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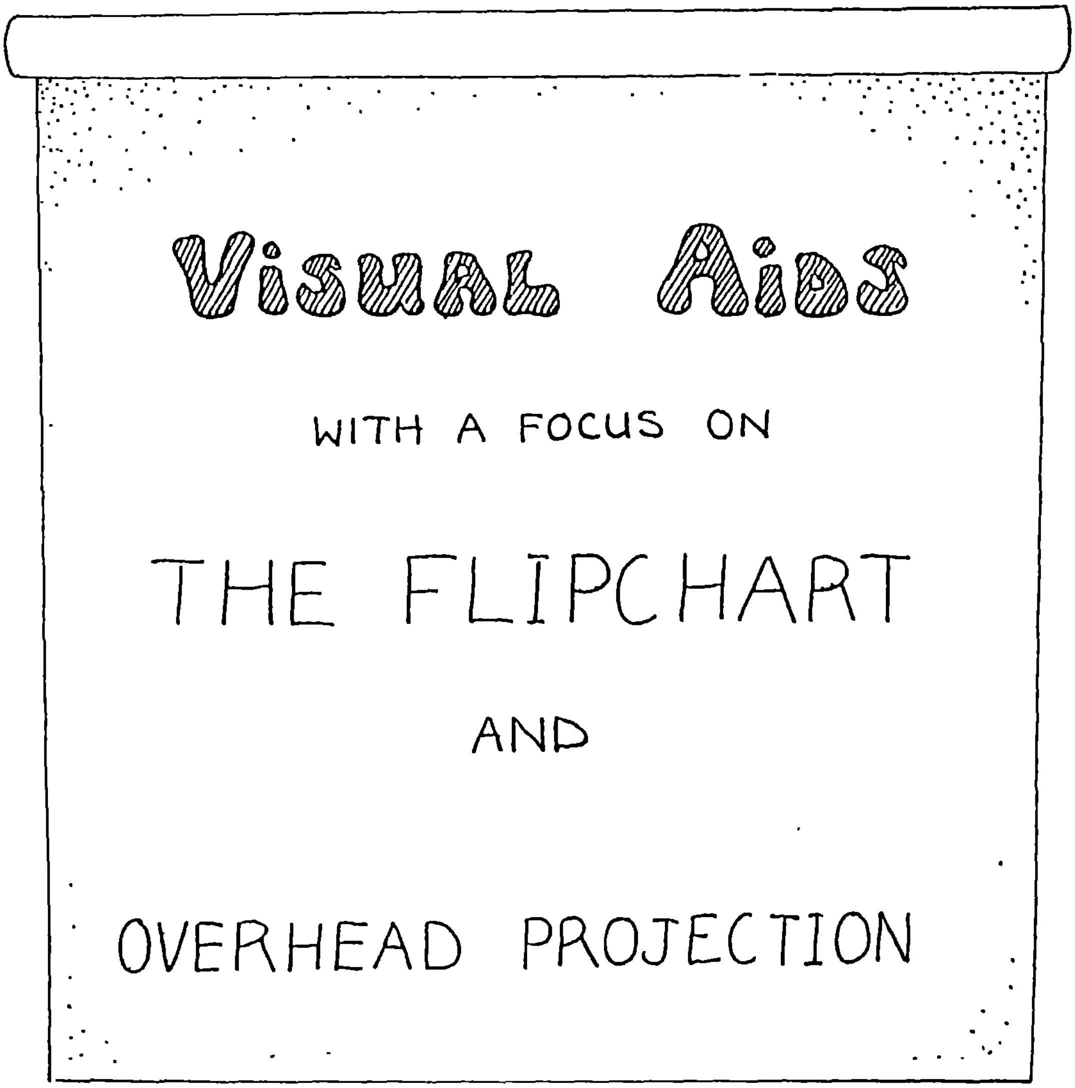
*Notes on
Communication Skills*



