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Exploring Public Speaking: 2nd Revision

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Chapter 9
Presentation Aids
in Speaking

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

◊   List and explain reasons why presentation aids are important in public speaking and how they function;

◊   Describe the various computer-based and non-computer-based types of presentation aids available to the students;

◊   Explain the correct use of various types of presentation aids;

◊   Design professional-looking slides using presentation software.

Chapter Preview

9.1 – What are Presentation Aids?

9.2 – Functions of Presentation Aids

9.3 – Types of Presentation Aids

9.4 – Using Presentation Slides

9.5 – Low-Tech Presentation Aids

9.1 - What Are Presentation Aids?

When you give a speech, you are presenting much more than just a collection of words and ideas. Because you are speaking "live and in person," your audience members will experience your speech through all five of their senses: hearing, vision, smell, taste, and touch. In some speaking situations, the speaker appeals only to the sense of hearing, more or less ignoring the other senses except to avoid visual distractions by dressing and presenting himself or herself in an appropriate manner. But the speaking event can be greatly enriched by appeals to the other senses. This is the role of presentation aids.

Presentation aids are the resources beyond the speech itself that a speaker uses to enhance the message conveyed to the audience. The type of presentation aids that speakers most typically make use of are visual aids: pictures, diagrams, charts and graphs, maps, and the like. Audible aids include musical excerpts, audio speech excerpts, and sound effects. A speaker may also use fragrance samples or food samples as **olfactory** (sense of smell) or **gustatory** (sense of taste) aids. Finally, presentation aids can be three-dimensional objects, animals, and people; they can change over a period of time, as in the case of a how-to demonstration.

As you can see, the range of possible presentation aids is almost infinite. However, all presentation aids have one thing in common: To be effective, each presentation aid a speaker uses must be a direct, uncluttered example of a specific element of the speech. It is understandable that someone presenting a speech about Abraham Lincoln might want to include a photograph of him, but because everyone already knows what Lincoln looked like, the picture would not contribute much to the message unless, perhaps, the message was specifically about the changes in Lincoln's appearance during his time in office.

Other visual artifacts are more likely to deliver information more directly relevant to the speech—a diagram of the interior of Ford's Theater where Lincoln was assassinated, a facsimile of the messy and much-edited Gettysburg Address, or a photograph of the Lincoln family, for example. The key is that each presentation aid must directly express an idea in your speech.

Moreover, presentation aids must be used at the time when you are presenting the specific ideas related to the aid. For example, if you are speaking about coral reefs and one of your supporting points is about the location of the world's major reefs, it would make sense to display a map of these reefs while you're talking about location. If you display it while you are explaining

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Presentation aids

the resources beyond the speech itself that a speaker uses to enhance the message conveyed to the audience

Olfactory

of or relating to the sense of smell

Gustatory

of or relating to the sense of taste

what coral actually is, or describing the kinds of fish that feed on a reef, the map will not serve as a useful visual aid—in fact, it's likely to be a distraction.

Presentation aids must also be easy to use. At a conference on organic farming, one of the authors watched as the facilitator opened the orientation session by creating a conceptual map (or "mind map") of our concerns using a large newsprint pad on an easel. In his shirt pocket were wide-tipped felt markers in several colors. As he was using the black marker to write the word "pollution," he dropped the cap on the floor, and it rolled a few inches under the easel. When he bent over to pick up the cap, all the other markers fell out of his pocket. They rolled about too, and when he tried to retrieve them, he bumped the easel, causing the easel and newsprint pad to tumble over on top of him. The audience responded with amusement and thundering applause, but the serious tone of his speech was ruined. The next two days of the conference were punctuated with allusions to the unforgettable orientation speech. This is not how you will want your speech to be remembered.

To be effective, presentation aids must also be easy for the listeners to see and understand. In this chapter, we will present some principles and strategies to help you incorporate effective presentation aids into your speech. We will begin by discussing the functions that good presentation aids fulfill. Next, we will explore some of the many types of presentation aids and how best to design and utilize them. We will also describe various media that can be used for presentation aids. We will conclude with tips for successful preparation and use of   presentation aids in a speech.

9.2 – Functions of Presentation Aids

Why should you use presentation aids? If you have prepared and rehearsed your speech adequately, shouldn't a good speech with a good delivery be enough to stand on its own? While it is true that impressive presentation aids will not rescue a poor speech, it is also important to recognize that a good speech can often be made even better by the strategic use of presentation aids. Presentation aids can fulfill several functions: they can serve to improve your audience's understanding of the information you are conveying, enhance audience memory and retention of the message, add variety and interest to your speech, and enhance your credibility as a speaker. Let's examine each of these functions.

Improving Audience Understanding

Human communication is a complex process that often leads to misunderstandings. If you are like most people, you can

easily remember incidents when you misunderstood a message or when someone else misunderstood what you said to them. Misunderstandings happen in   public speaking just as they do in everyday conversations.

One reason for misunderstandings is the fact that perception and interpretation are highly complex individual processes. Most of us have seen the image in which, depending on your perception, you see either the outline of a vase or the facial profiles of two people facing each other (seen here). Or perhaps you have seen the image of the woman who may or may not be young, depending on your frame of reference at the time (seen here). This shows how interpretations can differ, and it means that your presentations must be based on careful thought and preparation to maximize the likelihood that your listeners will understand your presentations as you intend them to do so.

As a speaker, one of your basic goals is to help your audience understand your message. To reduce misunderstanding, presentation aids can be used to clarify or to emphasize.
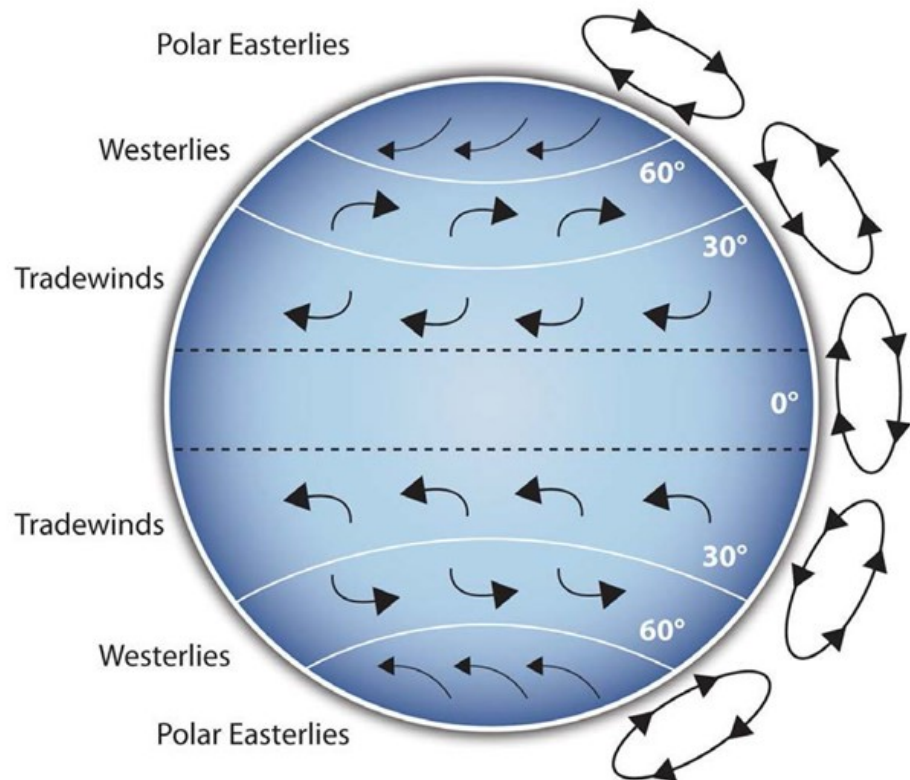
Figure 9.1—Coriolis Effect
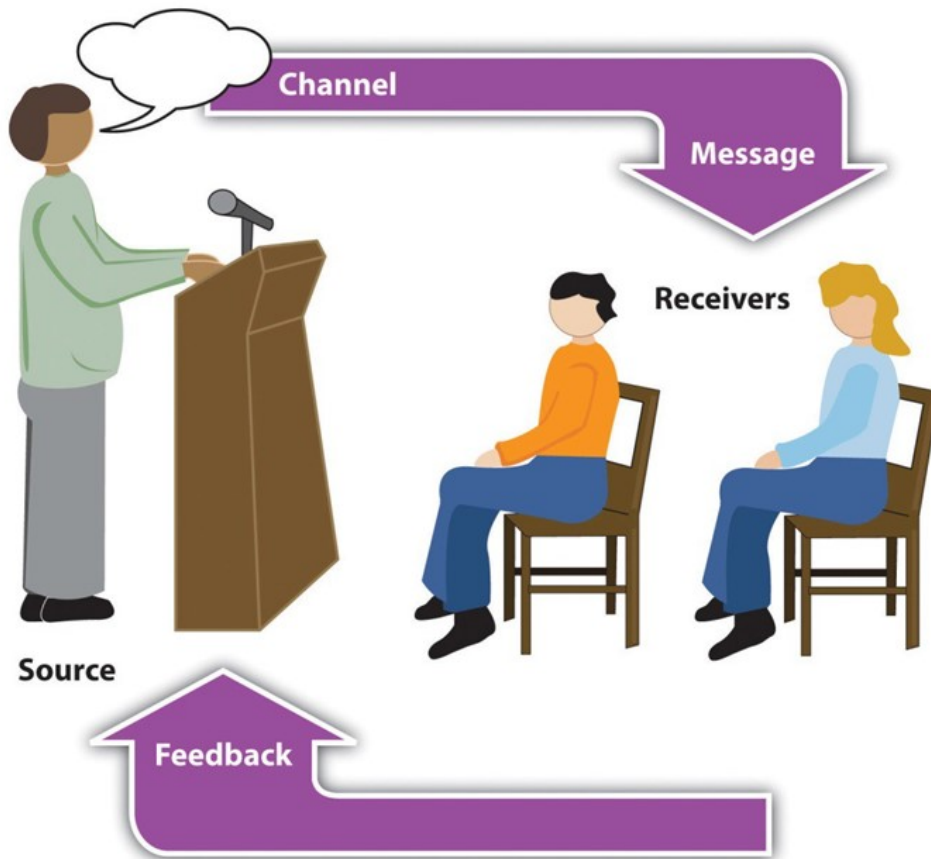
Figure 9.2—Model of Communication

Clarifying

Clarification is important in a speech because if some of the information you convey is unclear, your listeners will come away puzzled or possibly even misled. Presentation aids can help clarify a message if the information is complex or if the point being made is a   visual one.

