

Using Visual and Audio Aids in a Presentation

Visual and audio aids are used to help the audience better understand your speech. Aids include charts, maps, graphs, diagrams, outlines, pictures, handouts, cartoons, posters, slides, video clips, tape recordings, and objects. These aids are particularly useful in teaching and in other types of informative speaking. A great deal of our conversations take place in sight of the object we are talking about. Television has an advantage over radio not only because speakers can be seen as well as heard, but because they can use visual aids to supplement the spoken word.

Here are the suggestions/rules for the use of aids:

Let the aids supplement your words

Ask yourself, “Will visual and auditory aids help me achieve my purpose?” If so, use them. Decide on the best type of aid to use to get your point across. If the thing you want to show does not already exist, take the time to make it—it will be well worth the effort. Do not use too many or too few aids, and do not use your visual aids as “fillers”

Make sure that your audience can see your visual aids or hear your audio aids without straining their eyes or ears

An audience cannot be expected to take interest in an illustration that is too small or very minutely detailed or an audio example that is of poor quality. The thoughtful speaker will have aids that are easy for the audience to see and hear.

Keep your aids simple and comprehensible

An inventor created a wonderful machine that would do the work of five men, but it took six men to operate it. If it takes more time and energy for you to explain a chart than it would to explain the point, skip the chart. The point of your exhibit must emerge quickly and easily.

Synchronize your aids with your remarks

This is extremely important. To be effective, audio/visual aids must become visible at exactly the moment they are needed. Many speakers make the mistake of showing an aid before it is needed. As a result, the audience’s attention is distracted from the speaker’s words. Call attention to the aid at exactly the point it is needed. Unless you have a very good reason, do not use visual aids after the conclusion—the audience is done listening at this point.

Have the aids in working order

Have you ever suffered along with a speaker who tries to use electrical gadgets that would not operate, audio tapes that were not cued for immediate use, maps that fall down, or demonstration kits that lack an essential component? Be sure to arrange things before hand. Double check all your equipment and make sure you did not leave anything at home or elsewhere.