

# PRESENTATION SKILLS - VISUAL AIDS

Dr Ruth Freeman  
Molecular Population Genetics  
Trinity College  
Dublin 2.

## INTRODUCTION

- Why use visual aids?
- What should go on a visual aid?
- Preparing visual aids
- Graphs
- Using visual aids

## PEOPLE REMEMBER

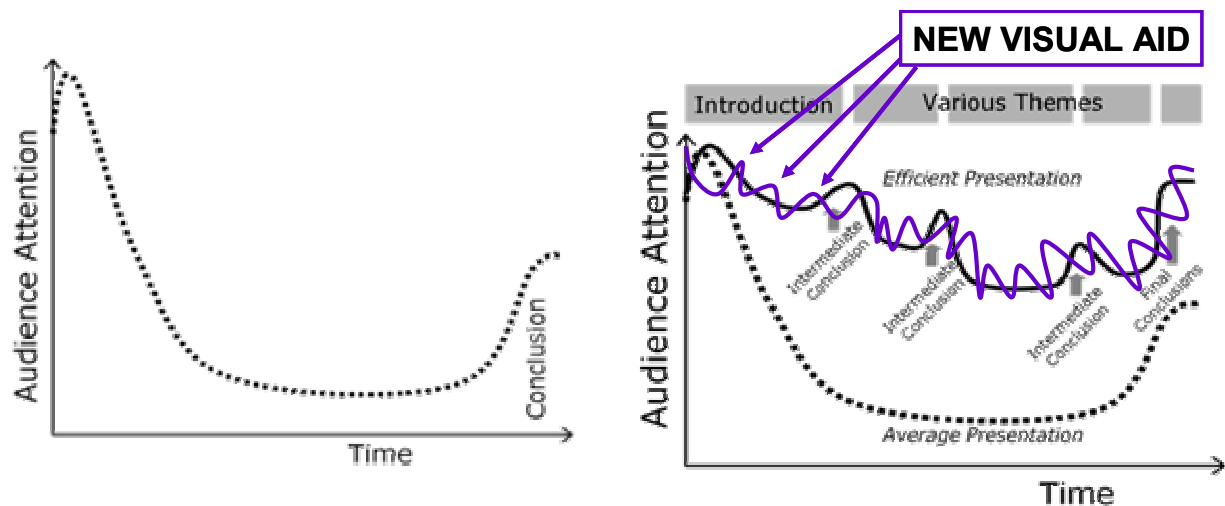
10% of what they read  
20% of what they hear  
30% of what they see  
70% of what they see & hear

Some ideas are difficult to describe

Back to Listener energy  
Visual aids help to maintain or rekindle concentration

Most people have a 15 - 20 minutes attention span

## ATTENTION PROFILES



- The visual aid is not the main event
- ..and should fit the structure of the talk
- Increase audience retention
- A bad visual aid is worse than no visual
- No poor visuals that require apology

### **CHOICE OF VISUAL AIDS DEPENDS ON...**

- The resources at your disposal
- Cost
- Time available for preparation
- Size of group
- Your own and preferences of others
- The learning environment

### **TYPES OF VISUAL AIDS**

#### **1) white/black/marker boards**

- Developing an idea
- Presenting information step by step
- Recording discussion points or feedback
- Emphasising key words
- Watch where you stand, how you write
- Give audience time to see

#### **2) flip charts**

- Same as for boards
- Provides permanent record
- Good for brainstorming
- Give audience time before flipping

#### **3) models**

- Can be incredibly effective
- Good to explain 3-D
- Can be a distraction
- Give audience time to look

#### **4) 35mm slides**

- Very high quality and professional
- Expensive
- Reusable (dis/advantage)
- Easy to project the wrong way
- Have to dim lights

#### **5) overhead projectors**

- Most flexible medium
- Cheap – disposable – personality

- Photocopy, write or print
- Can develop idea, write draw (carefully!)
- Can use colour, overlay
- But can be awkward to use – sequence, backing
- Leave lights on, small room

## 6) Powerpoint

- Can look very professional
- Very good for building up slides, diagrams
- Introduce text a line at a time (wipe, dissolve)
- Easy to update old presentations
- Can use same slide many times
- Colour and multimedia
- Use Pack and Go. Turn off screen saver

### ..but words of caution

- Impersonal
- May not be available
- Disastrous if it goes wrong
- Backgrounds, sounds, effects
- Computer compatibility
- Images as a large X
- May have to darken room

## RECAP – so far

Visual aids increase information retention

They prolong audience attention span

Types of visual aids

## DESIGNING SLIDES

### ONE IDEA PER SLIDE

- What idea does this illustrate?
- Does it support my key message?