If your speech is about the impact of the Coriolis Effect on tropical storms, for instance, you will have great difficulty clarifying it without a diagram because the process is a complex one. The diagram in Figure 9.1 ("Coriolis Effect") would be effective because it shows the audience the interaction between equatorial wind patterns and wind patterns moving in other directions. The diagram allows the audience to process the information in two ways: through your verbal explanation and through the visual elements of the diagram. Figure 9.2 ("Model of Communication") is another example of a diagram that maps out the   process of human communication. In this image you clearly have a speaker and an audience (albeit slightly abstract), with the labels of source, channel, message, receivers, and feedback to illustrate the basic

Figure 9.3—Petrogyph example
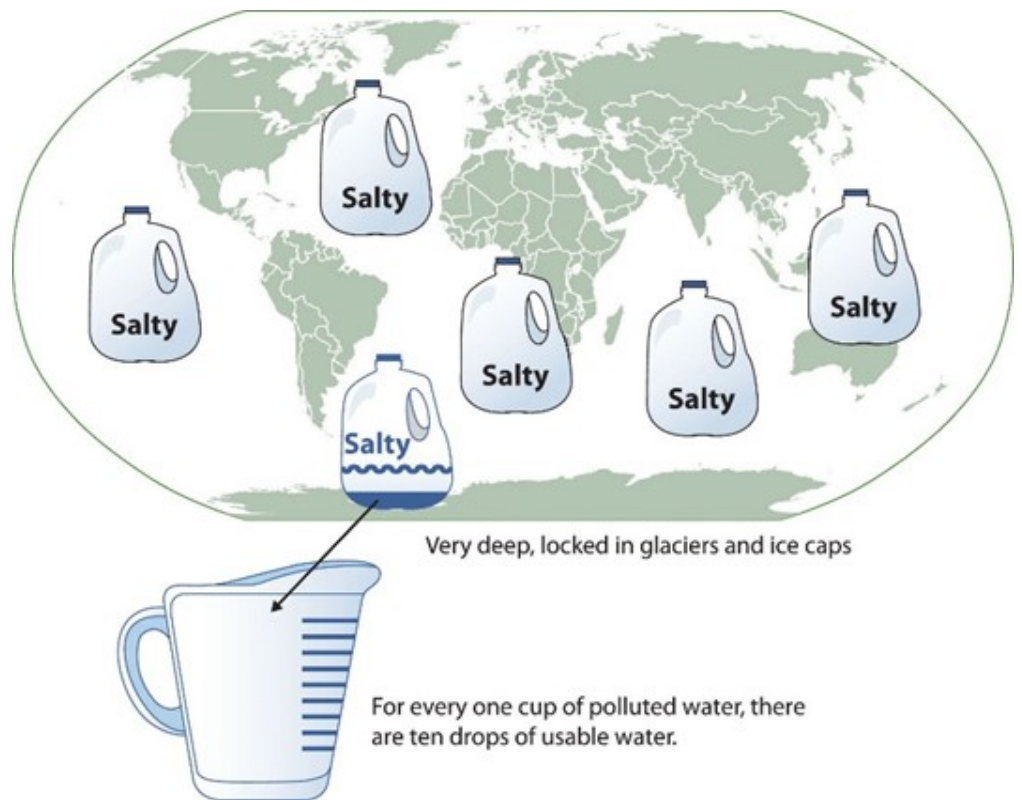
Figure 9.4—Planetary Water Supply

model of human communication.

Another aspect of clarifying occurs when a speaker wants to visually help audience members understand a visual concept. For example, if a speaker is talking about the importance of petro-glyphs in Native American culture, just describing the petroglyphs won't completely help your audience to visualize what they look

Figure 9.5—Chinese Lettering Amplified

Source: Image courtesy of Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/

like. Instead, showing an example of a petroglyph, as in Figure 9.3 ("Petroglyph") can more easily help your audience form a clear mental image of your intended meaning.

Emphasizing

When you use a presentational aid for emphasis, you im-press your listeners with the importance of an idea. In a speech on water conservation, you might try to show the environmental proportions of the resource. When you use a conceptual drawing like the one in Figure 9.4 ("Planetary Water Supply"), you show that if the world water supply were equal to ten gallons, only ten drops would be available and drinkable for human or household consumption. This drawing is effective because it emphasizes the scarcity of useful water and thus draws attention to this important information in your speech.

Another way of emphasizing that can be done visually is to zoom in on a specific aspect of interest within your speech.

In Figure 9.5 ("Chinese Lettering Amplified"), we see a visual aid used in a speech on the importance of various parts of Chinese characters. On the left side of the visual aid, we see how the characters all fit together, with an emphasized version of a single character on the right.

Aiding Retention and Recall

The second function that presentation aids can serve is to increase the audience's chances of remembering your speech. An article by the U.S. Department of Labor (1996) summarized research on how people learn and remember. The authors found that "83% of human learning occurs visually, and the remaining 17% through the other senses—11% through hearing, 3.5% through smell, 1% through taste, and 1.5% through touch." The researchers also found that the people   involved in the research retained 10 percent of what they heard from an oral presentation, 35 percent from a visual presentation, and 65 percent from a visual and oral presentation (Lockard & Sidowski, 1961). It's amazing to see how the combined effect of both the visual and oral   components can contribute to long-term memory.

For this reason, exposure to an image can serve as a memory aid to your listeners. When your graphic images deliver information effectively and when your listeners understand them clearly, audience members are likely to remember your message long after your speech is over. Moreover, people often are able to remember information that is presented in sequential steps more easily than if that information is presented in an unorganized pattern. When you use a presentation aid to display the organization of your speech (such as can be done with PowerPoint slides), you will help your listeners to observe, follow, and remember the sequence of information you conveyed to them. This is why some instructors display a lecture outline for their students to follow during class and why a slide with a preview of your main points can be helpful as you move into the body of your speech.

An added plus of using presentation aids is that they can boost *your* memory while you are speaking. Using your presentation aids while you rehearse your speech will familiarize you with the association between a given place in your speech and the presentation aid that accompanies that material.

Adding Variety and Interest

A third function of presentation aids is simply to make your speech more interesting. For example, wouldn't a speech on varieties of roses have greater impact if you accompanied your remarks with a picture of each rose? You can imagine that your audience

would be even more enthralled if you had the ability to display an actual flower of each variety in a bud vase. Similarly, if you were speaking to a group of gourmet cooks about Indian spices, you might want to provide tiny   samples of spices that they could smell and taste during your speech.

Enhancing a Speaker's Credibility

Presentation aids alone will not be enough to create a pro-fessional image. As we mentioned earlier, impressive presentation aids will not rescue a poor speech. However, even if you give a good speech, you run the risk of appearing unprofessional if your presentation aids are poorly executed. Conversely, a high quality presentation will contribute to your professional image. This means that in addition to containing important information, your presentation aids must be clear, clean, uncluttered, organized, and large enough for the audience to see and interpret correctly. Misspellings and poorly designed presentation aids can damage your credibility as a speaker.

In addition, make sure that you give proper credit to the source of any presentation aids that you take from other sources. Using a statistical chart or a map without proper credit will de-tract from your credibility, just as using a quotation in your speech without credit would. This situation will usually take place with digital aids such as PowerPoint slides. The source of a chart or the data shown in a chart form should be cited at the bottom the slide.

If you focus your efforts on producing presentation aids that contribute effectively to your meaning, that look professional, and that are handled well, your audience will most likely appre-ciate your efforts and pay close attention to your message. That attention will help them learn or understand your topic in a new way and will thus help the audience see you as a knowledgeable, competent, and credible speaker.   With the prevalence of digital communication, the audience expectation of quality visual aids has increased.

Avoiding Problems with Presentation Aids

Using presentation aids can come with some risks. However, with a little forethought and adequate practice, you can choose presentation aids that enhance your message and boost your professional appearance in front of an audience. One principle to keep in mind is to use only as many presenta-tion aids as necessary to present your message or to fulfill your classroom assignment. The number and the technical sophisti-

cation of your presentation aids should never overshadow your speech.

Another important consideration is technology. Keep your presentation aids within the limits of the working technology available to you. Whether or not your classroom technology works on the day of your speech, you will still have to present. What will you do if the computer file containing your slides is corrupted? What will you do if the easel is broken? What if you had counted on stacking your visuals on a table that disappears right when you need it?

You must be prepared to adapt to an uncomfortable and scary situation. This is why we urge students to go to the classroom well ahead of time to test the equipment and ascertain the condition of items they're planning to use. As the speaker, you are responsible for arranging the things you need to make your presentation aids work as intended. Carry a roll of duct tape so you can display your poster even if the easel is gone. Find an extra chair if your table has disappeared. Test the computer setup. Have your slides on a flash drive AND send it to yourself as an attachment or post to a Cloud service. Have an alternative plan prepared in case there is some glitch that prevents your computer-based presentation aids from being usable. And of course, you must know how to use the technology.

More important than the method of delivery is the audience's ability to see and understand the presentation aid. It must deliver clear information, and it must not distract from the message. Avoid overly elaborate presentation aids because they can distract the audience's attention from your message. Instead, simplify as much as possible, emphasizing the information you want your audience to understand.

