

## Tips for Visual Aids

Visual aids are very effective in presentations because sight is the most powerful communication channel. We get more information and more complex information through our eyes than through any of our other senses. Visual aids help to focus the audience and provide them with much more information than just through speaking to them.

### Preparing effective visual aids

Many people use PowerPoint slides as the main visual aid in their presentations, but other aids could be posters, whiteboards or models. Handouts can be used for detailed information. There are some general guidelines for effective PowerPoint presentations which also apply to other forms of visual aids.

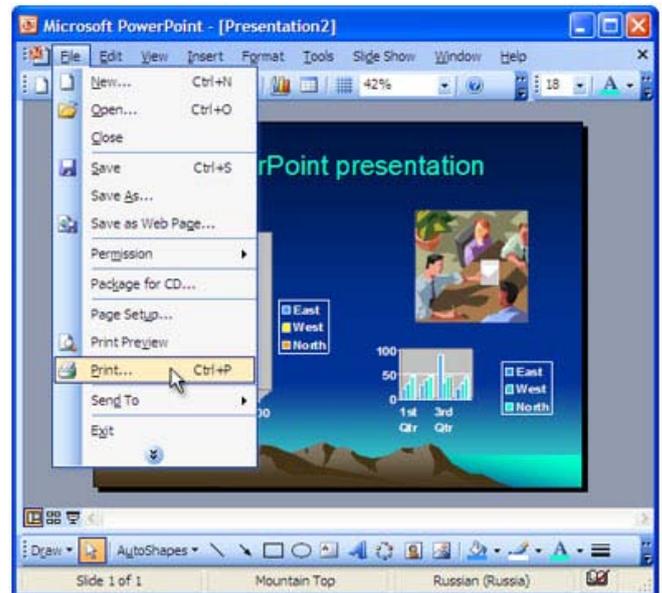
*Good visual aids illustrate the points you are making, not just restate them*

### Keep the writing to a minimum

Keep slides uncluttered with plenty of space between any words or images.

- **Write in note form** rather than whole sentences.
- **Write your points large** in a minimum of 20 point font so they are easy to see.
- **Don't have more than 5 – 6 points** on any one slide.
- If possible, **use pictures** to illustrate your point rather than words that repeat what you say.

- **Minimise the number of slides** you use. A reasonable guideline is one slide for every two minutes of presentation.



### Use design wisely

- **Develop a colour theme** or use one that is built into the program. Too many different colours become distracting. Two colours that either accent or contrast one main colour tend to give variety without becoming overwhelming. Dark colours usually can be read more easily.
- Also, generally **use the same font throughout** and use the same font sizes for titles, headings and text.
- Likewise, if you are using animations in your text or when changing slides, **use the same animations throughout** so that it is consistent.

### Keep graphics relevant

- Effective graphs or charts are those which **show only the information which is relevant** to the points you are making. Too much other information will only clutter your graphics and your audience will not be able to clearly see the points you are making. You may need to redraw

or adapt any graphs and charts you find for your presentation.

- Additionally, any **pictures, cartoons or diagrams used should be immediately relevant**. They should add to your presentation rather than confuse your audience because their relevance is not immediately clear.
- Ensure that any graphs or pictures you use are **large enough** for your audience to see.

## Using Visual Aids

While PowerPoint slides and other visual aids can be very powerful in a presentation, they can also be very distracting if they are not used correctly.

- Be careful **not to block anyone's view** while you are talking. Position yourself carefully so that everyone has a clear line of sight.
- **Refer to all the points and illustrations** that you put up to avoid confusion for your audience. There should be a clear link between what your audience hears and what they see.

- When talking about anything on the screen, **look at the audience not the screen**. Otherwise with your back to your audience, they will find it harder to hear and you lose eye contact with them. You may be able to have the computer screen in front of you so that you can see what they see without turning around.
- **Practise your presentation** using your visual aids. That way you will be able to use them smoothly without having to stop and think about what you are doing. Your audience will then stay focused on you rather than being distracted by your aids and miss the main points of your presentation.

### PHOTO REFERENCE

fitzp076, 'put it on the press', In:  
[http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://blog.lib.umn.edu/fitzp076/architecture/print\\_powerpoint.jpg](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://blog.lib.umn.edu/fitzp076/architecture/print_powerpoint.jpg), ed, 2008, PowerPoint screen

