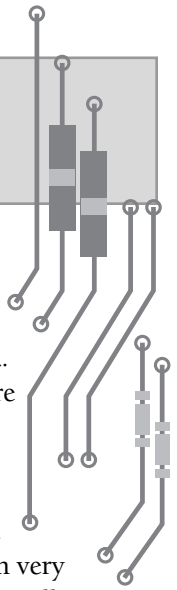


# Thirteen Steps to Better Instructional Visuals for Electronic Presentation



## 1. Understand the media.

Well-designed graphics can greatly hasten and increase understanding and improve retention of information. Electronic presentations have great promise for utilizing graphics and some important potential pitfalls to consider.

Well-designed presentations use a consistent format with wisely chosen colors and type fonts. Poor choices not only communicate poorly but also can distract from your message and you.

## 2. Simplify general composition.

Keep content simple and short. Use key words instead of complete sentences. Text on each slide should reflect the main points of your presentation. Bulleted items can introduce or summarize key points. Text should not reflect verbatim what you plan to say. Plan on spending 2 to 5 minutes or less verbally presenting the content of each slide.

## 3. Don't squeeze too much information on the page.

Five to seven words per line and five to seven lines per page is a good starting place. Twenty-five words per page is a good guideline. Headings should be short. Spread your information over multiple "slides" rather than crowding words and graphics on a single slide. Because no two TVs reproduce images the same, you must leave at least a 10 percent blank or "safe area" around your text and pictures.

## 4. Organize basic presentation outline.

- A. Presenter name, topic, class, etc.
- B. Objectives so audience knows where you are taking them
- C. Body of material
- D. Repeat list of objectives for group review
- E. Summary of required action or assignments

## 5. Limit colors and control contrast.

Color can be a powerful visual tool. Use it sparingly. Avoid large areas of heavily saturated (over 80 percent) colors like red or orange since they are difficult to reproduce electronically. Ensure adequate contrast between text color and background color. Use light letters, such as white or pale yellow, against a dark-colored background, such as blue or green. Use only a few color choice "templates" per presentation.

What you see on your computer screen may not be what you see on the actual presentation equipment. Highly textured, multi-color fills and loud backgrounds can be distracting. Avoid white backgrounds that can strain viewer's eyes in a darkened room.

## 6. Select a typeface appropriate for electronic media.

Typeface style in instructional visuals can promote visual variety, increase learner understanding, and gain or engage learner attention. Fonts should enhance the presentation without being the focus.

There is a good deal of disagreement about which type fonts are best for electronic media. The most legible fonts are those that have strokes with similar thickness at all points. Helvetica or Arial are good examples. Faces such as Times with very thin strokes do not work well. Fancy or ornate typefaces can be hard to read and reproduce poorly on video. Save them sparingly for title slides and headings. Use normal, bold, or extra bold (black) versions of the same type face to visually separate elements

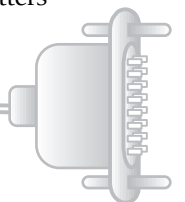
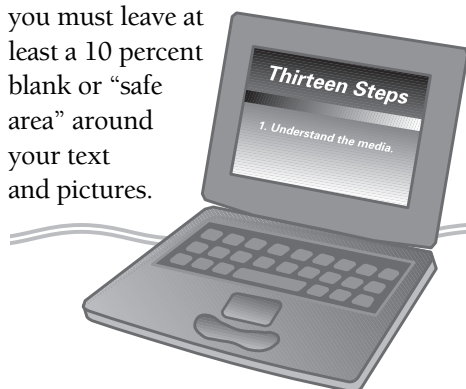
Limit typefaces, sizes, and weights to two or three, and retain these throughout the presentation. Some typefaces are specifically designed for electronic presentation like Microsoft's Trebuchet MS (Truetype) and Verdana (Truetype).

