



# Visual Aids

Visual aids are a necessity in this day and age. It's not often that you'll see a speech without some sort of visual presentation—whether it's a business meeting with tablets or a poster board at a child's science fair.

Here are basic tips for using visual aids most effectively:

## IN GENERAL

**Get ready.** Prepare and practice with your visuals ahead of time, at least a few days to a week before you are scheduled. This goes for every aspect of your presentation, from delivery to Q&A, but it especially helps with visual aids. If you aren't familiar with your visual aids, you'll spend more time looking at the board/screen/etc. than your audience, and that makes you come off as unprofessional, unprepared, and uninterested in the project. It will also help with timing - you don't want to move onto another subject while the previous slide is still displayed, which can be very awkward for you and your audience.

**Talk it up.** Explain the visual, don't just throw it in front of the audience and expect them to interpret the information. Point out important parts like labels, certain colors, characteristics, or other details appropriate to your thesis or topic.

**Give credit where credit is due.** Cite sources correctly. Often, it's acceptable to just write "Photo courtesy of \_\_\_\_\_" and insert the organization or website on which you found the resource, but double-check with your professor or the photo's author if you're unsure. Different

citation styles have different requirements, so make sure you are following proper protocol.

## **FOR TECHNOLOGICAL OR COMPUTER VISUALS**

**Keep it simple.** Don't use too much text or pictures! Too much clutter can distract an audience from listening to what you're saying, which is, after all, the point of public speaking. Don't use full sentences - use bullet points or fragments instead.

**Point it out.** Consider using a laser pointer (they're not too expensive and easy to find) if you have specific areas to highlight or tricky documents to display (ex: showing certain notes/chords on sheet music).

**Keep it moving.** Be willing to move around. Moving increases dynamism in a presentation, but don't stand right in front of the projector or screen. It will make it hard for you to see and obstruct your audience's view. Stand off to the sides and move back and forth between the two or your podium/stand.

**Check and double check.** Make sure all equipment is working. If the unthinkable happens and the technology malfunctions and can't be fixed, don't panic. Be well-prepared in your speaking and movements to have your body and voice act as the dynamo and highlight of the presentation.

## **FOR HANDOUTS, ETC.**

**Be overprepared.** Sometimes it's nice for the audience to follow and take notes on handouts, especially if it's a larger crowd. Make sure you have enough papers and even extra copies of all materials ahead of time to distribute.