VISUAL AIDS

WITH A FOCUS ON

THE FLIPCHART

AND

OVERHEAD PROJECTION

CWSSP Sri Lanka
1993

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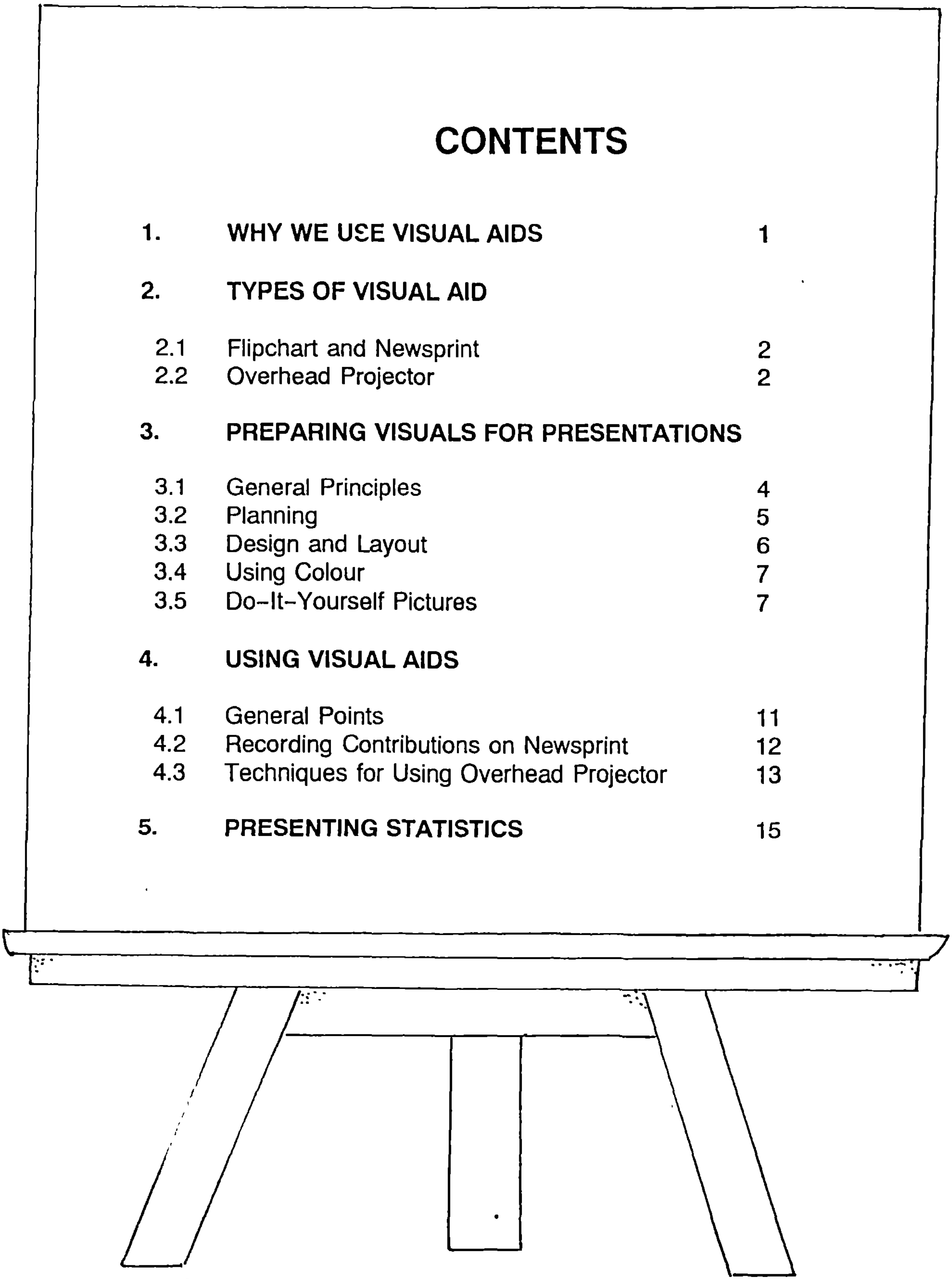

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1. WHY USE VISUAL AIDS?

TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION.

Have you ever tried using visual aids in your meetings or presentations? It could improve your work. People will understand up to 30% more and will retain up to 40% more of what is said in a presentation - if you use visual aids.