## Typefaces That Work Well for Electronic Presentation

Avenir, Arial, Bookman, Old Style, Chicago, Comic Sans, Geneva, Helvetica, Lubalin Graph, Monaco, Newtext, Korinna, Optima, Univers

## Font or Typeface Size

Start the main body of your text at a 36 pt. typeface and adjust up or down from there. Test your font sizes to make sure people in the back or sides of the room can easily read your text. Differentiate headings from the main body by using larger type or a different font. Use standard upper and lower case letters for best readability.



## **7. Keep transitions between slides smooth.**

Be consistent from slide to slide. Subtle transitions work better. Fancy transitions attract too much attention away from your message and require lots of computer processing power. Simple transitions use less compute memory and won't slow the pace of your presentation.

## **Clip Art, Pictures, Graphs and Diagrams**

Always attempt to substitute pictures, tables, or charts for words—they can convey complicated information quickly and efficiently. Keep drawings simple and lines bold. Make line size at least 4 pt. Solid fills work best. Stay away from screened fills, patterns, and broken or thin lines that cause annoying TV screen flicker. Use light, bright colors for illustrated graphics and dark backgrounds.

Always label charts and diagrams with horizontal text to avoid audience fatigue. Do not clutter graphs with text and footnotes. Reserve detailed data for handouts. Put footnotes in small text in the lower left-hand corner. If you are unsure about copyright clearance get permission or find an alternative image.

## **8. Scan images for best resolution.**

Optimal setting for digitized photos, slides, and printed materials is 72 dots per inch resolution and a color palette between 256 and 1,000 colors. Anything greater is beyond the resolution of TV and will create huge presentation files. Use a "universal" color palette to ensure image colors remain consistent when transferred across computers. Scan images at 75 percent to 50 percent actual screen size. This will save disk space and leaves an area surrounding the image for headings, labels, etc. If you are unsure about copyright clearance get permission or find an alternative image.

## **9. Use spreadsheets and instructional software with care.**

When converting computer-generated graphics to a TV signal, as much as 75 percent of the image resolution can be lost in the process. All of the above rules apply, especially the need for reasonable contrast between lettering and background. Never use patterns, screens, or anything with a line weight of less than 6 pixels, or severe screen flicker will occur. Many software programs can be enhanced for TV viewing by increasing line weights, converting backgrounds from white to light colors, increasing font size, and using a simple bold typeface.

## **10. Carefully select 35mm slides.**

Try to use horizontal compositions. Vertical slides are always cropped by TV's 3 × 4 ratio leaving wide blank margins on each side of the slide. Make sure letter size is adequate for reproduction on video. Word slides do not convert well to TV viewing. Consider converting text slides to a computer presentation, printing them out on paper or having your TV specialists recreate them using a character generator. Dark or out-of-focus slides will look significantly worse on television. Expect a significant drop in resolution when reproducing 35mm slides on TV.

## **11. Choose appropriate printed visuals and transparencies.**

Materials shaped in TV's horizontal format of 3 units high by 4 units wide work best. An 8½" by 11" paper is close enough to this size. Graphics for TV should be created in the horizontal (landscape) format rather than the vertical (portrait) format. Using a consistent size for all graphics eliminates the need to continually zoom the graphics camera in and out when dealing with different sizes of paper.

Use pastel or light-colored paper (light blue or light green, for example) to avoid extreme contrast between the letters and the paper. This should

make the graphics more "viewable" by both the camera and the participants. White paper with dark letters will fatigue the eyes. Transparencies will work, but are usually marred by wrinkled or glossy acetate that may pick up glare from overhead lights. Using matte acetate or copying transparencies to light-colored paper will eliminate this problem.

## **12. Hand-lettered visuals can still work.**

For hand lettering, see the notes above and print legibly with a medium point, dark-colored felt-tip marker on light-colored paper. Preprinted lined paper with ¾" spacing can be used to help guide penmanship.

## **13. And finally, to prevent embarrassment . . .**

Double check spelling, grammar, and numbers. Assume there will be technical problems to work out. Arrive early enough at the presentation room to test all visuals and equipment. If you're using non-standard fonts, bring along copies or embed (save) them in your presentation. Always bring printed copies of your visuals for backup if all else fails.

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