Another thing to remember is that presentation aids do not "speak for themselves." When you display a visual aid, you should explain what it shows, pointing out and naming the most important features. If you use an audio aid such as a musical excerpt, you need to tell your audience what to listen for. Similarly, if you use a video clip, it is up to you as the speaker to point out the characteristics in the video that support the point you are making—but probably beforehand, so you are not speaking over the video. At the same time, a visual aid should be quickly accessible to the audience. This is where simplicity comes in. Just as in organization of a speech you would not want to use 20 main points. But more like 3-5, you should limit categories of information on a visual aid.
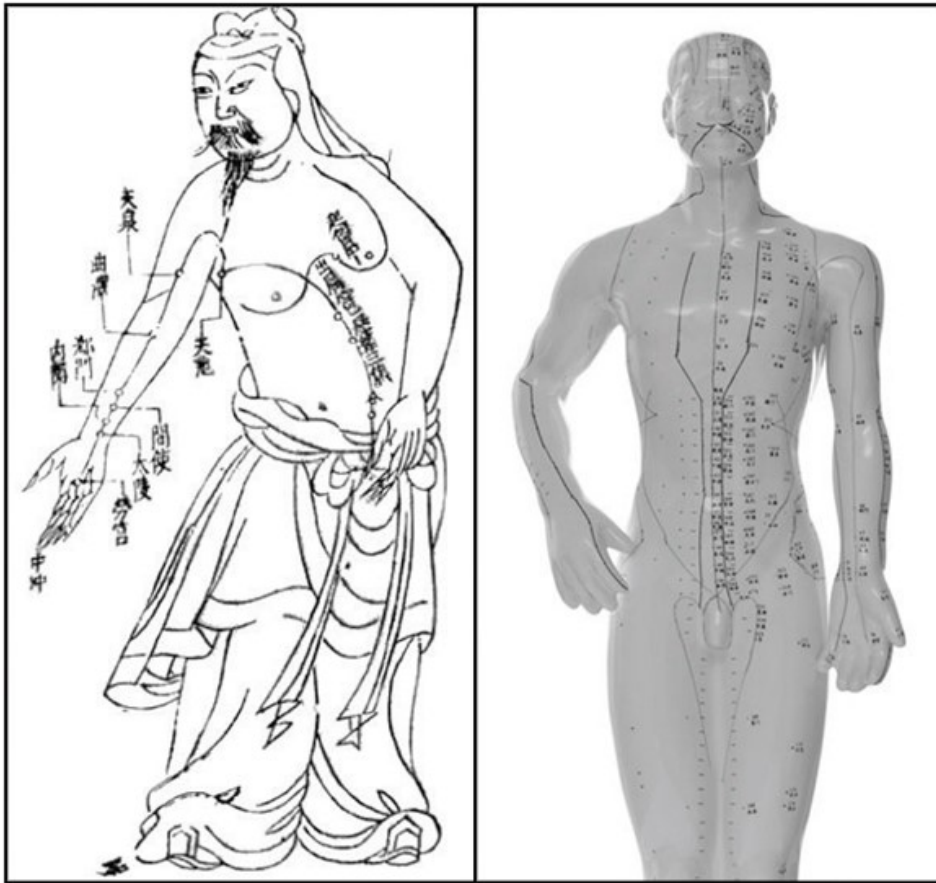
Figure 9.6 – Acupuncture Charts

Source: Image on the left from Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Acupuncture_chart_300px.jpg.

Image on the right © Thinkstock

Congenital Anomalies	Relative Risk	Nunmber of Smokers N = 1,943	Number of Nonsmokers N = 16,073	95% CI	*p*-Value
Cardiovascular System	1.56	43	217	1.12–2.19	$p < .01$
Skeletal System	1.11	19	139	0.68–1.82	NS
Hematologic System	1.39	20	121	0.86–2.25	NS
Nervous System	1.30	4	25	0.91–1.86	NS
Pulmonary System	1.25	7	39	0.55–2.84	NS
Gastrointestinal System	0.54	1	17	0.07–4.11	NS

Figure 9.7– Birth Weight Chi-Square

Source: Woods, S. E., & Raju, U. (2001).

9.3 – Types of Presentation Aids

Now that we've explored some basic hints for preparing visual aids, let's look at the most common types of visual aids: charts, graphs, representations, objects/models, and people.

Charts

Chart

graphical representation of data (often numerical) or a sketch representing an ordered process.

A **chart** is commonly defined as a graphical representation of data (often numerical) or a sketch representing an ordered process. Whether you create your charts or do research to find charts that already exist, it is important for them to exactly match the specific purpose in your speech. Figure 9.6 ("Acupuncture Charts") shows two charts related to acupuncture. Although both charts are good, they are not equal. One chart might be useful in a speech about the history and development of acupuncture while the other chart would be more useful for showing the locations of meridians (the lines along which energy is thought to flow) and the acupuncture points.

The rest of this section will explore three common types of charts: statistical charts, sequence-of-steps chart, and decision trees.

Statistical Charts

For most audiences, statistical presentations must be kept as   simple as possible, and they must be explained. The statistical chart shown in Figure 9.7 ("Birth Weight Chi-Square") is from a study examining the effects of maternal smoking on a range of congenital birth defects. Unless you are familiar with statistics, this chart may be very confusing. When visually displaying information from a quantitative study, you need to make sure that you understand the material and can successfully and simply explain how one should interpret the data. If you are unsure about the data yourself, then you should probably not use this type of information. This is surely an example of a visual aid that, although it delivers a limited kind of information, does not speak for   itself. On the other hand, if you are presenting to an upper level or   graduate class in health sciences or to professionals in health occupations, this chart would be appropriate. As with all other principles of public speaking, KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE.

Sequence-of-Steps Charts

Charts are also useful when you are trying to explain a process that involves several steps. The two visual aids in Figure 9.8 ("Steps in Cell Reproduction") both depict the process of cell division called mitosis using a sequence-of-steps chart, but they each deliver different information. The first chart lacks labels to indicate the different phases of cell division. Although the first
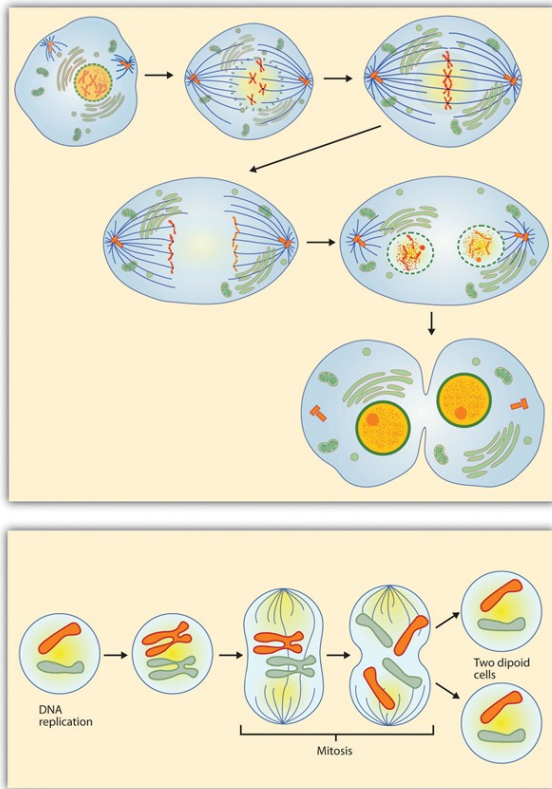
Figure 9.8 – Steps in Cell Reproduction

Source: Images courtesy of LadyofHats, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MITOSIS_cells_secuence.svg, and the National Institutes of Health, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MajorEventsInMitosis.jpg.

chart may have more color and look more scientific, the missing information may confuse your audience. In the second chart, each phase is labeled with a brief explanation of what is happening, which can help your audience understand the process.

Decision Trees

Decision trees are useful for showing the relationships between ideas. The example in Figure 9.9 ("Open Educational Resource Decision Tree") shows how a decision tree could be used to determine whether to use open-source textbook material. As with the other types of charts, you want to be sure that the information in the chart is relevant to the purpose of your speech and that each question and decision is clearly labeled. This particular tree is pertinent to this textbook, which is an open educational resource drawing from other open educational resources, and the decision tree shows some of the processes the authors went through to decide on the content of this text.

The next four pages show examples of decision trees and types of graphs. Text resumes on page 200.

Figure 9.9 – Open Educational Resource Decision Tree

Source: Image courtesy of T-kita, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Decision_tree_model.png.
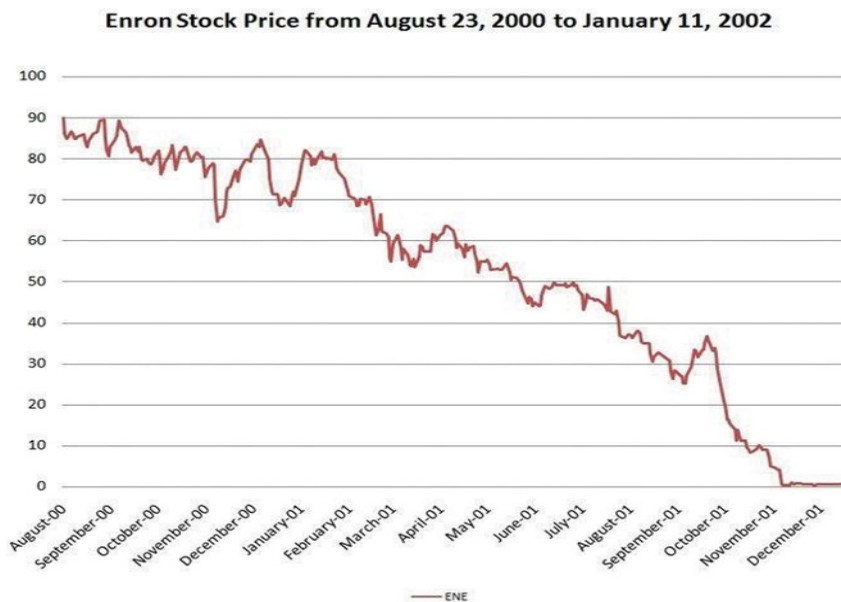
Figure 9.10 – Enron's Stock Price

Source: Image courtesy of Nehrams 2020, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EnronStockPriceAug00Jan02.jpg
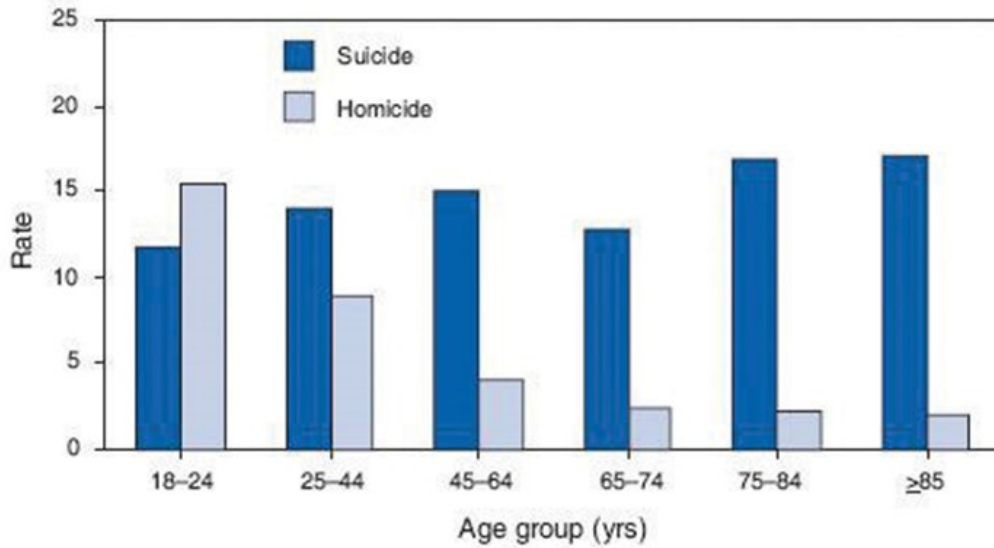
Figure 9.11 – Suicide vs. Homicide

