



## 4-H Communication Fact Sheet 7.0

# Preparing and Using Visual Aids

Visual aids such as posters, electronic slides, charts, models and photos can help an audience understand and remember what a presenter is telling them. Visuals should have a **definite purpose** and be used only if they make the presentation more effective. They can help you remember what to do and say next, and are preferred to notes.

There are many types of visuals: posters, models, illustrations, scale drawings, photographs, electronic slides (such as PowerPoint), flannel boards and flip charts.

Visuals should:

- serve as a guide in the presentation;
- add interest to the title, topic or ideas presented;
- focus and hold audience attention;
- emphasize key points;
- clarify a complicated process or procedure;
- show comparisons;
- summarize main thoughts.

Visuals may frustrate as well as educate. Before you decide to use a visual, ask if it:

- serves a purpose in the presentation,
- attracts attention,
- is simple and neat,
- is easy to use,
- fits smoothly into the presentation,
- gives only one main idea.

Practice is essential to using visual aids effectively. It is the only way to develop the necessary skills for handling visuals. You'll soon discover it's easier to give a public presentation with them than without them.

## Guidelines for lettering

1. Letters 1¾ inch high can be read from 25 feet.
2. Letters 2½ inches high can be read from 30 to 50 feet.
3. Title letters should be about 4 inches tall.

4. Use a combination of capital and lower-case letters for ease of reading.
5. Simple block letters are the easiest to read.
6. Tall, skinny letters and short, squatty, heavy letters are hard to read.
7. Bold or heavy-lined letters are preferred to letters with thin, light lines.
8. A different color may be used to emphasize a special word or phrase.
9. Colors of letters should **not** be mixed within the same word or phrase.
10. Vary letter style to emphasize a word, but don't use more than two different types of letters or fonts per poster or electronic presentation.
11. A high degree of contrast between background and message is important. Use dark colors on light backgrounds and light colors on dark backgrounds.
12. Display electronic presentations on a screen or light-colored wall. Make sure the projector is far enough back to project to a large enough size for everyone to easily read the slides.

## Guidelines for posters

1. Poster boards should be large enough to be seen at a distance — at least 22" × 28" in size and legible at 30 feet.
2. Print letters on a background with considerable contrast for ease in reading. Keep letters simple and large enough to be easily read.
3. Space letters on poster boards by the "eye" and not by ruler.
4. If using stencils, fill in stencils so lettering does not appear spotty.
5. Allow 3 or more inches for a margin on the top and sides and slightly more on the bottom.
6. When posters contain both illustrations and lettering, one should dominate.

7. Do not crowd or clutter a poster with too many ideas. The most effective poster is one that has a minimum of text, but yet has meaning.
8. Display posters high enough so that everyone can see them. They may be held up or supported on an easel. Do not let the poster hide what you are doing.
9. Posters may be made with paint, magic markers, drawing ink or any other medium that will not smudge easily.
10. When using several posters of identical size and color, a small identification number on the back of each will serve as a guide as you organize ahead of time.

Posters serve little purpose if they are improperly used or are forgotten during the presentation. Presenters must practice to develop skills in handling and turning poster boards.

Stack poster boards in order on the easel. You may need to practice sliding the posters that are finished behind the last poster on the easel, or perhaps you can place them on a back table out of the way when you are finished with them. Keep your posters in order in case you need to refer to them during questions. Practice this ahead of time.

## Using colors

Good use of color can enhance posters or electronic slides. Improperly used color will detract from your presentation. Choose colors with care. Use color in small amounts to attract attention. Colors must contrast — a high degree of contrast between the background and copy is important for legibility. Use dark colors on a light background or light colors on a dark background.

Some of the best combinations are:

- Black on yellow
- Dark green on white
- Dark blue on white
- Black on white
- White on dark blue
- White on red

Do not mix colors within words — it is difficult to read. Remember, you want color to work for you by attracting attention and creating a pleasing effect. Experiment to see what looks good and is easily seen.

## Using presentation notes

Most people use notes when giving presentations. Notes often strengthen confidence, even when used very little during the talk. Notes should not be used as a crutch. Creating an outline is best.

Suggestions for using notes:

1. Put them on uniform cards, using only one side. Write or print large enough so you can see the item with a quick glance.
2. Put main points, sub-points and supporting materials on the cards, but do not write the speech on them or crowd the material so you cannot easily read it.
3. Become thoroughly familiar with what is on the card so a quick glance will not disrupt your eye contact with the audience.
4. Put notes on the podium or hold them in your hand. Do not try to hide the fact that you have notes.

## Using visual aids

Once your visual aids are finished, you'll need to practice using them so they enhance your presentation, rather than weaken or overpower it.

Look at the audience as you talk. Do not focus on your poster or the screen showing your electronic slide. You'll have to practice striking a balance between looking at the audience and at what's on the screen or poster.

Position your visual aids so you do not block the poster or the screen. You may have to rearrange the room to find the best arrangement. Another option is to use a universal remote with the projector to advance the slides. This will allow you to move around the room instead of standing by the computer.

## Electronic slide tips

Many 4-H members will choose to use a computer to create electronic slides, perhaps with PowerPoint. These skills are taught in school, and 4-H members often want to apply them to their 4-H presentations.

Remember that electronic slides are nothing more than digital posters. How you create them will determine how much they complement or weaken your presentation.

