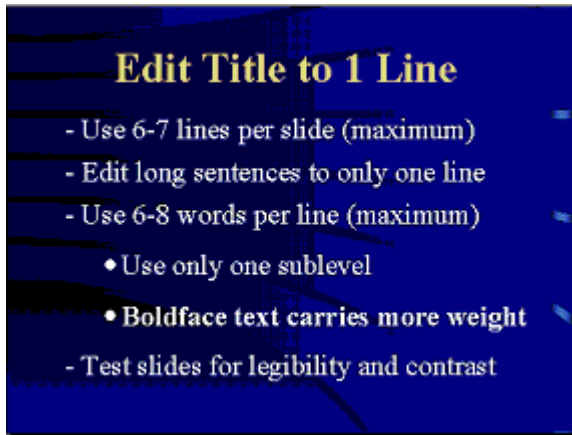
Visual aids used in a presentation must be twice as simple and four times as bold as those used in a written report. Be brutal with details:

- Round off numbers; cut decimal places.
- Use a scale along either the horizontal or vertical axis of a graph, bar chart, or column chart instead of numbers at the ends of the bars or columns.

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- Substitute symbols for words-\$ is better than "dollars"; % is better than "percent."
- Abbreviate where possible without creating confusion.
- Delete footnotes; introduce the information as part of what you say if it's important enough to mention.
- Omit sources; leave them for the written paper.
- Omit lines that detract: avoid underlines, excessive grid rulings, unnecessary outlines, and company logos.



3. Use Text Visuals Sparingly

Avoid using text visuals as cue cards or crutches for what you're going to say. Put that text in the notes you'll refer to as you speak. Use text visuals only to structure a complex concept or to emphasize groups of ideas, such as 3 conclusions, 4 recommendations, 5 next steps. And if you do use text visuals, be brutal with your delete pencil: edit 10 words to 4, 4 words to 3, 3 words to 2.

What the speaker should say:

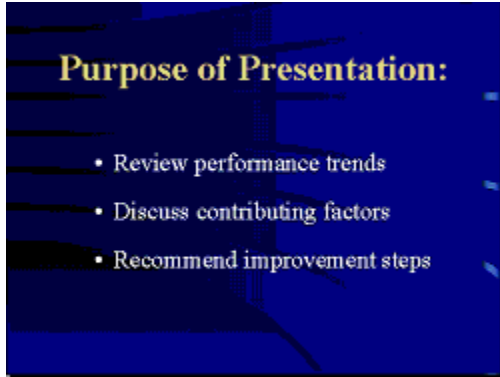
Purpose of this presentation:

1. To share with you the results of our study on highway safety performance through
 - Reviewing performance trends of different highway classifications
 - Giving you the analysis of the major factors contributing to this performance
2. To outline the steps that are recommended to enhance safety on highway classes needing improved performance

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What the slide should show:



4. Don't Crowd Your Slides

Err on the side of more slides with less on each slide. Keep in mind that it takes exactly the amount of time to speak through six ideas on one slide as it does to speak through one idea on each of six slides. Besides, making your audience look at the same slide while you speak through the six points does not make for visual excitement.

5. Use Color with Purpose, Not as a Decoration

For example,

- To emphasize a trend line, a component, a row of data, a title;
- To identify a recurring theme throughout the presentation (display related data in the same color);
- To distinguish actual from projected, one trend from another;
- To symbolize the meaning of a word ("losses" in red, "Go" in green);
- Use contrasting colors-for example, bright yellow or white lettering against a black, deep blue, or deep green background. Avoid pastels and red or green lettering;
- Too many colors in a single visual will reduce contrast and legibility.

Generally, use no more than four colors in a single visual.

SPEAKING TIPS

1. Talk to Your Audience, Don't Read Them a Paper

Think of this as a communication with your audience, rather than a presentation to the audience. Spend more time with the audience than with your paper: use eye contact; move your eyes around the room. Speak clearly and avoid monotone. Let your confidence, conviction, and enthusiasm show.

2. Be Natural, Not Perfect

Don't be afraid to make mistakes, to say the wrong thing at the wrong time, to forget an important point, to have no answer for a question. We promise you that you will; you're human. Mistakes

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are unavoidable; suffering is optional. Better to be your comfortable best self than try to be a perfect someone you're not.

3. Rehearse, Rehearse, Rehearse

Rehearse before the presentation-during it is too late. The first time you rehearse, do it alone with a tape recorder so you can listen to what you're saying. Rehearse a second time in front of colleagues who are sensitive to your feelings, objective about the situation, realistic about the pressures you face, and constructive with their suggestions. Rehearse a third time in front of videotaping equipment so you can see yourself from the audience's point of view. **Time your presentation to keep within your allotted time!** Help the presiding officer, yourself, and your audience by sticking to your allotted speaking time (generally 20 minutes-15 for presentation, 5 for questions).

4. Encourage Questions

Be glad your audience is asking questions; it shows they're paying attention.

- Be patient and listen to the question without stepping on the questioner's words.
- Pause before responding; don't rush your answer. Make the questioner feel that the question was important enough for you to think about an answer.
- Repeat the question into the microphone so that everyone in the room knows what it is.
- Answer only the question that's been asked -no more and no less.
- Answer with eye contact on others in the room, not only the person who asked the question.

5. Seek Feedback

Ask for feedback on your visual aids and presentation style from the session moderator, committee members, audiovisual technician, or TRB staff. These people have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly in presentations and can provide constructive comments to make your next presentation even better.

6. Humor

Humor can be an effective tool for establishing rapport with your audience or making a point. Humor can do more harm than good, however, if it offends or denigrates others. Any joke you tell should be in good taste and appropriate for the topic. Your presentation should be remembered for the information it conveys, rather than for the jokes it contains.

Reference: Transportation Research Board