

Tips for using visual aids in presentations and public speaking

1. For printed visual aids with several paragraphs of text, use serif fonts (a font is a typeface) for quicker readability.
2. For computer and LCD projectors use sans serif fonts, especially if the point size (letter size) is quite small.
3. Arial is a sans serif font. Times is a serif font. (A serif font has the extra little cross-lines at the ends of the strokes of the letters. Interestingly, serif fonts originated in the days of engraving, before printing, when the engraver needed a neat exit from each letter.)
4. Extensive sections of text can be read more quickly in serif font because the words have a horizontal flow, but serif fonts have a more old-fashioned traditional appearance than sans serif, and so stylistically can seem old-fashioned, which does not fit certain presentations.
5. If you need to comply with a company/corporate typeface (font/letter design) you'll maybe have no choice of lettering style. If you are creating and delivering the presentation for a company or organization of any sort then ask if there is a recommended/compulsory 'house' typeface, and if so, then use it, along with corporate colour/color schemes and branding. Marketing departments usually keep this information.
6. Generally try to use no more than two different typefaces (fonts) and no more than two size/bold/italic variants, or the text presentation becomes confused and very distracting to read quickly and easily.
7. Whatever - try to select fonts and point sizes that are the best fit for your medium and purpose.
8. If in doubt simply pick a good readable serif font and use it big and bold about 20-30pt for headings, and 14 - 16 point size for the body text.
9. Absolutely avoid using upper case (capital letters) in lots of body text, because people need to be able to read word-shapes as well as the letters, and of course upper-case (capital letters) makes every word a rectangle, which takes much longer to read, and becomes uncomfortable and tiring. Upper-case is acceptable for short headings if you really must use it, but even for headings lower-case lettering is best. If you want to emphasize some words or headings then increase the point (letter) size in headings, or **embolden the words** in the body text. Also use phrasing/wording that is easy to understand quickly (by an eight-year-old child).

For example:

this heading is quicker and easier to read

THAN THIS HEADING CAN BE READ

And this passage can be **read** and **understood** and **absorbed** far more quickly and effortlessly, because **your brain recognises the shapes of the words**, before it reads the letters...

... THAN THIS PASSAGE CAN BE READ AND UNDERSTOOD AND ABSORBED,
ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE TO READ A FEW HUNDRED WORDS LIKE THIS; ALL

BORING RECTANGULAR SHAPES; WHICH IS VERY TIRING AND FRUSTRATING INDEED.

10. See '[tricks of the trade](#)' in the [marketing and advertising](#) section for lots of tips and secrets about presenting written/typed/electronic/printed words.

11. See also the writing tips on this website for good general guidance and tips about writing effectively, so that your audience can read, understand, and absorb what you want to communicate to them.

12. **Your own written cue/prompt cards and notes** - Create your own prompts and notes to suit your purpose and situation. Cue cards are usually very effective aids, but make sure to **number them** and **tie them together, in order**. In the pressure of a presentation it is very easy to accidentally shuffle or drop your cue cards, which is then a serious nuisance and distraction for any presenter. A single '**at-a-glance**' **timetable sheet** is a useful aid for any presenter, especially for presentations longer than half an hour, where keeping track is more challenging. A timetable on one sheet is also useful to monitor your timing and pace.

<http://www.businessballs.com/presentation.htm>