

Audio and Visual Aids



Audio-Visual aids are methods of communicating with people. There are a variety of audio-visual aids which can be used - it is important to select aids which are appropriate to the method. The word "aids" is vital to a correct understanding of their use. Once they take the nature of "gimmicks" they have ceased to be "aids". They are not ends in themselves.

Audio aids communicate ideas through the ears to the mind. They may take the form of music or tape recordings, television, records, sound films, etc.

It is possible to produce very complex sounds on tape, particularly by mixing music, sound effects and dialogue. However, the best effects are gained by keeping the material simple and uncluttered.

Music used on its own can be very effective as a scene setter and can help create atmosphere.

Equipment is available to synchronise sound with vision. Although expensive and time consuming in preparation, it does lend an air of professionalism - if done well. Rehearsal of session material before the event is helpful, particularly if someone is available to comment on performance. Practice done with a friend or colleague will help improve performance.

Many rooms are not designed to be acoustically pleasing. It is useful to test beforehand how the room will react to your voice or the sound of your equipment. A simple check is to clap your hands in the empty room. If the clap creates an echo or ringing sound the room is not good for sound. It is worth remembering that an audience will tend to decrease the ringing effect as chairs and clothing soak up the sound. This also means that a greater volume of sound will be required when the audience is present.

Visual aids communicate facts and ideas through the eyes to the mind and emotions. Visual aids

include films, slides, videos, overhead projection, books, photographs, models and charts.

Ensure that the aids do not replace training by doing. With some activities, e.g. operating a machine, canoeing or a sport, their use is limited.

This Factsheet explains a variety of audio-visual aids which are available for you to use.

Video

Commercial Video

There are two methods of showing a video. The first is to use a normal television set, the second and more expensive way is to use a video projector. When showing a video, make sure the picture will be big enough for the whole audience to see. The maximum screen that you are likely to get with a television is about 75cm (30 inches), while a video projector gives a picture size of 2½ metres (8 foot) square or over.

Generally, commercially produced videos should not be copied for your own use. Some video companies prosecute people who do copy their videos and high fines result.

A video can be used to make a session or part of a session. Be prepared to show only part of a video if that is all you need. Sometimes it is a good idea to let people watch the remainder in their own time.

Filming your own video

The price of video cameras has been coming down for some time, and it is possible to hire them at reasonable rates from high street stores.

Unless you have access to high quality cameras and editing facilities it is not easy to make your own films. If participants are told they are going to see a video, they expect something of high quality and this is not usually possible using a

domestic video camera. Instead, film practical sessions and presentations where the participants will gain from being able to see themselves performing.

When making a video, the camera does not have to be on the move the whole time. Constant panning round and zooming in and out just makes people feel seasick! It is better to set the camera and leave it for quite long periods just moving it when the presenter moves out of shot.

Watching television news and documentary programmes will show you how best to film someone. Film their head and shoulders rather than their full height. This gives a closer view.

Remember if you are filming people, make sure they get the opportunity to see the results!

Flip Chart

Setting up

When setting up a flip chart care should be taken to ensure that everyone will be able to see it. Make sure you have enough paper and that your pens are within easy reach. Most flip charts have a pen tray attached to them.

Try to address the audience, rather than the flip chart.

Pens

Pens come in a number of thicknesses so choose a size that is comfortable to use (5mm chisel tip is a good one to try). The normal range of colours are black, blue, red and green. Blue is restful to the eyes, but red is good if you wish to make text stand out. Black is dull and boring but is useful if you need a further colour. Green can be a bit weak and difficult to read.

Pens come in two different types. Spirit pens tend to be bold and bright but also smell and can

give you headaches if not used carefully. Water based pens on the other hand are slightly less bright but do not smell.

Other tips

If you have problems writing in a straight line, draw pencil lines faintly across the page before you start. These will be seen by yourself - but not the participants.

If you have a problem writing neatly, stencil the words you intend to use onto the page in pencil beforehand and then write over them in pen during the session.

Your notes can also be written onto the paper in pencil if you wish.

Lettering should be bold enough for everyone to read and lower case letters should be just over half the height of upper case. Write key words or headings on a flip chart and refer to them, rather than writing too much information.

When you have finished referring to the information on the flip chart cover it up or remove the page so it is not a distraction to the rest of your session.

Whiteboard

Setting up

As with viewing a flip chart, care should be taken to ensure that everyone will be able to see the whiteboard. Make sure your pens are within easy reach and try to face the audience when speaking.

