

Making and showing transparencies

► The best way to help get your message across is to use speech along with an illustrated presentation.

The purpose of visual material

By using illustrative and educational transparencies it is possible to enliven your presentation. Learning results improve when the subject matter is repeated in different ways.

How adults learn information and skills:

- 20 % of what they hear
- 30 % of what they see
- 50-70 % of what they hear and see combined

Thus visual material has two main purposes:

- To make the presentation of the information easier for the lecturer and to make it easier for the material to be remembered
- To attract and maintain the interest and attention of the audience

Transparencies make it easier for the lecturer to present his or her thoughts in a structured, compact and more easily understandable manner.

Transparencies are multi-purpose

Illustrative material should emphasise the message of the presentation. Transparencies can be used in many different ways:

- As a summary
- As repetition of a key learning point
- As an illustration of links between issues
- As an activating element
- As inspiration or a mood setter.

Characteristics of a good transparency

- Only use one new, difficult or important idea or fact on the transparency.
- Only use the most important and supporting key words. Every needless word reduces the impact.
- Place the text in the middle of the transparency and divide the projection screen clearly.
- Well-planned illustrations support the message of the transparency and stay in the mind of the viewer.
- Use your creativity. Individual, clearly hand-written transparencies, or those made with a coloured marker can often stand out.
- Quantity does not compensate for poor quality!

The layout of the transparencies

Choosing the text

- Use no more than 6 main points and number them.
- Use short words and sentences, no more than 3-5 words on each row.
- Use no more than 6-8 rows
- Use the same font on the entire transparency. Simple fonts, such as Arial, are easy to read even from a far.
- Make the text large enough (at least 18 point character size 6 mm) and use a marker that is thick enough (at least Medium). Check beforehand that the transparencies are readable even from the back of the room in which the presentation will be made.
- When you want to emphasise some part of the text, do it with **bold**, *Italics* or underlining.
- In the titles it is possible to use LARGE (capital) letters, but also use small letters, because people can recognise words from their shape.
- Use mainly dark text on a light background. Choose a suitable level of contrast, especially transparencies that have been produced on a computer. These will be of much lighter shade than when viewed on the computer screen.

Use of colours

- Use colours to emphasise the message. Usually three colours are enough: one for the background, one for the title and the information to be emphasised, and one for the text. In graphic illustrations more colours can be used. Reflect the transparencies on a screen to see how the colours agree and whether they are visible enough.
- After choosing the colours, use the same colours throughout the presentation.
- The background of the transparency can be coloured, and the colour may even vary during the presentation, but the overall impression must be tranquil.
- Remember the symbolic meanings of colours (for example, red: stop, danger, defeat, heat).



From transparencies to notes

Make it easier for the audience to follow the presentation by distributing copies of the transparencies. Leave a wide margin so that there is room to make notes.

Using charts and graphs

When you use charts, choose the simplest versions so that the audience can easily understand the data and explain how to interpret the chart or table.

Some types of chart are:

- line graphs: time series data (changes over time), trends, large amounts of information
- bar graphs: the differences in data at different times, differences between specific data.
- circle or pie diagram: proportions.
- flow charts: operational chains, such as production lines or organisational structures.

Tips on presentation

Interaction is most important

- Transparencies are an aid. Talk to the audience, not to the overhead projector and observe the reactions of your listeners.
- The beginning of the presentation is important: create an interacting atmosphere that is suited for the occasion – before using transparencies.
- Vary the proportions of transparency use and other methods of training. Show a group of transparencies at once, then turn off the projector and concentrate on verbal interaction.
- Transparencies often enliven a presentation, but too many transparencies, especially quickly rotating ones, can drain audience attention.
- Organise the transparencies carefully before the presentation. If you use the same transparencies repeatedly, vary the amount and presentation order and choose them on an individual basis for each specific occasion. Remember the content of the transparencies, do not merely present them.
- Plan how you can use your material for specific audiences. Think about how you can present familiar transparencies and be flexible, adapting your presentation to the particular circumstances.

Check the presentation area and equipment

- Choose the position of the overhead projector so, that it does not disturb the audience. The cooling system of the lamp must also be operating because a hot lamp will not withstand vibration (movement). Before the presentation, check that the picture is in focus and that you know how to use the controls of the machine. Do you know how to change a lamp?

- Keep the room well lit so the audience can make notes and you can see your own notes. In a dim room, eye contact with the audience is impaired and the audience can become too relaxed.

Point out the most important issues

- Point out the important issues by placing a pen or pointer on the transparency. Avoid touching the cloth of the screen with a pointer, as this makes the screen swing and the picture difficult to see.
- Go through all the items on the transparency avoiding any unnecessary items that you have not had time to remove.
- Show an entire transparency at once covering a whole topic - give your audience time to view it all.
- A frame or border round the transparency can alleviate the interference caused by a bordering light. The frame may also be used for notes.

Do not be afraid to turn off the projector

- The light reflecting from an empty overhead projector and the humming of the machine can be annoying to the audience and disturb their concentration.
- If there is a long period between transparencies, turn off the overhead projector. That way, you and your presentation get the full attention of the audience. At the same time, you will be able to change the transparency. However, do not turn the projector on and off all the time.
- How will you manage if the machine breaks down in the middle of your presentation? Or you run out of blank transparencies, leave your transparencies at home or their order has been changed? Your lifesaver could be a chalkboard or a flip chart. When you use these, you write the text for the audience as you give your speech: the visual and auditory senses of the audience are in balance.

Transparencies in risk management training

You should always have blank transparencies and markers with you for presenting opinions, group work and the results of exercises returned during the training session. Sometimes no overhead projector is available, so the trainer should be prepared to make his or her presentation without the support of transparencies. This is something to remember when choosing material and planning the training schedule.