VISUAL AIDS

IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

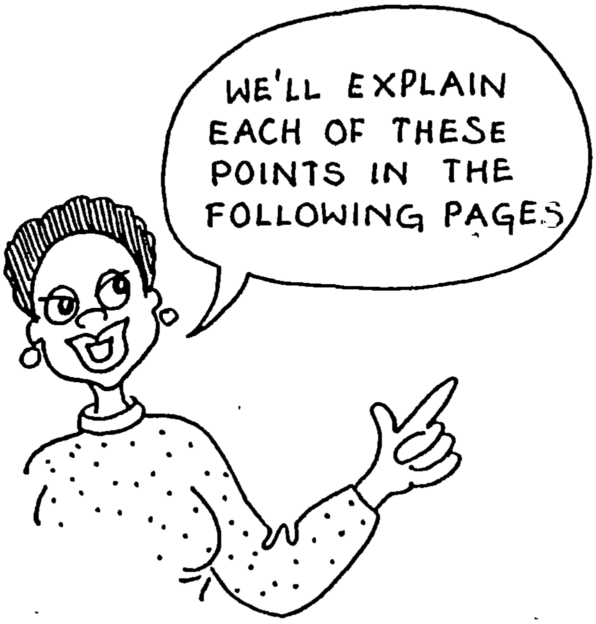
EQUIPMENT

OHP & FLIP CHART

- Easy to use
- Used in normal light conditions and positioned at front - speaker maintains eye-to-eye contact with audience and can adjust the presentation according to their reaction

VISUALS

- Attract attention
- Describe - places, people, products, situations, etc.
- Explain - complicated points
- Reinforce - important points
- Summarize - main points


WE'LL EXPLAIN EACH OF THESE POINTS IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES

VISUAL DISPLAY TECHNIQUES

Allow presenter to

- Pace the rate at which information is displayed
- Build up complex information step -by-step
- Animate static pictures

2. TYPES OF VISUAL AIDS

THE FLIPCHART AND NEWSPRINT

Custom-made flip charts are similar to large writing pads which have two holes along the top edge to hook them on to the easel.

Newsprint is a cheap paper available in large sheets which can be clipped to a stiff backing (an old blackboard) with bulldog or drawing-board clips.

The charts can be prepared in advance or used during the presentation for *ad hoc* notes and diagrams. When the page in use is no longer needed, it should be flipped back over or it will create a distraction for the audience. Alternatively the texts can serve as the focus for a post-presentation discussion – posted along the wall.

Setting up flip charts

1. Adjust the height to allow the presenter to work in comfort and the audience to see clearly.

2. Remember to leave a blank page at the front and several blanks in between the prepared charts in case you need to make impromptu notes.

INTRODUCING THE OVERHEAD PROJECTOR (OHP)

The **overhead projector** (OHP) provides a means of conveying visual information to an audience without breaking the personal link between speaker and audience. It allows the speaker to show visual materials in order to reinforce, summarize or explain selected parts of the talk.

Unlike other types of projector, the OHP can be used in normal light conditions without the quality of the projected image being impaired. This asset is particularly useful in that ventilation does not have to be suppressed.

The speaker controls the rate at which the visual information is displayed, and can adjust the pace or visual content to suit the needs of each group.

Setting the projector

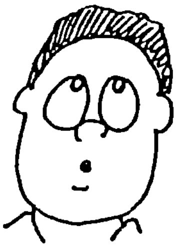
1. Plug in and arrange lead so that nobody can trip over it.
2. Dust the projecting surface with a soft cloth.
3. Switch on fan and lamp.
4. Adjust picture size by carefully moving OHP closer to (smaller) or further from (larger) the screen.
5. Focus so that there is a crisp, black outline around the projected area – and then check this by projecting your own special `test' transparency, which should contain very small lettering unsuitable for normal use.

Make sure		**If not**
OHP PLUGGED IN AND WORKING	→	Check plug, change lamp/projector.
PROJECTED IMAGE IS BRIGHT	→	Clean the lenses.
PROJECTED IMAGE IS IN FOCUS	→	Adjust.
VISIBILITY IS GOOD	→	Check from back row, enlarge picture by moving OHP further from screen
Remember to:		
LEAVE FAN RUNNING THROUGHOUT	→	This is to cool the lens.
TURN OFF LAMP BETWEEN VISUALS	→	To bring audience's attention back to yourself. A brilliant, blank screen acts as a distractor.

DON'T

- LOOK AT THE SCREEN – Remember, you focused before you started and the transparency is the right way up on the projector for you to read it.
- POINT TO THE SCREEN – Apart from losing the eye-to-eye contact with the audience, you could damage the screen. Point to the transparency. (You can use a pencil).
- FIX YOUR GAZE ON ONE SECTION OF THE AUDIENCE – Keep your eyes moving to make everyone feel that you are talking to them personally and to assess their reaction.

3. PREPARING VISUALS FOR PRESENTATION



Remember your
ABCs for visuals

ACCURATE
BRIEF
CLEAR

Be accurate

This seems an obvious statement to make, but one can unintentionally mislead or confuse the audience.