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Homicide_suicide_USA.gif
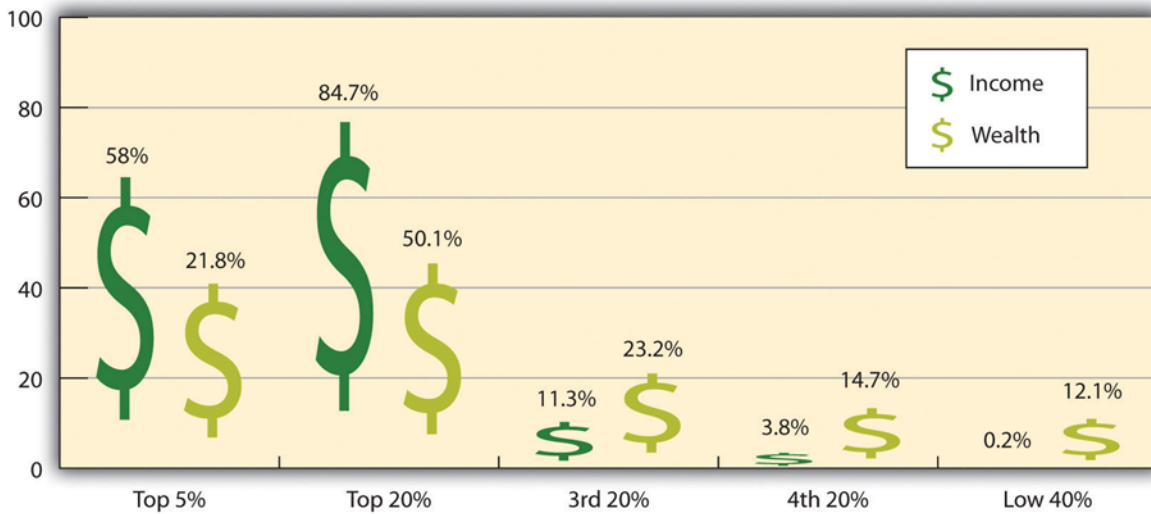
Figure 9.12 – Distribution of Income and Wealth in the United States

Source: Wolff, E. N. (2007). Recent trends in household wealth in the United States: Rising debt and the middle-class squeeze (Working Paper No. 502). Retrieved from the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College website: http://www.levy.org/pubs/wp_502.pdf

Figure 9.13 – Causes of Concussions in Children

Figure 9.14 – World Populations

Cheese	
Veggie only	
Pepperoni	
Sausage	
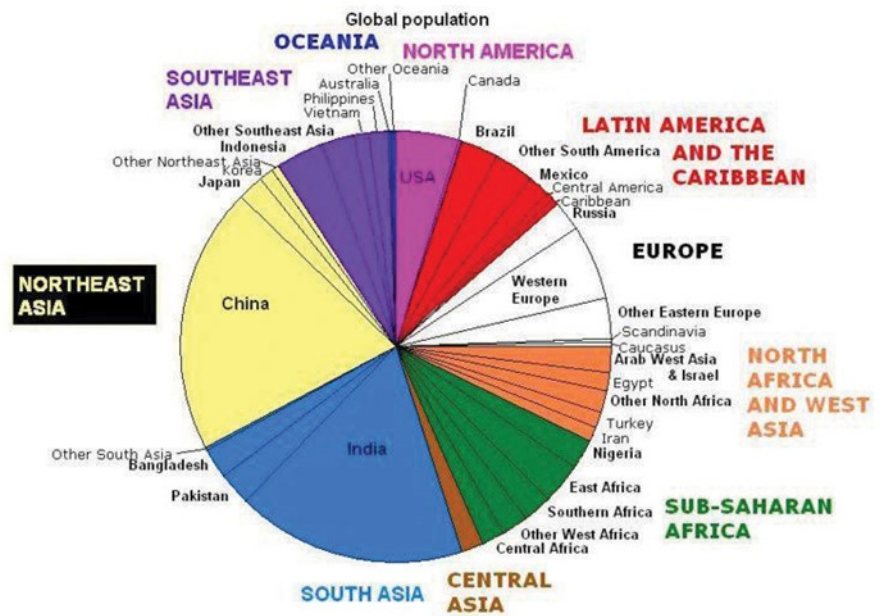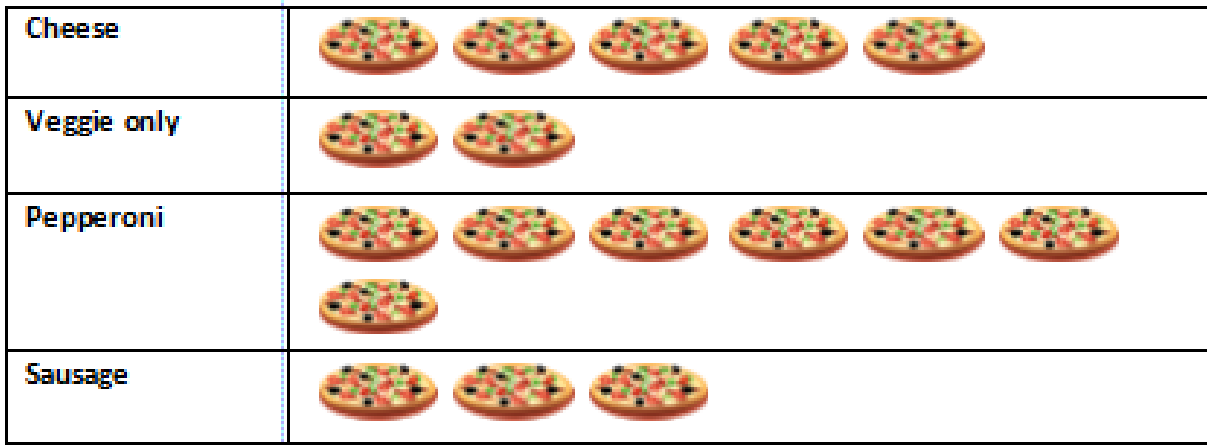
Each equals fifty students polled

Figure 9.15 – Pictograph – Favorite Pizza Toppings of Dalton State College Freshmen
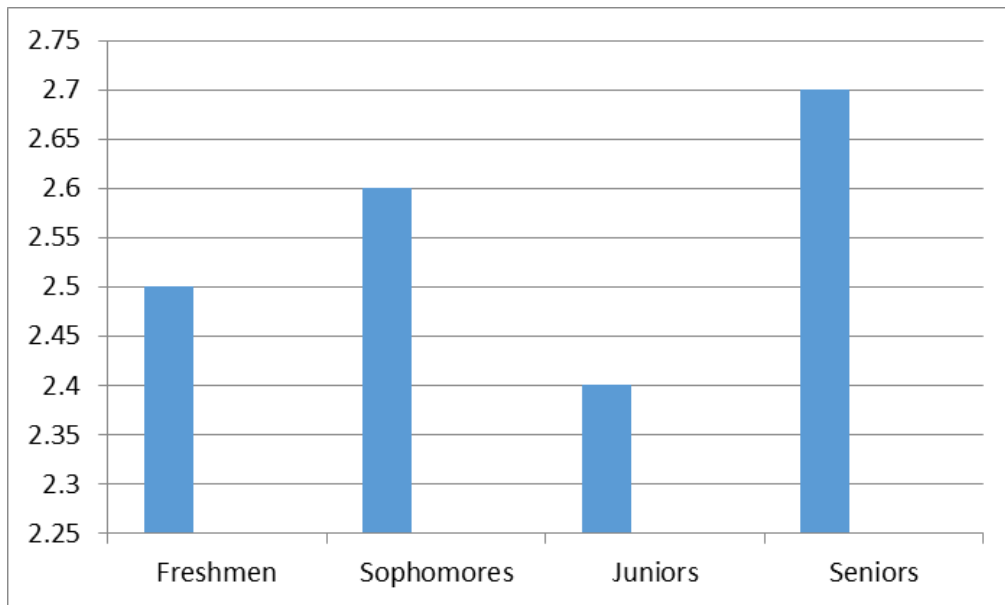
Figure 9.16 – Misrepresentative Graph of GPAs of Students

Graphs

Graph

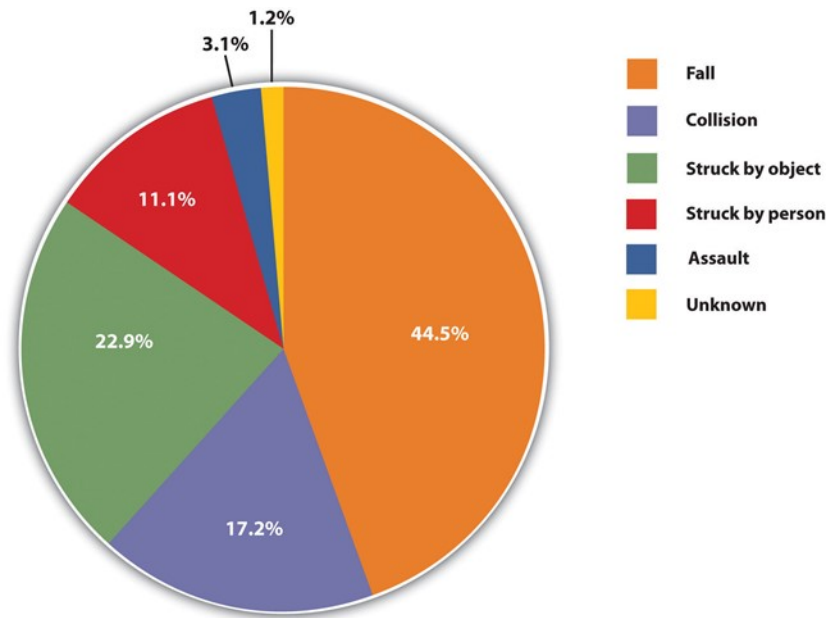a pictorial representation of the relationships of quantitative data using dots, lines, bars, pie slices, and the like

Strictly speaking, a **graph** may be considered a type of chart, but graphs are so widely used that we will discuss them separately. A graph is a pictorial representation of the relationships of quantitative data using dots, lines, bars, pie slices, and the like. Graphs show how one factor (such as size, weight, number of items) varies in comparison to other items. Whereas a statistical chart may report the mean ages of individuals entering college, a graph would show how the mean age changes over time. A statistical chart may report the amount of computers sold in the United States, while a graph will use bars or lines to show the breakdown of those computers by operating systems such as Windows, Macintosh, and Linux.

