Selecting Visual Aids

Slides

Advantages	Disadvantages
Suitable for large audiences.	Require at least partial darkness for projection.
Easy to store and carry.	Require projection equipment, screen, slide carousel, and power (standard equipment for most meetings).
Can easily be rearranged.	Can get out of order, become lost, or be projected incorrectly (e.g., upside down).
Able to show full-resolution photographs.	Can be expensive (up to $2-3 per slide).

	projector) are more difficult to overcome.
Animation is possible (although not always desirable).	Must be able to digitize photographs in order to display, and resolution is dependent upon laptop computer and projector, which are often unknown variables prior to the presentation.
Last-minute changes or additions are easy.	
After software is purchased, production of "slides" is inexpensive.	
Visual is displayed on the computer screen before you as well as on the screen for the audience. Allows you to face audience at all times.	

Electronic presentation software should be used when:
1. Same indications as described for "slides."
2. Movement (video or animation) is required.
3. High quality display of photographs is not necessary.

Overhead Transparencies

Advantages	Disadvantages
Good for small groups.	Photographs are not reproduced well.
Room can be fully lighted.	Requires special overhead projector and power (standard equipment for most meetings).
Can face the audience during presentation.	Projector may block the view of a portion of the audience.
Easy and inexpensive to prepare.	Presenter must generally handle overheads as well as make the presentation.
Can enlarge and copy hard-copy content directly to an overhead (cartoons, organizational charts, etc.).	Presenter may have to turn head away from audience to ensure the overhead is projected properly.
Can write directly on the overheads during the presentation.	Content limited to static, low resolution images (no animation or movement is possible).
Can easily be rearranged.	

Last-minute changes or additions are easy.

Technical failures are rare.

Overhead transparencies should be used when:
1. You have a smaller, intimate group.
2. You don't want to turn off the lights.
3. You expect the audience to take notes.
4. You wish to add material to the visual during the presentation.
5. Preparation time is short.
6. Your budget is limited.
7. Content is static and largely non-visual (text only) in nature.

Written Handouts

Advantages	Disadvantages
Provide audience with a more detailed presentation of the topic.	Can be distracting if handed out prior to or during the presentation.
Can provide audience with a bibliography.	Audience may fail to take or read them.
Good backup if other forms of visual presentations fail due to technical reasons.	May be expensive to reproduce lengthy handouts.
Avoid the necessity of audience taking notes.	Cumbersome to transport large quantities.
Availability generally appreciated by the audience.	

Written handouts should be used when:
1. It is an expectation of the conference planners.
2. Other forms of visual aids are not available.
3. You need a backup in case of technical failure of equipment.
4. You want to leave the audience with more detailed information than is provided in your presentation.