Avoid using too much text

### DO NOT OVERWHELM YOUR AUDIENCE WITH VISUAL INFORMATION

- Keep it simple – one theme
- Key words or short points
- Informative title and objective slides
- Only essential information
- Names, dates, logos
- Unrelated quotes, pictures

## FONTS AND TEXT

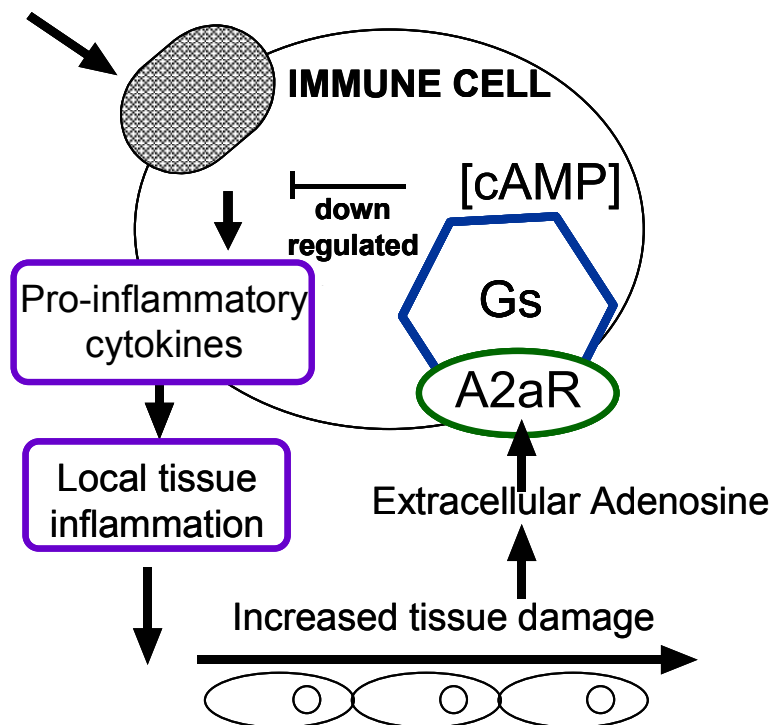
- Use san **serif** fonts such as ARIAL
- 22-48 pt font
- Stick to one font
- Bold and CAPITALS for emphasis
- Spacing important
- Not too many words
- 4 -10 lines per slide
- Good printing/Neat writing
- Use graph paper for overheads
- Spelling
- Grammar

TEXT AND IMAGES TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM PAPERS ARE USUALLY NOT APPROPRIATE

## DIAGRAMS

- Colour can be very useful for diagrams
- Use several diagrams for complex models
- Relevant parts only
- Build up diagrams
- Hi-light and masking
- Simple schematics tend to be most effective

### Immune stimulation



## **TABLES**

- Usually have too much information
- Too many numbers
- Graph or a pictorial representation
- Equations – don't include unless you intend to explain them
- Inferential statistics – don't include unless directly relevant to your message

## **GRAPHS**

- Title, axis marks, legend, labels
- Pie charts – not unless data sum to 100%
- Three dimensional charts
- Good contrast
- Colour (5 max)
- Lines 4 times thicker than for printed work
- Error bars
- Simple schematic

## **COLOUR**

- Use colour carefully
- Be consistent with colour and layout
- Can help or hinder readability
- Contrast

**CAREFUL ABOUT CHOICE OF COLOURS – COLOUR BLINDNESS AFFECTS 8% OF MEN AND 0.5% WOMEN**

There is nothing wrong with black writing on a white background

It is especially effective for overhead transparencies

Black on white has equal contrast but leaves far less light in the room

Some high contrast schemes are very hard on the eyes

Brightest yellow or white on the darkest blue background is acceptable

Text on a structured background may look attractive initially, but is often hard to read in a lecture theatre

Powerpoint has lots of slide design templates – most of them will just detract from your message

## **DESIGNING VISUAL AIDS -RECAP**

- For every slide ask yourself “Can I manage just as well without it?”
- One idea per slide - Ask yourself ‘What will this slide show?’
- Can the person at the back of the room see?
- Have you missed any illustrations that help to explain complex ideas?
- Use colour carefully
- Keep charts and drawings simple
- Use sequences of illustrations rather than one overcrowded one
- Use hi lighting and masking to illustrate complicated diagrams

## **TECHNIQUES**

- Preview visual aids
- Integrate into your talk (1 slide/min)
- Point, turn, talk.
- Don't block visual aid
- Generally stick to one kind of visual aid
- Be comfortable
- Time to absorb
- More frequently at low attention periods
- Don't forget the value of physical objects
- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse

**Have a contingency plan in case of visual aid failure!!**