Public speakers can show graphs using a range of different formats. Some of those formats are specialized for various professional fields. Very complex graphs often contain too much information that is not related to the purpose of a student's speech. If the graph is cluttered, it becomes difficult to compre-
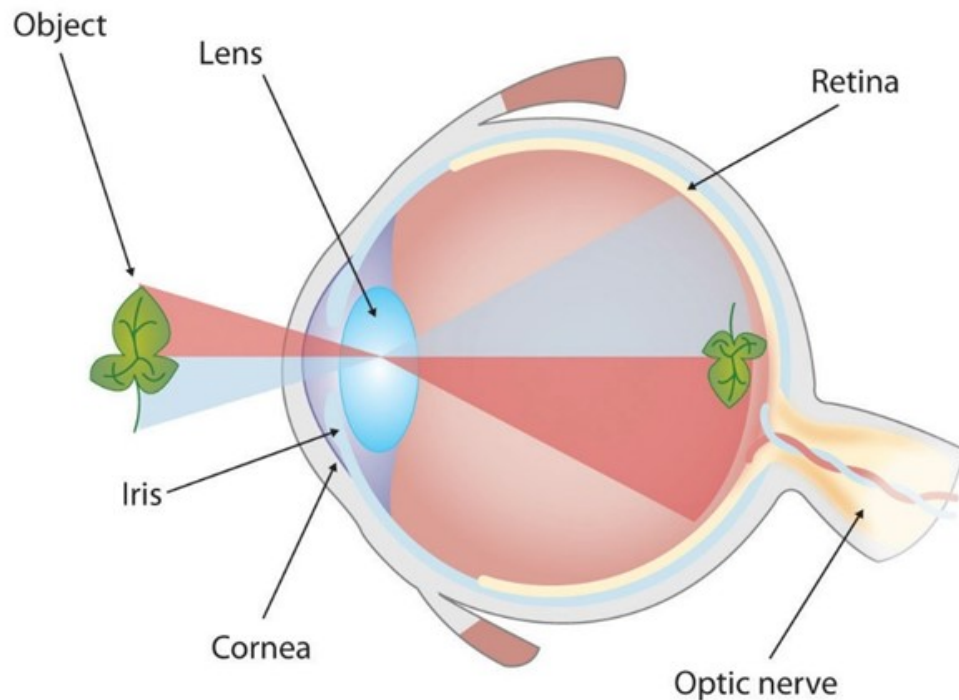
Figure 9.17 – The Human Eye

hend. In this section, we're going to analyze the common graphs speakers utilize in their speeches: line graphs, bar graphs, pie graphs, and pictographs.

Line Graph

A **line graph** is designed to show trends over time. In Figure 9.10 ("Enron's Stock Price"), we see a line graph depicting the fall of Enron's stock price from August 2000 to January 2002. Notice that although it has some steep rises, the line has an overall downward trend clearly depicting the plummeting of Enron's stock price. This is far more effective in showing the relationship of numbers than a chart (as in Figure 9.7) or reading the numbers aloud.

Line graph

a graph designed to show trends over time

Bar Graph

Bar graphs re useful for showing the differences between quantities. They can be used for population demographics, fuel costs, math ability in different grades, and many other kinds of

Bar graph

a graph designed to show the differences between quantities

Figure 9.18 – Map of Africa with Nigerian Emphasis
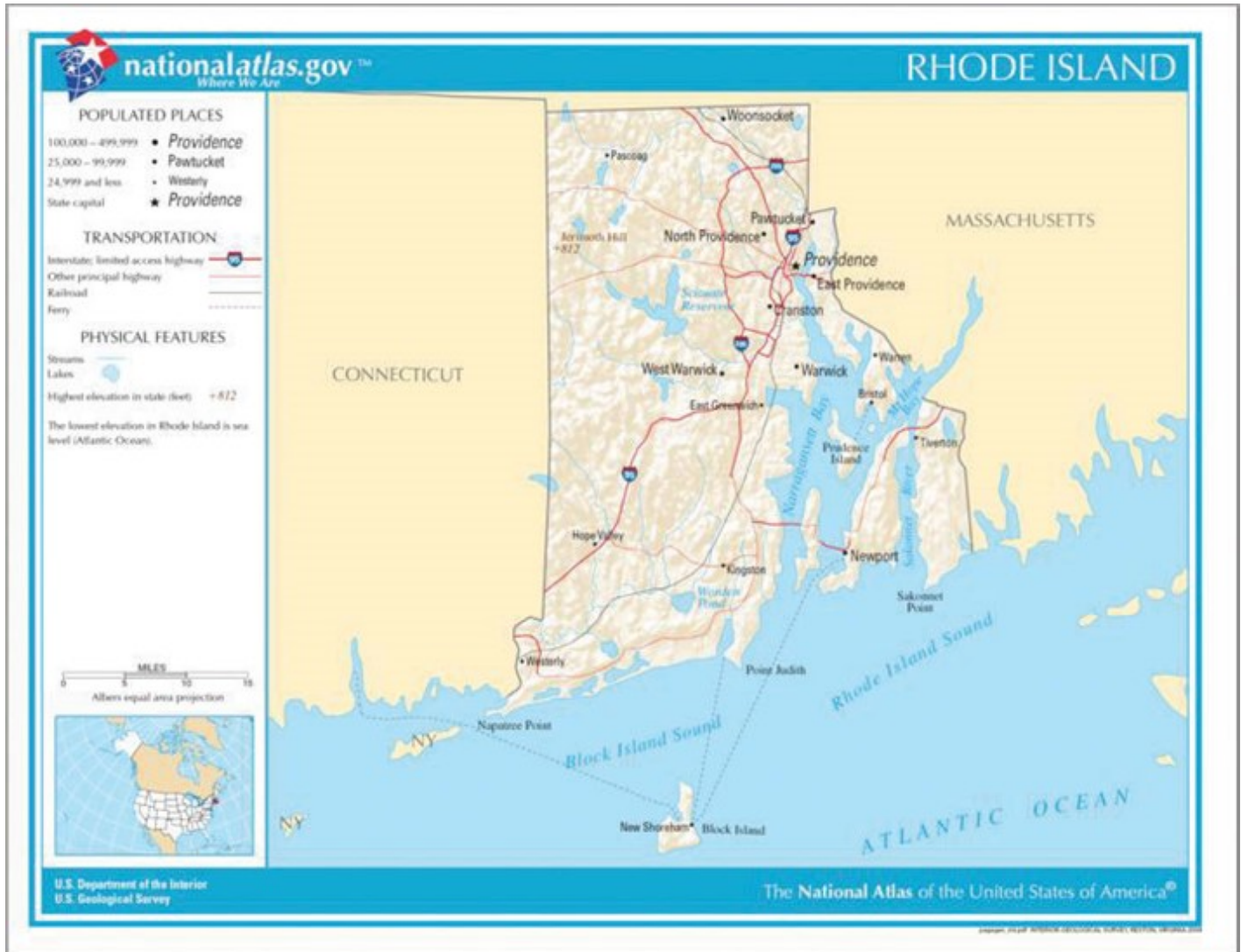
Figure 9.10 – Rhode Island Map

data. The graph in Figure 9.11 ("Suicide vs. Homicide") is well designed. It is relatively simple and is carefully labeled, making it easy for you to guide your   audience through the quantities of each type of death. The bar graph is designed to show the difference between rates of suicides and homicides across various age groups. When you look at the data, the first grouping clearly shows that eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds are more likely to die because of a homicide than any of the other age groups.

The graph in Figure 9.12 ("Distribution of Income and Wealth in the United States") is a complicated bar graph depicting the disparity between the so-called "haves" and the "have nots" within the United States. On the left hand side of the graph you can see that the Top 20% of people within the United States account for 84.7% of all of the wealth and 50.1% of all of the

Figure 9.20– Wigwam Photograph

© Thinkstock

income. On the other hand, those in the bottom 40% account for only 0.2% of the wealth and 12.1% of the actual income.

While the graph is very well designed, it presents a great deal of information. For example, it shows "wealth" and "income," for several groups; however, these are related but different concepts. In a written publication, readers will have time to sit and analyze the graph, but in a speaking situation, audience members need to be able to understand the information in a graph very quickly. For that reason, this graph is probably not as effective for speeches as the one in Figure 9.11 ("Natural Death vs. Homicide").

Pie Graph

Pie graphs are usually depicted as circles and are designed to show proportional relationships within sets of data; in other words, they show parts of or percentages of a whole. They should be simplified as much as possible without eliminating important information. As with other graphs, the sections of the pie need to be plotted proportionally. In the pie graph shown in Figure 9.13 ("Causes of Concussions in Children") we see a clear and proportional chart that has been color-coded. Color-coding is useful when it's difficult to fit the explanations in the actual sections of the graph; in that case, you need to include a legend, or key, to indicate what the colors in the graph mean. In this graph, audience members can see very quickly that falls are the primary

Pie graph

a graph designed to show proportional relationships within sets of data

reason children receive concussions. However, the pie graph in Figure 9.14 ("World Populations") is jumbled, illegible, confusing, and overwhelming in every way. The use of color coding doesn't help. Overall, this graph simply contains too much information and is more likely to confuse an audience than help them understand something.

Pictograph

Similar to bar graphs, **pictographs** use numbers or sizes of iconic symbols to dramatize differences in amounts. An example is found in Figure 9.15. Pictographs, although interesting, do not allow for depiction of specific statistical data. If you were trying to show the output of oil from various countries through oil wells, each oil well representing a ten million barrels a day, it might be hard for the audience to see the difference between a third of an oil well and a fourth of one, but that is a significant difference in amounts (3.3 million versus 2.5 million).

Graphs can present challenges in being effective but also in being ethical. To be both ethical and effective, you need a good understanding of what statistics mean, and you need to create or use graphs that show amounts clearly. If you were showing GPAs of freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior students at your college, and the bottom number on the graph was 2.25 rather than 0.0, that would result in a visually bigger difference than what really exists (see Figure 9.16).

Diagrams

Diagrams are drawings or sketches that outline and explain the parts of an object, process, or phenomenon that cannot be readily seen. Like graphs, diagrams can be considered a type of chart, as in the case of organization charts and process flow charts.