- As with posters, keep electronic slides simple. Don't put too much information or too many images on one slide.

- Use key words, phrases and concepts — not complete sentences. Using bullets is one way to accomplish this.
- Maintain eye contact with the audience. Audiences are easily bored if you just read your slides.
- Quotes may be written and read in their entirety.
- Blend a photo, chart or graph with minimal text.
- Leave ample borders all around the slide, especially at the bottom, which can be hard for the audience to see.
- Try not to use white for the background color. It is harsh on the eye. When projected, colors tend to lighten in appearance.
- Choose colors that can be seen with the lights on during the presentation. You want the audience to be able to see you during the presentation.
- Test contrasting colors by projecting them on a screen or wall to see if the colors complement each other and you can easily read the text. If not, change the background or text color.
- Stick with one background color during the presentation for consistency and to minimize distractions.
- Make sure the text on the slide is large enough to read from the back of the room — generally a 28- to 34-point font. Bold letters aid visibility.
- Don't mix more than two fonts in a slide, and pick a font that can be easily read. *An ornate script font is not easy for the audience to read.*
- Try using upper and lower case lettering. All CAPITALS tend to shout at the audience and are more difficult to read. Use italics and underlining sparingly — only for special emphasis.
- Limit photos or other images to two or three per slide. Otherwise, they are too small to be seen.
- Resist the temptation to use PowerPoint's many special effects and transition features. They can distract the audience.
- If you use special effects and transitions, keep them simple, to a minimum and consistent. Don't use multiple special effects in your slides.
- Slides should be shown for about 30 to 60 seconds.
- Avoid spending a long time on the same slide.
- Check all slides for spelling and formatting errors.

## Equipment success

The success of your presentation depends on:

1. Bringing the right equipment for the presentation.
2. Your skill in using this equipment.

Check your planning outline for equipment you will need. For example, you might need a blender for a cooking demonstration. Choose equipment that is best for the job. Some locations may not work well for all types of presentations. Therefore, you may have to adjust your presentation. Have equipment in good working condition. Practice so you will show skill in using the equipment. Above all, plan for the unexpected.

- Electronic slides are an alternative to posters. As with posters, slides are meant to complement your presentation, not overpower it. Remember, less is more with PowerPoint.

## Using electronic equipment

If you are using a laptop and a projector, make sure the computer and projector will synchronize. Don't forget an extension cord, two-prong grounding adapter and power strip. Do not assume that the extension office will provide a computer, projector and screen for your presentation.

If you want to use electronic slides (such as a PowerPoint presentation), prepare in advance so you have the right equipment and that all the equipment works together. Otherwise, you may not have any visuals for your presentation.

If you are planning to show a DVD or video clip, make sure it will play on the computer you will be using. If you won't be using your own computer, don't forget to copy your electronic slides, video clips and other material onto a flash drive. It's a good idea to have the presentation backed up on a flash drive in case you have technical problems. In addition, if you plan to use a Web site during your presentation, make sure the room is wired for the Internet or the facility has wireless access to the Internet. This requires planning and prior communication — don't wait until the day of the presentation.

In the event you are planning to use a TV or a monitor with a DVD player, make sure the TV or monitor is big enough for everyone to see. A rule of thumb is to have a 25-inch screen for an audience of 25 people. If the screen is not large enough, consider using a computer and projector so the images can be made large enough for everyone to easily see.

## Written and revised by

Deryl E. Waldren, 4-H Youth Development Specialist

James P. Adams, 4-H Youth Development Specialist

## Other resources to help you

4-H Communication Fact Sheets:

4H975 *Kansas 4-H Project Talk Scoresheet*

4H976 *Kansas 4-H Demonstration and Illustrated Talk Scoresheet*

4H977 *Kansas 4-H Public Speaking Scoresheet*

4H978 *Kansas 4-H Presentation Overview*

4H979 *4-H Project Talks*

4H980 *4-H Demonstrations*

4H981 *4-H Demonstration or Illustrated Talk Outline Form*

4H982 *4-H Illustrated Talks*

4H983 *4-H Public Speaking*

4H984 *Effective Presentation Tips*

4H986 *Presentation Brainstorming Activity*

### Use of copyrighted and trademarked materials in 4-H presentations and posters:

A copyright and/or a trademark are legal methods used by artists, photographers and writers to protect original creative works such as photographs, books, music, recipes, sports logo insignias, brand names and art work. The copyright symbol does need to appear on a work for it to be protected by copyright. Copyrighted materials cannot be reproduced without permission and proper crediting of the source. 4-H members need to be aware of copyright restrictions and take steps to obtain permission to use copyrighted materials and trademarks. Full details cannot be covered in a short paragraph, but additional helpful information can be found on K-State's Intellectual Property site: [www.k-state.edu/academicpersonnel/intprop/](http://www.k-state.edu/academicpersonnel/intprop/). Look for the upcoming Communication Fact Sheet, *Use of Copyrighted and Trademarked Materials in 4-H Presentations and Posters*.

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Publications from Kansas State University are available on the World Wide Web at: [www.ksre.ksu.edu](http://www.ksre.ksu.edu)

Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit Deryl E. Waldren and James P. Adams, *Preparing and Using Visual Aids*, Kansas State University, October 2009.