

## Visual Aid Use in Public Speaking

1. **Visual aids should be easy to see.** This may seem obvious, but it's so obvious that many speakers don't consider this when selecting a visual aid. Think about it from the perspective of the audience. Have you used colors and text in a way that will be easy to read? Is the visual aid large enough? Will *everyone* in the room be able to see the visual aid?
2. **Visual aids should be easy to understand.** People should be able to look *quickly* at your visual aid and get the point. They can't pay close attention to you and close attention to the visual aid, so make things easy for them. Each visual aid should only make one point. If you're using a graph or table of some sort, keep it as simple as you can. And if you're using a visual aid with text, use as little text as possible or you will distract the audience.
3. **Visual aids should look professional.** A sloppy visual aid will kill your credibility. Remember, professional doesn't necessarily mean fancy, but it does mean neat and organized. Don't use "cutesy" visual aids, even for a class presentation. And *always* make sure everything is spelled correctly!
4. **Visual aids should *demonstrate* something.** A good visual aid doesn't just list information: it makes a point. Let's say you're giving a speech about the environmental damage done by cruise ships. You could list the different types of damage caused by cruise ships on a slide. But that doesn't *demonstrate* anything. A better visual aid would be a photograph of a shoreline that has been damaged because of pollution by cruise ships. Or you could show a graph that shows the increase of a chemical in the water over a period of time when cruise travel has increased in that area.
5. **Visual aids should be explained clearly.** Make sure the audience understands what your visual aid is supposed to illustrate. Don't assume they'll figure it out. In your speech about cruise ship pollution, don't show the audience a bunch of dirty water and assume they'll know what it is. Instead, explain that this is a photograph of the ocean taken twenty minutes after a cruise ship came by.
6. **Visual aids should not be distracting.** Your visual aid should blend into your speech. As a rule of thumb, you should *not* pass a visual aid around the room for people to look at while you speak. They'll be looking at the visual aid instead of listening to you, and the audience will be distracted by having to pass something to other people.
7. **Choose visual aids that have relevance to your audience.** If you're giving a speech about hate crimes on campus, don't show them a photo of the aftermath of a hate crime on another campus. Use a photo from *your* campus-- or at least from a campus in your area.
8. **Visual aids should be appropriate.** Use common sense. If you're giving a speech about the importance of wearing a condom, there are ways to illustrate this that won't gross anybody out, and there are ways to illustrate this that will. Err on the side of being conservative here, especially if you don't know everyone in your audience.