AVOID

- MISSPELLINGS
- INACCURATE FACTS – Make sure the visual information corresponds with the ideas you want to convey.
- EMPHASIS ON UNIMPORTANT POINTS – this usually happens because colour is wrongly used or lettering sizes are inconsistent.

Be brief

Visuals should be kept simple and to the point so that the contents can be quickly read and assimilated.

Limit each transparency to 40 words and each flipchart sheet to 20 words.

40 words are the maximum that can be easily absorbed in one go. Therefore try to keep within that limit. You can always use another visual or provide printed handouts.

Be clear

Do not Confuse the audience with big words and technical jargon.
Put in so many details that your audience misses the **MAIN POINT**

PLANNING

1. Write the **notes** for your presentation in point form (i.e. not complete sentences and focusing on the main information).

2. Remember to include an **introduction** and **summary**.

Introduction – 'Tell 'em what you'll tell 'em'
Content – 'Tell 'em'
Summary – 'Tell 'em what you told 'em'

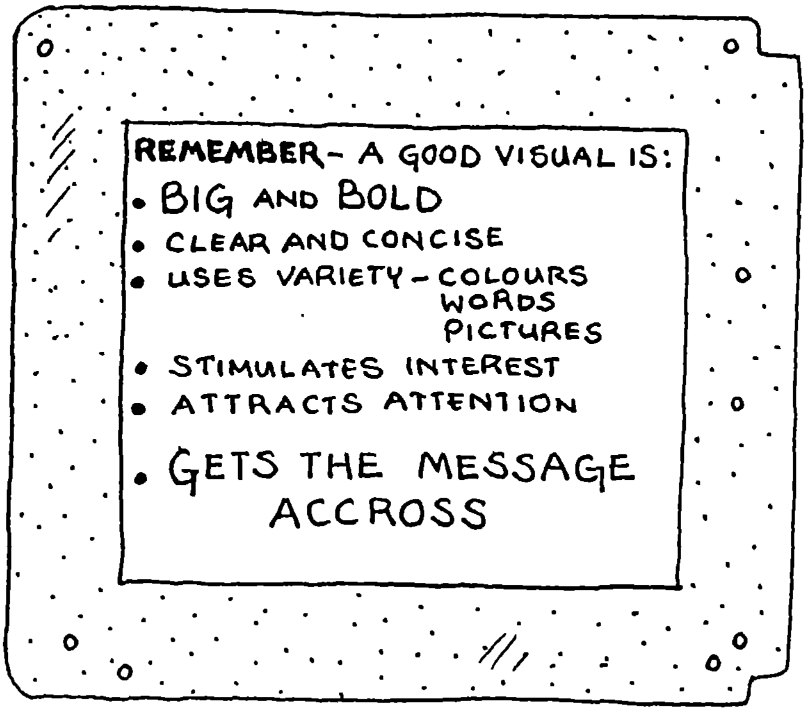
3. Select and underline the **key points** in your notes.

4. Decide whether to use **words** or **pictures** (or both) for each visual; varying the types of visual can help to hold the audience's attention.

5. Be tough with yourself – select those ideas/words which are **crucial** (i.e. to be included in the visual) and eliminate those which are **"nice but not necessary"**.

6. Select points to be emphasized.

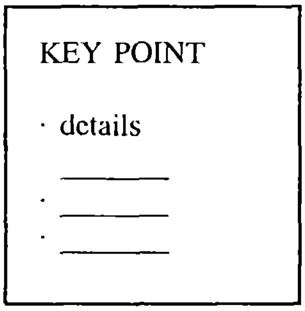
7. Produce a **rough plan** on paper first before writing on the newsprint or transparency – this will help you decide how many points are to be included on each sheet or transparency.



REMEMBER– A GOOD VISUAL IS:
- BIG AND BOLD
- CLEAR AND CONCISE
- USES VARIETY – COLOURS
  WORDS
  PICTURES
- STIMULATES INTEREST
- ATTRACTS ATTENTION
- GETS THE MESSAGE ACCROSS

HINTS ON LAYOUT & DESIGN

- Limit yourself to **one idea** per transparency/flipchart sheet.



- Keep the **words to a minimum:**

Transparency:	**40 word** limit
Flipchart sheet:	**20 word** limit

A page crammed with words will merely confuse – a few words will catch the audience's attention

Remember – only the **key points** !

You can elaborate on points in your verbal presentation, and, if necessary, provide a more detailed handout (to be given out at the end of the session).

