

The Importance of Preparation

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to prepare visual aids to use in your speech. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. The Importance of Preparation
 - a. Are Your Visual Aids Appropriate for Your Audience?
 - b. Are Your Visual Aids Easy to Understand and Easy to Read or View?
 - c. Do You Know What Is on Your Visual Aids and Can You Present Them Effectively?

1. The Importance of Preparation

Appropriate preparation of your visual aids is essential in making sure that they are effective in helping to improve the engagement, memory, and comprehension of your audience.

In preparing your visual aids, you should consider three important components:

- Are your visual aids appropriate for your audience?
- Are your visual aids easy to understand and easy to read or view?
- Do you know what is on your visual aids and can you present them effectively?

1a. Are Your Visual Aids Appropriate for Your Audience

Once your topic has been decided upon and your research is underway, it's time to think about how you plan to present your information in visual aids.

Of the several angles that need to be addressed in regards to delivering a speech, the most important thing to keep in mind is, "Who is my audience?" Never underestimate the importance of knowing your audience. If your audience can't understand your visuals, you'll find it much harder to accomplish your objective.

Make sure to consider the knowledge base, **demographic** background, occupation, and values of your audience when creating a visual aid.

➦ **EXAMPLE** You may not want to use examples and images that one generation or age group may not understand.

Your decision to use visual aids such as PowerPoint, charts, or any kind of demonstrative props will have a

sizable impact on your audience, so they should be given careful thought.



TERM TO KNOW

Demographic

A characteristic used to classify people for statistical purposes, such as age, race, or gender.

1b. Are Your Visual Aids Easy to Understand and Easy to Read or View?

When you are preparing your visual aids, you should make sure that your audience will be able to read and understand what they are saying.

Be sure to use text that is large enough (size 16 point font is a suggested minimum) and colors that do not conflict with one another. This ensures that words are legible. Make sure that any photos, charts, and diagrams are easily understood within the first few seconds of looking at them. If they are not easily understood, be sure to spend time during your presentation explaining what the photos or charts mean.

Additionally, one way to make sure that people in the back of the presentation can read your visual aids is to print off a full page slide of your presentation, place it on the floor and stand up and see if you can read the entire slide. If you cannot read it, people in the back of the room during your presentation will also likely not be able to read your slide.

One other consideration is to be sure that you are comfortable using any technology that you will use to assist the presentation of your visual aids. You must also make sure that the location of your presentation has this working technology available to you.

1c. Do You Know What Is on Your Visual Aids and Can You Present Them Effectively?

An essential component of using visual aids effectively is to prepare yourself in understanding what is on them and determining how you want to explain them. If you are using pictures, graphs, or charts to help you explain a point, be sure that you understand the graph or picture and you are comfortable explaining this to an audience.

If you are confused about a graph during your presentation, or do not do an adequate job of explaining a graph, your audience will also likely be confused about the graph as well. Such confusion will detract from audience engagement and comprehension.

Before you present, go through your graph, charts, and pictures. In your notes, write where each visual aid is presented in your presentation, what they mean, and how you plan to present them. Be sure to rehearse this before your presentation so your visual aids can be as effective in helping your audience be engaged, understand your presentation, and remember your key points.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that when **preparing your visual aids**, you should consider three important components: **whether your visual aids are appropriate for your audience**, **whether your visual aids are easy to understand and easy to read or view**, and **whether you know what is on your visual aids and can present them effectively**. When creating a visual aid, make sure to consider the knowledge base, demographic background, occupation, and values of your audience. Be sure to use text that is

large enough and colors that do not conflict with one another. This ensures that words are legible. An essential component of using visual aids effectively is to prepare yourself in understanding what is on them and determining how you want to explain them.

Source: Boundless. "The Importance of Preparation." Boundless Communications Boundless, 17 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 1 Jun. 2017 from <https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/preparing-and-using-visual-aids-16/the-value-of-sensory-enhancements-81/the-importance-of-preparation-311-4197/>



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