

## Making use of Visual Aids

### Seminar Presentations

### Working with Visuals & Technology

#### General Principles

- Any visual materials or multimedia you use should support and add impact to your presentation.
- They can:
  - illustrate factors which are hard to explain with words alone
  - show reality (photographs, plans, maps)
  - Help the audience to visualise abstract concepts (charts/diagrams)
  - reinforce or compare information and (numbers, graphs, charts)
- Messages should be concise, simple and relevant.
- The impact of each visual message can be varied by the imaginative use of colour.
- Lettering should be clearly printed in bold colours and properly spaced.

#### PowerPoint

You can use PowerPoint software to produce overheads, or to make a computer-based presentation.

#### PowerPoint Pitfalls

Spending more time on producing PowerPoint graphics than on the actual talk. Remember—Powerpoint can certainly support your presentation, but it can't deliver the presentation for you. If your talk is poor, no amount of fancy graphics will save it!

Ignoring the audience. Don't become so preoccupied with your PowerPoint presentation that you pay more attention to clicking the mouse at the right time than delivering your talk. Speak to your audience, not to your screen or your notes.

Turning all the lights off. Dimming the light can increase the clarity and contrast of your slides. However, don't turn off all the lights and leave your audience in darkness. They may want to make notes or read handouts.

Using too many slides. A common pitfall is to reproduce almost the entire text of a presentation onto slides. The result is too much text and too much on-screen movement (in the form of clickable bullet points and slide transitions etc.) Too many slides also effectively anchor the speaker in place.

Reading slides aloud. As you should avoid reading a script of your presentation word-for-word, so you should avoid reading from slides.

Use slides carefully. Limit the number to 5 or 6 slides per 10 minutes. Think of them as key points which you can use as prompts. Do not simply read the material: supplement or explain what is written.

Too many animations/ decorations/ bells & whistles!

### **Managing the technology**

- Will you need to dim any lights, or close the curtains?

On the day

Arrive early on the day of your presentation. Test and (if possible) set up your equipment beforehand. You are likely to feel nervous and want to concentrate on your presentation, rather than the extra stress involved in setting up equipment.

- Is the projector plugged in/ switched on?
- Is the projector in focus?
- Is the projection screen set up? If there is no screen, is there a clean white space (a wall or whiteboard will suffice) and is the projector facing it?

Have a Back-up Plan

Remember that PowerPoint may look great, but if the technology goes wrong you may be very embarrassed. It's a good idea to print out a handout, or have some overheads as a backup just in case.

### **Hints for Designing Overhead Transparencies or Slides**

**Do**

- either print clearly or use a large font (at least 24 points). Text should be readable from the back of the room.
- use text effectively. Avoid overly elaborate fonts. Choose a font that is easy to read, like Helvetica, Arial or Times. Put your message in Bold.
- check spelling and grammar.
- choose appropriate colours. Use strong colours for text and ensure there is a clear contrast between text and background colour.

**Do Not**

- use small fonts, cursive typefaces or untidy handwriting. You audience won't be able to read it.
- cram too much information on one slide. For example, don't reproduce the entire text of a presentation; list the main points in bullet form.
- include any visual elements (like computer clip art) purely for decoration.
- use faded or pale colours for text, unless your background is dark.
- squeeze lines or cramp letters together.
- use too many of the animations available in Powerpoint. They can be very distracting for an audience.