

Empower Your Speaking with Visual Aids

Every effective speaker uses visual aids. Think back to the times you have been part of an audience. The best speakers used this even when you did not think of them. In church or temple, for example, the speaker wears certain robes, reads from a book of scriptural writings or is surrounded by religious symbols. Sacred music plays in the background before or after the talk. As a speaker, you use visual aids to communicate better and help your audience understand and remember your message. It can be:

1. Provide support and emphasize main ideas
2. Facilitate understanding
3. Encourage emotional involvement
4. Aid with delivery
5. Add to your credibility
6. Decrease your nervousness, because they can give something to do with your hands
7. Draw audience attention away from you personally and onto your topic
8. Make it almost impossible to forget what you want to say.

Good visual aids also help listeners by sorting and organizing information. A well-organized text slide, for example, shows one main point with three to five supporting statements. This way, your audience can file the information away in their minds, in an organized fashion, and pull it up again whenever they need it. Visual aids do more than just help audiences learn. They increase the entertainment value of your talk by adding interest and color. Actually, they cover more than just the visual. People learn better the more their senses are engaged. So if you are giving a talk about aromatherapy, you will want to use a lightly scented candle or other product to illustrate what you are talking about. If you are teaching a cooking technique for a small class, of course you will offer everyone a taste of the finished dish. Some of them are distracting, annoying or simply too much. Here are some tips for creating and using effective aids: Use some kind, even if you do not have much time to prepare. Even a simple article or picture helps anchor your speech in the listeners mind. Keep it simple. Flip charts or PowerPoint slides with text should highlight just a few words or phrases per page. Just enough to help you and your audience remember the main points. If it takes more than a few seconds to understand the text, the audience will go into reading mode and stop listening. Make sure ahead of time that your venue can accommodate your visual aids. Try to visit the room you will speak in before the big event. Make sure there is a stand for your flip chart or bring one. If you use pictures or other artifacts, make sure they are directly connected to your topic. Enhance your audiences memory, not distract from it. It is useful to watch video of good speeches. Notice how effective speakers use it to emphasize a point, make a transition and remind themselves of their next points. You will see that what a person wears can be for good or bad. Once you have chosen and created your visual aids, it is important to practice using them. This gives you a chance to make your transitions smooth and ensure that you have all the supplies you need. Practice in front of family or friends and let them tell you whether it is useful or distracting. Developing good visual aids is just one creative aspect of effective public speaking. Using them well can make your presentation more enjoyable, both for you and your audience.

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