When you use a diagram, be sure to explain each part of the phenomenon, paying special attention to elements that are complicated or prone to misunderstanding. In the example shown in Figure 9.17 ("The Human Eye"), you might wish to highlight that the light stimulus is reversed when it is processed through the brain or that the optic nerve is not a single stalk as many people think.

Maps

Maps are extremely useful if the information is clear and limited. There are all kinds of maps, including population, weather, ocean current, political, and economic maps, so you should find the right kind for the purpose of your speech. Choose a map that emphasizes the information you need to deliver. The

Pictograph

a graph using iconic symbols to dramatize differences in amounts

Diagrams

drawings or sketches that outline and explain the parts of an object, process, or phenomenon that cannot be readily seen

map shown in <u>Figure 9.18 ("African Map with Nigerian Emphasis")</u> is simple, showing clearly the geographic location of Nigeria. This can be extremely valuable for some audiences who might not be able to name and locate countries on the continent of Africa. <u>Figure 9.19 ("Rhode Island Map")</u> is a map of the state of Rhode Island, and it emphasizes the complicated configuration of islands and waterways that characterize this state's geography. Although the map does not list the names of the islands, it is helpful in orienting the audience to the direction and distance of the islands to other geographic features, such as the city of Providence and the Atlantic Ocean.

Photographs and Drawings

Sometimes a photograph or a drawing is the best way to show an unfamiliar but important detail. <u>Figure 9.20 ("Wigwam Photograph")</u> is a photograph of a wigwam, a dwelling used by Native Americans in the North East. Audiences expect high quality in photographs now, and as with all presentation aids they should enhance the speech and not just "be there." It is common to put photographs on PowerPoint slides as "clip art," but they should be relevant and not detract from the message of the slide.

Video or Audio Recordings

Another very useful type of presentation aid is a video or audio recording. Whether it is a short video from a website such as YouTube or Vimeo, a segment from a song, or a piece of a podcast, a well-chosen video or audio recording may be a good choice to enhance your speech. Imagine, for example, that you're giving a speech on how Lap-Band surgeries help people lose weight. One of the sections of your speech could explain how the Lap-Band works, so you could easily show a forty-three second video available on YouTube to demonstrate the part of the surgery. Maybe you could include a recording of a real patient explaining why he or she decided to get the Lap-Band.

There is one major warning to using audio and video clips during a speech: do not forget that they are supposed to be aids to your speech, not the speech itself! In addition, be sure to avoid these five mistakes that speakers often make when using audio and video clips:

- Avoid choosing clips that are too long for the overall length of the speech. Your instructor can give you some guidelines for how long video and audio clips should be for the speeches in your class, if they are allowed (and make sure they are).

- Practice with the audio or video equipment prior to speaking. If you are unfamiliar with the equipment, you'll look foolish trying to figure out how it works. This fiddling around will not only take your audience out of your speech but also have a negative impact on your credibility. It also wastes valuable time. Also be sure that the speakers on the computer are on and at the right volume level.

- Cue the clip to the appropriate place prior to beginning your speech. We cannot tell you the number of times we've seen students spend valuable speech time trying to find a clip on YouTube or a DVD. You need to make sure your clip is ready to go before you start speaking. Later in this chapter we will look at using video links in slides.

- In addition to cuing the clip to the appropriate place, the browser window should be open and ready to go. If there are advertisements before the video, be sure to have the video cued to play after the ad. The audience should not have to sit through a commercial. There is a website called TubeChop that can allow you to cut a segment out of a YouTube video, then creating a new link. It has limitations but can be useful.

- The audience must be given context before the video or audio clip is played, specifically what the clip is and why it relates to the speech.

Objects or Models

Objects and models are another form of presentation aid that can be very helpful in getting your audience to understand your message. Objects refer to anything you could hold up and talk about during your speech. If you're talking about the importance of not using plastic water bottles, you might hold up a plastic water bottle and a stainless steel water bottle as examples.

Models, on the other hand, are re-creations of physical objects that you cannot have readily available with you during a speech. If you're giving a speech on heart murmurs, you may be able to show how heart murmurs work by holding up a model of the human heart. As will be discussed in the section on handouts below, a speaker should never pass an object or model around during a speech. It is highly distracting.

People and Animals

The next category of presentation aids are people and animals. We can often use ourselves or other people to adequately demonstrate an idea during our speeches.

Animals as Presentation Aids

When giving a speech on a topic relating to animals, it is often tempting to bring an animal to serve as your presentation aid. While this can sometimes add a very engaging dimension to the speech, it carries some serious risks that you need to consider.

The first risk is that animal behavior tends to be unpredictable. You may think this won't be a problem if your presentation aid animal is a small enough to be kept confined throughout your speech—for example, a goldfish in a bowl or a lizard or bird in a cage. However, even caged animals can be very distracting to your audience if they run about, chirp, or exhibit other agitated behavior. The chances are great that an animal will react to the stress of an unfamiliar situation by displaying behavior that does not contribute positively to your speech or to the cleanliness of the physical environment. Additionally, the animal's behavior may not only affect audience attention during your speech, but potentially during your classmates' speeches as well.

The second risk is that some audience members may respond negatively to a live animal. In addition to common fears and aversions to animals like snakes, spiders, and mice, many people have allergies to various animals. One of the authors had an experience where a student brought his six-foot yellow python to class for a speech. As a result, one of the other students refused to stay in the room because of her snake phobia (the instructor was not overwhelmingly comfortable either).

The third risk is that some locations may have regulations about bringing animals onto the premises. If animals are allowed, the person bringing the animal may be required to bring a veterinary certificate or may be legally responsible for any damage caused by the animal.

For these reasons, before you decide to use an animal as a presentation aid, ask yourself if you could make your point equally well with a picture, model, diagram, or other representation of the animal in question.

Speaker as Presentation Aid

Speakers can often use their own bodies to demonstrate facets of a speech. If your speech is about ballroom dancing or ballet, you might use your body to demonstrate the basic moves in the cha-cha or the five basic ballet positions.

Other People as Presentation Aids

In some cases, such as for a demonstration speech, you might want to ask someone else to serve as your presentation aid. You should arrange ahead of time for a person (or persons) to be an effective aid—do not assume that an audience member will volunteer on the spot. If you plan to demonstrate how to immobilize a broken bone, your volunteer must know ahead of time that you will touch him or her as much as necessary to splint the break.

You must also make certain that they will arrive dressed presentably and that they will not draw attention away from your message through their appearance or behavior. The transaction between you and your human presentation aid must be appropriate, especially if you are going to demonstrate something like a dance step. In short, make sure your helper will know what is expected of him or her and consents to it.

9.4 – Using Presentation Slides

Ever since the 1990s and the mainstreaming of personal computer technology, speakers have had the option of using slide presentation software to accompany their speeches and presentations. The most commonly known one is PowerPoint, although there are   several others:

- Prezi, available at www.prezi.com
- Slide Rocket, available at www.sliderocket.com
- Google Presentations, available in Google Drive and useful for collaborative assignments
- Keynote, the Apple presentation slide software on MACs
- Impress, an Open Office product (http://www.openoffice.org/product/impress.html)
- PrezentIt
- AdobeAcrobat Presenter
- ThinkFree

These products, some of which are offered free for trial or basic subscriptions (called a "freemium), allow you to present professional-looking slides. Each one is "robust," a word used to mean it has a large number of functions and features, some of which are helpful and some of which are distracting. For example, you can use the full range of fonts, although many of them are not appropriate for presentations because they are hard to read. In

this section we will discuss the proper use of presentation slides, with the assumption that you understand the basics of cutting, pasting, inserting, etc. involved in these products. You may have taken a class in high school where you learned to use the technology, but that is not the same as learning to use them for actual presentations. Your professor may not allow you to use this type of presentation aid in class (so you can focus on the actual speech), but you will likely give a presentation at some point in your college career where you are required or permitted to use this type of presentation aid.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Presentation Slides

In some industries and businesses, there is an assumption that speakers will use presentation slides. They allow visualization of concepts, they are easily portable, they can be embedded with videos and audio, words can dance around the screen—why wouldn't a speaker use them? You will probably also be expected to have slide presentations in future assignments in college. Knowing how to use them, beyond the basic technology, is vital to being a proficient presenter.

But why not use them? Franck Frommer, a French journalist and communication expert, published the book *How PowerPoint Makes You Stupid* (2012), whose title says it all. He criticizes the "linearity" of PowerPoint and similar presentation software, meaning that audiences are not encouraged to see the relationship of ideas and that PowerPoint hurts critical thinking in the audience. Slide follows slide of bulleted information without one slide being more important.

As recently as the mid-2000s, critics such as the eminent graphic expert and NASA consultant Edward Tufte (2005) charged that PowerPoint's tendency to force the user to put a certain number of bullet points on each slide in a certain format was a serious threat to the accurate presentation of data. As Tufte put it, "the rigid slide-by-slide hierarchies, indifferent to content, slice and dice the evidence into arbitrary compartments, producing an anti-narrative with choppy continuity."

Tufte argues that poor decision making, such as was involved with the 2003 space shuttle *Columbia* disaster, may have been related to the shortcomings of such presentation aids in NASA meetings. While more recent versions of PowerPoint and similar programs allow much more creative freedom in designing slides, this freedom comes with a responsibility—the user needs

to take responsibility for using the technology to support the speech and not get carried away with the many special effects the software is capable of producing.

It should be mentioned here that Prezi helps address one of the major criticisms of PowerPoint. Because Prezi, in its design stage, looks something like a mind map on a very large canvas with grid lines, it allows you to show the relationship and hierarchy of ideas better. For example, you can see and design the slides so that the "Big Ideas" are in big circles and the subordinate ideas are in smaller ones.

In addition to recognizing the truth behind Frommer's and Tufte's critiques, we have all sat through a presenter who committed the errors of putting far too much text on the slide. When a speaker does this, the audience is confused—do they read the text or listen to the speaker? An audience member cannot do both. Then, the speaker feels the need to read the slides rather than use PowerPoint for what is does best, visual reinforcement and clarification. We have also seen many poorly designed PowerPoint slides, either through haste or lack of knowledge: slides where the graphics are distorted (elongated or squatty), words and graphics not balanced, text too small, words printed over photographs, garish or nauseating colors, or animated figures left up on the screen for too long and distracting the audience. What about you? Can you think about PowerPoint "don'ts" that have hurt your reception of a presentation or lecture?

Creating Quality Slide Shows

Slides should show the principles of good design, which include unity, emphasis or focal point, scale and proportion, balance, and rhythm (Lauer & Pentak, 2000). Presenters should also pay attention to tone and usability. With those principles in mind, here are some tips for creating and then using presentation software.

