

Understanding Visual Aids for Training Purposes

~by Shirley Fine Lee

I have been doing training and presentations for many years and am still surprised by how often I see visual aids being misused. Or worse, not used when they would have helped drive home a concept in a training course.

Below is a short list of what visual aids should be and what they should not be. Give the list a look and perhaps you will agree. Better yet, you may see something I missed. If you see something I missed, please send me an email to let me know.

Visual aids should:

- Be clear and easy to understand
- Support a presented training concept using a few key words and lines
- Follow the order of the presentation
- Directly relate to training point being given in order to emphasize it or prevent confusion
- Be easily managed and transported
- Utilize some basic formatting rule for text (like [Rules of Six for Slide Design](#))
- Note legends used in graphs, acronym explanations, and word definitions
- Show audience how to do something
- Use color and [pictures](#) to enhance presentation concepts
- Teach the audience an easy way to remember an idea
- Be practiced before put into use

What visual aids are NOT:

- A distraction from the main subject
- Meant to include humor that is not relevant to the presentation or causes audience to forget the main points
- A way to jazz up an otherwise boring presentation
- So busy that the audience becomes confused about what is being taught
- A chance to show off animation skills (unless your presentation is about animation)

If you want more general information on preparing presentations, see the Perspective archives for a 2-part article on [creating](#) and [delivering](#) presentations from 2007. If you are new to delivering presentations, you may also want to review my on-line article "[Ten Points on Poor Podium Use by Presenters.](#)"



About the Author: Shirley Fine Lee is the author of "[R.A!R.A! A Meeting Wizard's Approach](#)", a guide to planning and conducting meetings for productivity and effectiveness, and smoothly run. She has considerable training and expertise in leading effective meetings herself, as well as training others to do the same. Shirley has worked as a training and development specialist since 1986, and an independent consultant since 2000 when she joined Dallas ASTD. She has extensive experience helping organizations with their team building, training development, meeting facilitation, presentation delivery, and other communication needs. You may read many business articles by Shirley (some of the e-articles

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