

Suggestions for Creating Visual Aids

When deciding whether to use visual aids, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I need to present information that I cannot easily say?
- Does this information need to be presented visually?
- Would I be able to accomplish this assignment as well as or better without visual aids?
- Will visual aids enhance the assignment?

If your answers to these questions convinced you that you need to use visuals, then use this checklist to guide you when creating your visual aids:

- _____ Choose the information that can only be presented visually.
- _____ With this information, create a visual aid that is neat and professional.
- _____ If using written words, use dark font against a white or light neutral background.
- _____ If there are multiple visual aids, make sure you have consistent typeface, color, and alignment.
- _____ If using a chart, graph, or map, use only the crucial information and make sure that the information is easy to interpret.
- _____ If using a picture, make sure that the resolution is high to avoid pixelation.
- _____ Avoid clutter. If it is not crucial to your message, do not include it. This includes bullet points of your key ideas.
- _____ Avoid unnecessary borders, shapes, or any other tangentially related images. The focus of the assignment has to be on you and your message; do not have distractions.
- _____ Avoid distracting sound effects or entrance/exit effects. Simplicity is usually the most elegant and visually pleasing.*
- _____ Cite the source for your information or image at the bottom of each slide in slightly smaller font (but be sure you can still read it).*
- _____ Practice with your visual aid so that you know the timing of your speech or presentation.*

The points with an asterisk are most applicable to PowerPoint presentations or similar visual rhetoric assignments. (Original document by Kathi Groenendyk, Calvin College. Modified by the RAC.)