Unity and Consistency

Generally it is best to use a single font for the text on your visuals so that they look like a unified set. Or you can use two different fonts in consistent ways, such as having all headers in the same font and all bullet points in the same font. Additionally, the background should probably remain consistent, whether you choose one of the many design templates or if you just opt for a background color.

In terms of unity, the adage, "Keep It Simple, Speaker" definitely applies to presentation slides. Each slide should have
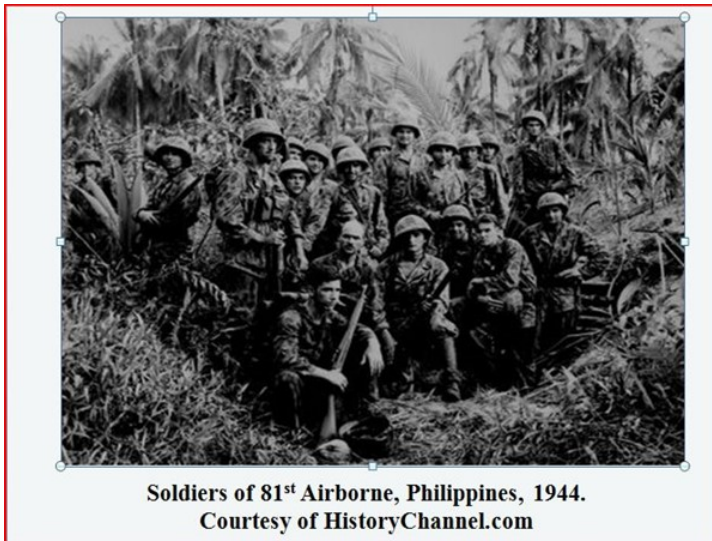
Figures 9.21 and 9.22—Captioning Photographs on Presentation Slides

Figures 9.23—Sample Slide for Critique

one message, one photo, one graphic. The audience members should know what they are supposed to look at on the slide. A phrase to remember about presentation slides and the wide range of design elements available is "Just because you can, doesn't mean you should."

Another area related to unity and consistency, as well as audience response, is the use of animation or movement. There are three types of animation in slideshows. First, you can embed little characters or icons that have movement. These may seem like fun, but they have limited use and should not stay on the screen very long—you can use the second type of animation to take them off the screen.

That second type is the designed movement of text or objects on and off the screen. Although using this function takes up a good bit of time in preparing your slides, especially if you want to do it well and be creative with it, it is very useful. You can control what your audience is seeing. It also avoids bringing up all the text and material on a slide at one time, which tempts the audience again to pay more attention to the screen than to you. Movement on the screen attracts attention (see Factors of Attention in Chapter 7), for better or worse. PowerPoint, for example, allows bouncing words, pulsating text, and swirling phrases, which may or may not serve your purpose.

The third type of animation is called slide transitions, which is the design of how the next slide appears. In PowerPoint you can have the slides appear automatically or as blinds, as little checkerboards, even like the opening credits in *Star Wars*. (You can also use sound effects, but that is strongly discouraged.) In Prezi, the slides transition by zooming in and out, which is a clever effect but does make some audience members experience motion sickness. In general, you want to use a consistent and efficient pattern of movement with the second and third types of animation.

Emphasis, Focal Point, and Visibility

Several points should be made about how to make sure the audience sees what they need to see on the slides.

1. It is essential to make sure the information is large enough for the audience to see; and since the display size may vary according to the projector you are using, this is another reason for practicing in advance with the equipment you intend to use.

2. The standard rule is for text is 7 X 7, or sometimes (if the screen is smaller) 6 X 6. Does this mean 49 or 36 words on the slide? No. It means, in the case of 7 X 7, that you should have no more than seven horizontal lines of text (this does not mean bullet points, but lines of text, including the heading) and the longest line should not exceed seven words.

3. Following the 7 X 7 rule will keep you from putting too much information on a slide, but you should also avoid too many slides. Less sometimes really is more. Again, there is no hard and fast rule, but a ten-minute speech probably needs fewer than ten slides, unless you can make a good argument for more based on the content of the speech. If, however, the slides are just text, more than ten is too many.

4. Do not assume that all the templates feature visible text. Text should not be smaller than 22 point font for best visibility, and some of the templates have much smaller sized fonts. This is especially important in those situations where the speaker creates handouts. Text smaller than 22 is very difficult to see on handouts of your slides.

5. High contrast between the text and slides is extremely important. White fonts against very dark backgrounds and black fonts against very light backgrounds are probably your safest bet here. Remember that the way it looks on your computer screen is not the exactly how it will look when projected—the light is coming from a different place. Avoid words on photos. Figure 9.21 shows a photo with the words placed across the center of the image. Not only does this obviously obscure some of the picture, it also makes the words difficult to read. Figure 9.22, by contrast, has the accompanying text placed just blow the image, making both much easier to see, and a citation is provided.

6. Also in terms of visibility, most experts say that *sans serif* fonts such as Arial, Tahoma, and Verdana are better for reading from screens than *serif* fonts such as Times New Roman, Bookface, Georgia, or Garamond.

How does the slide in Figure 9.23 stack up beside these rules for visibility? You probably noticed that slide is a "fail" in terms of high contrast between the font and background and the use of a block of text not broken up for easy reading. The audience would feel like they are supposed to read it but not be able to. Also, since the text is a quotation from John Dewey, the text should have quotation marks around it.

Tone

the attitude of a given artifact (humorous, serious, light-hearted, etc.)

Tone

Fonts, color, clip art, photographs, and templates all contribute to **tone**, which is the attitude being conveyed in the slides. If you want a light tone, such as for a speech about cruises, some colors (springtime, pastel, cool, warm, or primary colors) and fonts (such as Comic Sans) and lots of photographs will be more appropriate. For a speech about the Holocaust, more somber colors and design elements would be more fitting, whereas clip art would not be.

Scale and Proportion

Although there are several ways to think about scale and proportion, we will discuss three here. First, bullet points. Bullet points infer that the items in the bulleted list are equal and the sequence doesn't matter. If you want to communicate order or sequence or priority, use numbers. Do not use outline points or numerical points with bullet points. Also, you should not put your outline (Roman numerals, etc.) on the slide.

Bullet points should be short—not long, full sentences—but at the same time should be long enough to mean something. In a speech on spaying and neutering pets, the bullet point "pain" may be better replaced with "Pet feels little pain." Second, when you are designing your slides, it is best to choose a template and stick with it. If you input all your graphics and material and then change the template, the format of the slide will change, in some cases dramatically, and you will have distorted graphics and words covered up. You will then have to redesign each slide, which can be unnecessarily time-consuming.

The third aspect of scale and proportion is the relationship between the graphics and text in terms of size. This aspect is discussed below in the next section on "Balance." Also, a graphic should be surrounded by some empty space and not just take up the whole slide.

Balance

In general you want symmetrical slides. Below are four examples of slides that are unbalanced (Figures 9.24-9.27); the last one (Figure 9. 28) achieves a better symmetry and design.

Rhythm in Presenting

The rhythm of your slide display should be reasonably consistent—you would not want to display a dozen different slides in the first minute of a five-minute presentation and then display only one slide per minute for the rest of the speech. Timing them so that the audience can actually take them in is important.

Presenters often overdo the number of slides, thinking they will get a better grade but too many slides just causes overkill.

If you can obtain a remote mouse to change slides, that can help you feel independent of the mouse attached to the computer. However, you have to practice with the remote "clicker." But if you have to use the mouse to change slide, keep your hands off of it between clicks. We have seen students wiggle the little arrow all over the screen. It is extremely annoying.

Whether using a "clicker" or the attached mouse, you must attend to the connection between what is on the screen and what you are actually talking about at the moment. Put reminders in your notes about when you need to change slides during your speech.

For better or worse, we have become very screen-oriented in our communication, largely because screens change often and that changing teaches us to expect new stimuli, which we crave. If the screen is up but you are not talking about what is on the screen, it is very confusing to the audience. (Other programs have similar functions; for example, if using Prezi, the "B" key also shows a black screen.)

If you are using PowerPoint and if you are not talking about something on a slide, hit the "B" key or the blank screen button on the remote mouse. This action will turn the screen to black. You can also hit the "W" key, which turns the screen to white, but that will make the audience think something is coming. Unfortunately, the downside of the "B" key action is that it will return you to the previous screen. To avoid this, some presenters put a black slide between slides in the presentation so that hitting the forward key gives the same effect, but hitting it again takes them to a new screen.

Other Practical Considerations

1. Be sure the file is saved in a format that will be "readable" on the computer where you are presenting. A common example is that a Keynote presentation (Apple) does not open on all PCs. You can save Keynote as a .ppt file for use on a PC. Likewise, if you chose to use Prezi or other web-based presentation soft-ware, you will need a strong, reliable Internet connection to show the slides.

2. Any borrowed graphic must be cited on the slide where it is used; the same would be true of borrowed textual material. Just putting your sources on the last slide is insufficient.
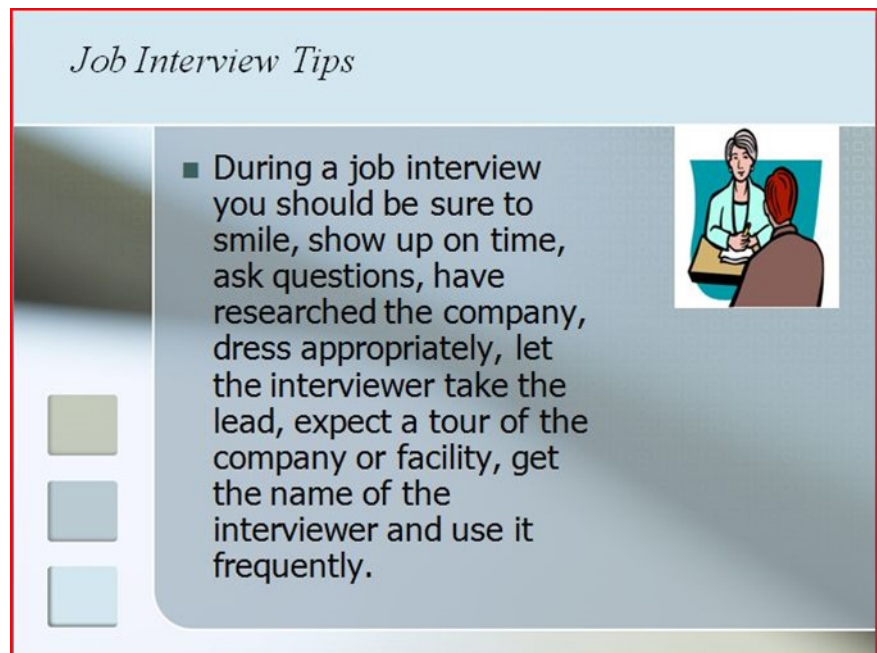
Figure 9.24—This slide leaves too much "white space" below the text, leaving an imbalance between the text and graphic; the graphic goes up into the title, and the title could be centered.