- Words (and pictures) should be **bold** and **large** enough to be visible from the back row of the audience.

- Size and letters:

transparencies:	**6 mm** (¼ inch) high
flipchart sheets:	**48 mm** (2 inches) high

The size of the letters depends on your audience. In a large hall the letters on the flipchart mey need to be even larger. Write a few letters and walk to the back of the hall to check that your writing is clearly visible.

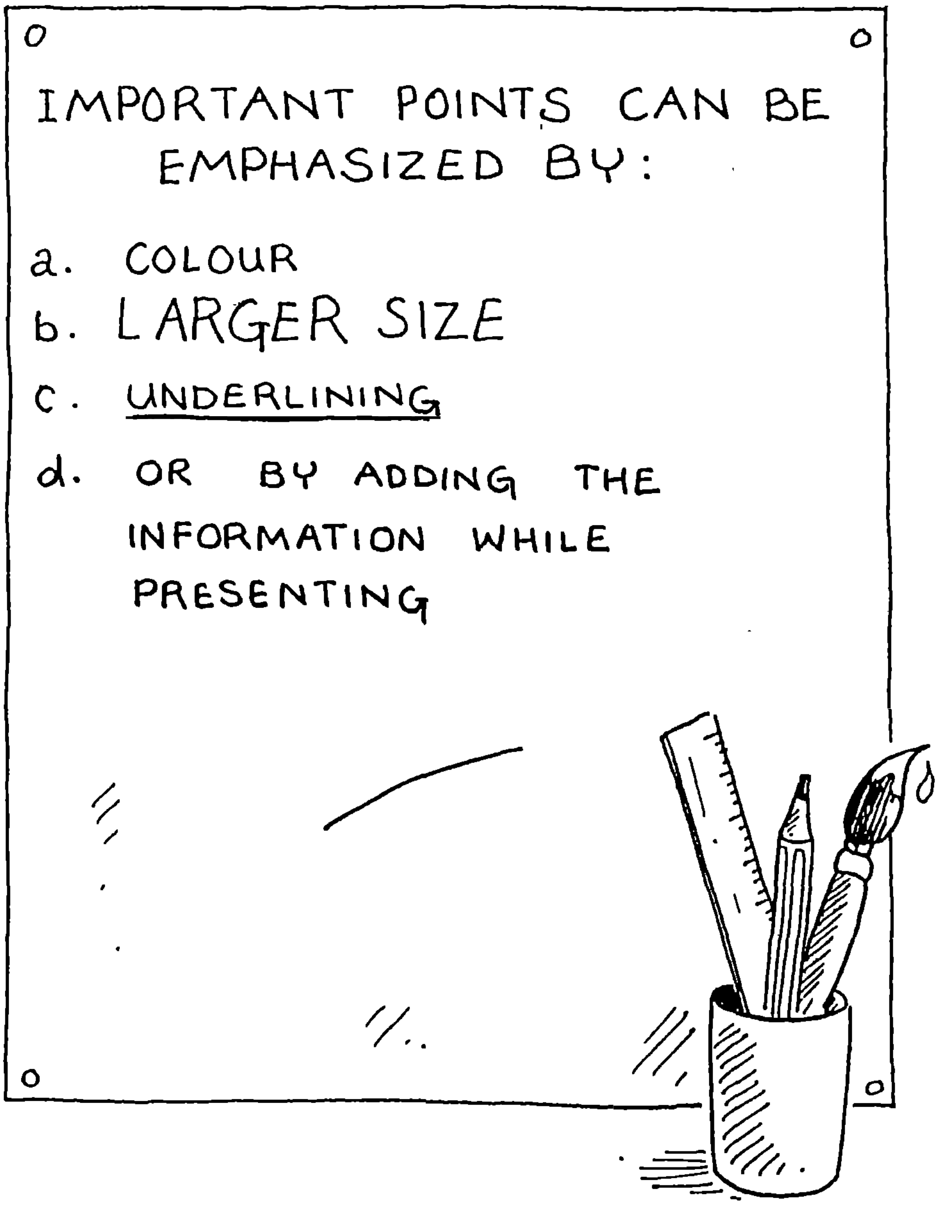
- **Linework** should be **bold** [redacted] 1.5 mm (1/16th") wide and limited to simple outlines and essential information. Faint lines can disappear when projected, and lines too close together often merge. So keep the drawings basic and to the point. Not only will the visual result be better, but production time will be cut.

