

DESIGNING AND USING VISUALS

This job aid describes how effective visuals can enhance your teaching. It contains techniques and guidelines to help you create and use effective visuals.

This job aid will help you to:

- use best practice techniques for the design of visuals (text and graphics)
- use sound and animation in presentation software appropriately

net Includes techniques for online courses.



Why use visuals?

PowerPoint slides and overhead transparencies (OHTs) are useful visual aids for all sizes of classes, provided they are well designed and appropriately used. They are cost-effective and quick to produce, and most classrooms are equipped with the means to display them.

Visual aids can be used to:

- organize your lesson or presentation
- provide interest and motivation for your students
- increase retention of information and learning
- save instructional time and preparation time because they can be reused
- aid communication
- explain the relationships of parts to the whole
- clarify something difficult, complicated or very large
- stress important points

If you are using PowerPoint slides or other presentation software to design your visuals, you can automatically print the outline view and print 2, 3, or 6 frames per page. This makes an excellent note-taking guide.

Key principles

Apply the following six principles to the design of your visuals.

Chunk information—put similar materials together in manageable, sensible chunks. If information must be split over a number of slides or screens, consider reducing the size of the chunks you have.

Organize the content—use basic principles such as simple to complex, known to unknown, knowledge to application. Position any image as close to the relevant content as possible.

Relevance—be sure that the information or visual that you are using is relevant to the topic. Be able to give a rational reason for something to be in the visual. Just because the technology exists isn't a good enough reason to use a visual. Over-use of bulleted slides is a common student complaint.

Importance—place the most important information early in your slides or visuals. Call attention to it in some way. Be sure it really is an important idea to include.

Appropriateness—consider the audience receiving the information and the material being presented.

Visual effectiveness—keep your visuals simple so that they have the most impact.

Services to Industry

- Performance Consulting
- Front End Analysis (FEA)
- Course Design
- Train-the-Trainer
- Job Aids and Course Materials
- Course Evaluation

Use key phrases rather than long sentences.

Curriculum Development

- Curriculum Redesign
- New Courses and Programs
- Existing Program Revitalization
- Teaching/Learning Materials
- Employability Skills

Use no more than 6 words per line and no more than 6 short lines per slide.

Learning Skills Development

- Time Management
- Reading Skills
- Study Skills
- Note-taking Skills
- Listening Skills

Ensure that all type is visible from the back of the room (all lettering should be at least 1/4" high or 24 pts).

Clients

The logo for nGRAIN, featuring the word "nGRAIN" in a bold, sans-serif font with a registered trademark symbol. The "n" is in a light blue color, and "GRAIN" is in black.The logo for terasen Gas, featuring a stylized blue and green circular icon above the word "terasen" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with "Gas" in a smaller font below it.The logo for TELUS, featuring a stylized green and blue "t" icon followed by the word "TELUS" in a bold, sans-serif font.

Leave plenty of white space around images.

Where Are We?

A map of North America showing the United States and parts of Canada and Mexico. The map is colored in shades of green and blue, with a grid overlay.

Use a graphic rather than text

Degree Development

STAGE 1 Getting Started	STAGE 2 Needs Assessment
STAGE 3 Letter of Intent	STAGE 4 Degree Proposal
STAGE 5 Implementation	

If you have more than 36 words of content, break them up into a series of slides beginning with an overview slide.

Degree Development

**STAGE 5
Implementation**

Degree Development

**STAGE 4
Degree Proposal**

Degree Development

**STAGE 3
Letter of Intent**

Degree Development

**STAGE 2
Needs Assessment**

Degree Development

**STAGE 1
Getting Started**

- working group
- research
- project plan

Making your visuals effective

Use the following checklist to ensure your overheads and PowerPoint slides are effective.

Content—I have:

- Checked the learning outcomes to establish what is needed
- Carefully chosen the material and included essential details only
- Presented only one main idea per visual
- Obtained permission to reproduce copyrighted material

Format—I have:

- Oriented the visuals to be wide (landscape) rather than tall (portrait)
- Used templates where possible (for consistency)
- Placed the most important points at the top left or bottom right
- Used plenty of white or blank space, especially around images
- Presented numeric data in graph form with very clear formats

Text—I have:

- Used simple, clear language
- Used key phrases rather than long sentences
- Used no more than 6 short lines per slide
- Used no more than 6 words per line
- Considered using a series of slides rather than a single one containing more than 36 words
- Used upper and lower case text, not all capitals
- Used a simple and consistent font throughout (sans serif fonts, e.g., Arial, Verdana, or Tahoma are easiest for viewing)
- Limited each slide to two different font types (usually one type for title text and another type for body text)
- Used different font sizes for emphasis and contrast, selecting a minimum font size of 24 pt
- Used special effects like bold and drop shadows for emphasis, when appropriate
- Used bullets as anchor points
- Used parallel structure with bullets

Graphics—I have:

- Used graphics rather than text whenever possible
- Chosen simple, clear images
- Labelled all important parts of each graphic
- Shown a scale if the size of an object is hard to gauge
- Avoided showing only part of an object
- Used clip art sparingly (e.g., every third or fifth slide)
- Stayed away from clip art for presentations that include charts, photographs, or drawings
- Used no more than one clip art image on a single slide

Colour—I have:

- Used colour sparingly to highlight key features
- Used colours that are clearly visible and readable
- Limited meaningful colour coding to five colours
- Used strongly contrasted colours rather than similar ones
- Used colour for separating, defining, and associating information

Background (PowerPoint slides)—I have:

- Chosen a background to enhance information, not overpower
- Reserved multicolour, highly textured, or complicated backgrounds for text slides only
- Used a consistent background throughout the presentation
- Selected a light or dark background, based on the amount of light in the room (light backgrounds and dark text in well lit rooms; dark backgrounds and light text in rooms with lots of lighting control)

Transitions (PowerPoint slides)—I have:

- Avoided using a different transition for every slide, using special transitions here and there for effect and emphasis
- Set the transition speed to fast to give my presentation a snappier feel and pace

Sound and animation—I have:

- Used special effects sparingly for maximum impact
- Used sounds to serve a specific purpose—to complement and give further instruction

Using visuals

As well as making sure your visuals are effectively designed, you need to make sure that they are used appropriately.

Use the following checklist to prepare and deliver your presentation.

Preparing the room and equipment—I have:

- Checked that the overhead projector and screen or digital projector and computer work reliably
- Checked that the lighting in the room is appropriate or adjustable (I may need to switch lights off above the front row)
- Focused the image
- Stood at the back of the room and checked that all slides are readable from the back of the room
- Checked that I can tilt the screen to prevent distorted images
- Located the telephone number for AV Services (local 8780)

Preparing visuals for delivery—I have:

- Used the checklist on pages 5–6 while creating my visuals
- Included a visual to start with that outlines the topic
- Made printed copies of the visuals as student handouts
- Layered together sets of overlays to show complex information
- Numbered the slides to indicate the order of use
- Noted additional comments on the frames of the OHTs or in the notes section of the PowerPoint or other presentation software
- Prepared an alternative strategy in case the equipment fails

Delivery—I have:

- Practiced using the projector smoothly and efficiently
- Used the fade or black screen when not in use to avoid distracting the students
- Checked that there is space to stand to one side facing the class so that the screen is not obscured by me or my shadow
- Brought a pointer or will use the cursor to indicate sections of the slide as I speak (I point to what is displayed, not the computer screen)
- Used PowerPoint transitions or planned how to gradually reveal any lists on a slide as I speak
- Noted that I must shoulder-check that the images remain clear and correctly placed as I speak
- Brought some blank OHTs and a pen in case I need to illustrate something

Want to try something other than bulleted text?

Check out these two presentation techniques for a non-traditional approach to your lessons or presentation.

Beyond Bullet Points by Cliff Atkinson (in BCIT Library)

Atkinson's approach to designing presentations is to tell a story using one full sentence plus an illustration or photograph per slide. Each slide should flow smoothly from one to the next, telling the listeners a story. His belief is that people will remember stories, not bulleted lists.

"pecha kucha" developed by Mark Dytham and Astrid Klein

Dytham and Klein developed a new form of presenting they have dubbed "pecha kucha" (Japanese for "chatter"). This form of presentation style has a simple set of rules—exactly 20 slides displayed for 20 seconds each. Say what you need to say in six minutes and forty seconds. Many of the presentations that follow this style tend to incorporate more illustrations and graphics than text. You can find out more about pecha kucha on the Internet.

Online development and delivery of visuals

The principles described in "Making your visuals effective" also apply when developing visuals for your online course.

Keep in mind that your visuals will contain key phrases rather than long sentences, so your students will need further explanation, either in text or audio format.

You can add audio to your presentation and deliver it either synchronously, using a tool like Elluminate Live®, or asynchronously, by uploading it to your online course or delivering it as a podcast. The LTC can help you with best use practices and technical assistance with these educational technologies. Contact your school liaison for more information.