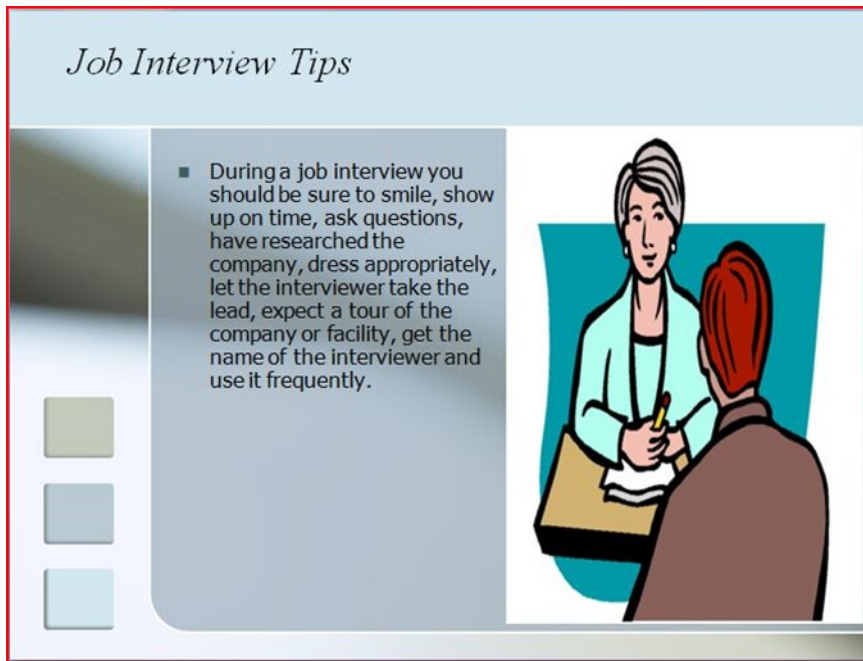
Figure 9.25—This slide does not break the text up into bullets and is therefore hard to read; the graphic is strangely small, and the heading is in a different font. Script fonts are often hard to read on screens.

Figure 9.26—In this slide, similar problems from Figure 9.25 are repeated, but the text is also too small and the graphic is distorted because it was not sized from the corner.
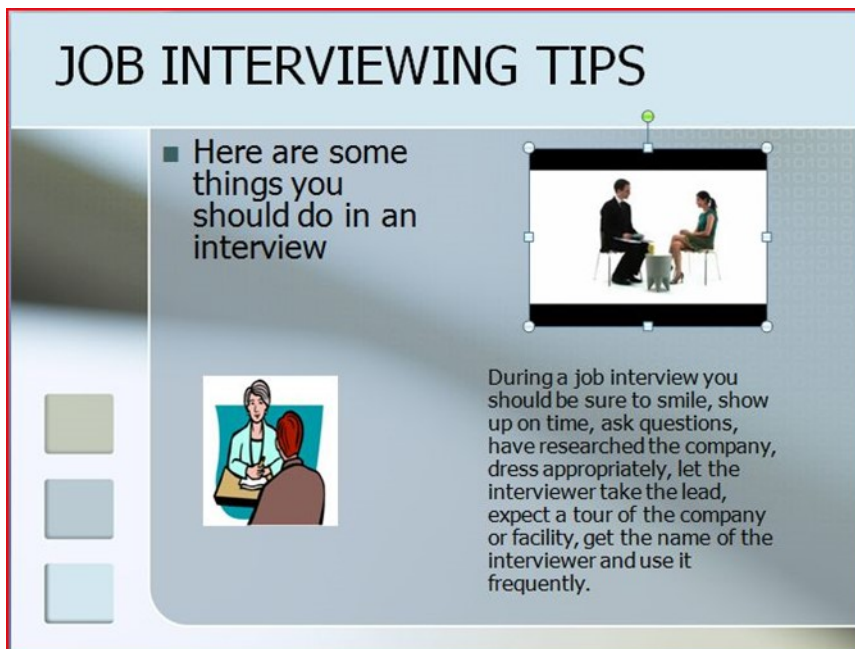
Figure 9.27—This slide is far too "busy." The additional clip art is not helpful, the font is too small, and the ideas are disconnected. Having text in all caps is also difficult to read.

Figure 9.28—This version provides more visual balance and does not violate the 7X7 rule. Probably a photograph would work better than clip art on this slide. It also has a few typos—can you find them?

3. A very strong temptation for speakers is to look at the projected image rather than the audience during the speech. This practice cuts down on eye contact, of course, and is distracting for the audience. Two solutions for that are to print your notes from the presentation slides and/or use the slides as your note structure. And remember that if the image is on the computer monitor in front of you, it is on the screen behind you.

4. Always remember—and this cannot be emphasized enough—is that the technology works for you, not you for the technology. The presentation aids are aids, not the speech itself.

5. As mentioned before, sometimes life happens—technology does not work. It could be that the projector bulb goes out or the Internet connection is down. The show must go on.

6. If you are using a video or audio clip from an Internet source, it is probably best to hyperlink the URL on one of the slides rather than minimize the program and change to the Internet site. You can do this by highlighting a key word on the slide, right clicking to find "hyperlink," and then pasting the URL there. Although you can also embed video in a PowerPoint, it makes the file extremely large and that may cause problems of its own.

9.5 – Low-Tech Presentation Aids

One reason for using digital media is that it can't be prone to physical damage in the form of smudges, scratches, dents, and rips. Unlike posters and objects, presentation software can be kept professional looking if you have to carry them through a rainstorm or blizzard. However, there are times when it makes sense to use "low-tech" media for presentations. Here are some directions for those times.

Dry-Erase Board

If you use a chalkboard or dry-erase board, you are not using a prepared presentation aid. Your failure to prepare visuals ahead of time can be interpreted in several ways, mostly negative. If other speakers carefully design, produce, and use attractive visual aids, yours will stand out by contrast. You will be seen as the speaker who does not take the time to prepare even a simple aid. Do not use a chalkboard or dry-erase board and pretend it's a prepared presentation aid.

However, numerous speakers do utilize chalk and dry-erase boards effectively. Typically, these speakers use the chalk or dry-erase board for interactive components of a speech. For example, maybe you're giving a speech in front of a group of executives. You may have a PowerPoint all prepared, but at various points in your speech you want to get your audience's responses. (More recent technology, such as on iPads, allows you to do the interaction on the screen, but this would have to be supported by the environment.) Chalk or dry-erase boards are very useful when you want to visually show information that you are receiving from your audience. If you ever use a chalk or dry-erase board, follow these four simple rules:

1. Write large enough so that everyone in the room can see (which is harder than it sounds; it is also hard to write and talk at the same time!).

2. Print legibly; don't write in cursive script.

3. Write short phrases; don't take time to write complete sentences.

4. Be sure you have markers that will not go dry, and clean the board afterward.

Flipchart

A flipchart is useful for situations when you want to save what you have written for future reference or to distribute to the audience after the presentation. As with whiteboards, you will need

good markers and readable handwriting, as well as a strong easel to keep the flipchart upright.

Posters

You may have the opportunity in your college years to attend or participate in a "poster session." These are times during an academic conference where visitors can view a well-designed poster depicting a research project and discuss it one-on-one with the researcher. These kinds of posters are quite large and involve a great deal of work. They can be generated from PowerPoint but often require a special printer. Otherwise, posters are probably not the best way to approach presentation aids in a speech. There are problems with visibility as well as portability. Avoid producing a presentation aid that looks like you simply cut pictures out of magazines and pasted them on. Slapping some text and images on a board looks unprofessional and will not be viewed as credible or effective.

Handouts

Handouts are appropriate for delivering information that audience members can take away with them. As we will see, handouts require a great deal of management if they are to contribute to your credibility as a speaker.

First, make sure the handout is worth the trouble of making, copying, and distributing it. Does the audience really need the handout?   Second, make sure to bring enough copies of the handout for each audience member to get one. Having to share or look on with one's neighbor does not contribute to a professional image. Under no circumstances should you ever provide a single copy of a handout to pass around. It is distracting and everyone will see it at different times in the speech (this is also true about passing any object around the room) and lose the point of the handout or object.

There are three possible times to distribute handouts: before you begin your speech, during the speech, and after your speech is over.   Naturally, if you need your listeners to follow along in a handout, you will need to distribute it before your speech begins. If you have access to the room ahead of time, place a copy of the handout on each seat in the audience. If not, ask a volunteer to distribute them as quickly as possible while you prepare to begin speaking. If the handout is a "takeaway," leave it on a table near the door so that those audience members who are interested can take one on their way out; in this case, don't forget to tell them to do so as you conclude your speech. It is almost

never appropriate to distribute handouts during your speech, as it is distracting, takes up time, and interrupts the pace of your presentation.

Conclusion

To finish this chapter, we will recap and remind you about the principles of effective presentation aids. Whether your aid is a slide show, object, a person, or dry erase board, these standards are essential:

Presentation aids must be easily seen or heard by your audience. Squinting and head-cocking are not good reactions. Neither should they look at the screen the whole time and ignore the speaker.

Presentation aids must be portable, easily handled, and efficient. They should disappear when not in use.

Presentation aids should be aesthetically pleasing, which includes in good taste. Avoid shock value just for shock value. You might want to show pictures of diseased organs and teeth, deformities, or corpses for your speech to make a point, but context is everything. Will your audience react so strongly that the overall point is missed? Additionally, electronic media today allows you to create very "busy" slides with varieties of fonts, colors, collages of photos, etc. Keep in mind the principles of unity and focal point.

Color is another aesthetic aspect. Some colors are just more soothing, readable, and appropriate than others. Also, the color on your slides may be different when projected from what is on your computer. Finally, presentation aids must support your speech and have high relevance to your content.

This chapter has covered a wide range of information about all kinds of audio and visual aids, but audiences today expect and appreciate professionally designed and handled presentation aids. The stakes are higher now, but the tools are many.

Something to Think About

What are some attention problems caused by using projection equipment during a speech?