Pens

Most whiteboards are designed for dry wipe and special whiteboard pens should be used. Writing can be erased using a dry cloth or board rubber. Occasionally dry wipe whiteboards will need cleaning with a spirit based solvent available from suppliers. This solvent will also remove spirit and water based pen marks used in error on the board.

There are some whiteboards which require the use of water based pens and which can be rubbed off using a damp cloth.

Other Tips

Lettering size should be similar to that used on a flip chart and key words used.

When you have finished talking about the information on the whiteboard cover it up or wipe it off so that it is not a distraction to the rest of your session.

Slides

Showing slides can be as easy or complicated as you like or Can afford. A presentation using one projector is the cheapest and easiest method, but if you use two or more projectors you can get a more professional result.

With slide presentations take the slides yourself and with practise you will get good results. Try to keep to the same format for a whole presentation i.e. portrait or landscape.

Multi-Projector

Various effects are available using more than one projector, some of which are listed below:

1. Cut - quick change from one slide to the next.
2. Fade - slow fade out of one slide while the next fades in.
3. Flip - when a slide fades out the tray does not advance enabling the previous slide to be shown again.
4. Superimpose - showing a slide over the top of another, i.e. a caption.

All these can be controlled by hand.

Tape/slide sets

These have a sound-track with the slides.

The methods of production are numerous but here are two examples:

1. Pulses are recorded onto one track of an audio tape. When the tape is played back these pulses are not heard by the audience

but interpreted by the machinery which controls the slide projectors.

2. A time code is recorded onto the audio tape and when played back a computer programme controls the slide projectors, taking its timing from the tape.

If you have the equipment to produce slide/tape sets in this way, be sure to read the appropriate manual before going into production.

Cost

One slide projector can cost approximately £150. However, if you wish to do multi-projector shows you will need at least two projectors which have an audio-visual control port on the side (this synchronises the projectors). These cost £350 and upwards.

On top of the projectors you will need a dissolve unit, these are made by various companies and cost about £350.

If you wish to use slides with a sound-track, then you need a stereo system so that you can record your sound-track on one channel and the pulses on the other. Or a four track recorder (£400 and upwards) allows stereo sound and two control tracks. The nice thing about a four track is that each track can be recorded on its own which means that the pulses for the slide projectors can be recorded after the soundtrack, this is not possible with an ordinary sound system.

Overhead Projector

Setting Up

When setting up an overhead projector make sure that the screen is tilted forward at the top to eliminate the key stone effect. The screen should be large enough to allow everyone to read the text clearly.

Using the Overhead Projector

Remember, when using the over head projector you are in charge. Do not be afraid to turn it off when the information on the screen would be distracting. List key words on the screen and remember that a cartoon or similar helps to break the monotony.

If you need to put a full sheet of text on the screen let people read it for themselves, rather than reading it for them.

Providing you are still able to see your audience you could sit on a high stool next to the overhead projector.

Acetates

Acetates vary from plain ones which you write on with overhead projector pens, to the special variety which can be fed through a laser printer. With so many computers around these days it is a fairly simple task to get an A4 size artwork produced which can then be transferred onto acetate.

Acetates are available to produce coloured artwork on a clear background, black artwork on a clear or coloured background, clear artwork on dark background and full colour acetates. The permutations are endless.

A lot of copy shops and office work agencies have the facility to transfer artwork onto acetate at reasonable rates.

Acetate rolls are available for the overhead projector and can be quite useful during report back sessions. It is not a good idea to try and clean these off after use as the ink tends to smear.

Pens

Overhead projector pens or audio visual pens come in two varieties - permanent or washable ink. Generally speaking the washable pens have a grey barrel and the permanent ones have a black barrel, Washable pens are, as the name implies, easily washed off and permanent pens are not. However spirit impregnated erasers are available which can rub out spirit based pens. Washable pens have a tendency to change colour after a lot of use.

Pens come in a choice of six colours - red, blue, black, green, orange and violet. The best colour to use is blue which is considered to be the most restful to the eyes. Red is a good colour to highlight words. Black is fairly dull but can be used for drawings or text. Green, orange and

violet are generally too weak to be used for much other than shading or drawings.

Pens come in several thicknesses from fine to extra thick. Some companies sell sets of pens in wallets.

Other Tips

When using a piece of paper to reveal parts of an acetate progressively, place your sheet of paper under the acetate and you will find it is much easier to keep in place.

Use cardboard frames to tidy up your presentation or use 3M flip frames which are punched to fit a ring binder. They have two strips of white plastic hinged down each side to mask the sides and enable you to make notes applicable to that acetate