- Try to keep the size of letters **consistent**, especially for points of equal importance – and write in a **straight line** rather than sloping down the page.

- Allow enough **space** in between lines of text (e.g. the height of the capital letters or more to make it easy to read.

- Use the entire space without **overcrowding** or adding details just for the sake of filling the space.

- For variety break up the written word with simple line **drawings**.



IMPORTANT POINTS CAN BE EMPHASIZED BY:

a. COLOUR

b. LARGER SIZE

c. UNDERLINING

d. OR BY ADDING THE INFORMATION WHILE PRESENTING

- Leave blank pages or space at key intervals in the presentation to **get your audience involved.** Ask a question and then record their answers on the blank sheet or space.

The blank sheet might be headed by a single question – which makes your audience think and provides some variety after all the statements (and spoon-feeding). If you are "fishing" for specific answers, write them down in small letters in pencil (which your audience cannot see) as a cue for you.

USING COLOUR

Brightly, systematically coloured visuals can help both the audience and the presenter

Colour can be used to:

- **Aid identification**
- **Highlight important information**
- **Colour code flow paths**
- **Attract attention**
- **Reduce eye fatigue**

REMEMBER -

For maximum input, colour should be vivid and contrasting.

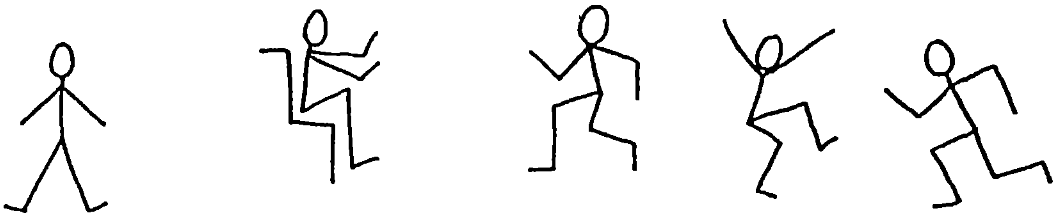
Lighter colours (red, yellow, orange) may not be visible from a distance.

Don't overwhelm people with too many colours - it may become confusing. Stick to 2 or 3.

DO-IT-YOURSELF PICTURES

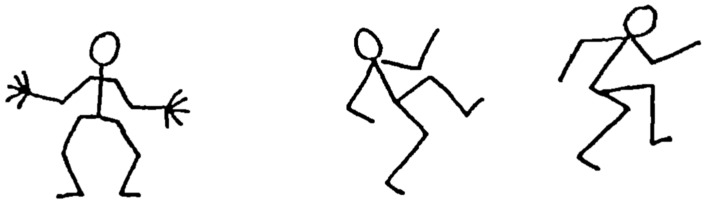
Stick people

Stick people are easy to draw and can be made to sit, run, jump, swim, and so forth. In their simplest form, they require a circle for a head, and lines to make a spine, arms, legs and feet. To keep them in proportion, keep the arms, legs and body all the same length.

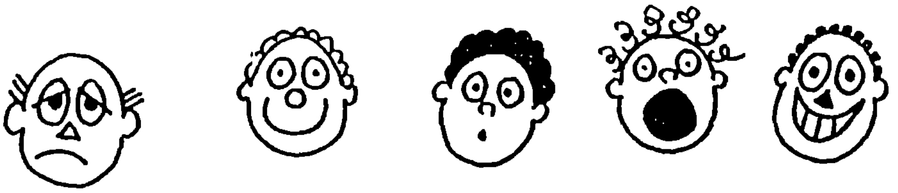


The more advanced models bend at the elbows and knees, but they do not need hips nor shoulders, and adding these extras can make them look like stringless marionettes.

Another point to consider is balance. When they run they do, like us, need one leg under or behind the spine to stop them from falling over.

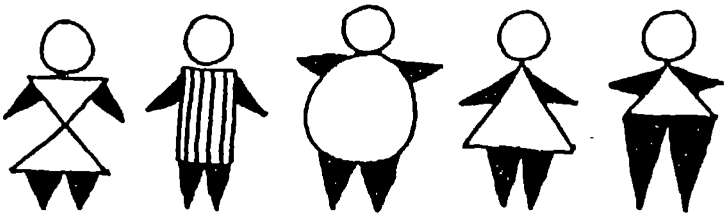


Facial expressions are a matter of a few dots and dashes, while noses can, if necessary, be added to show which way a person is looking.



Using simple shapes

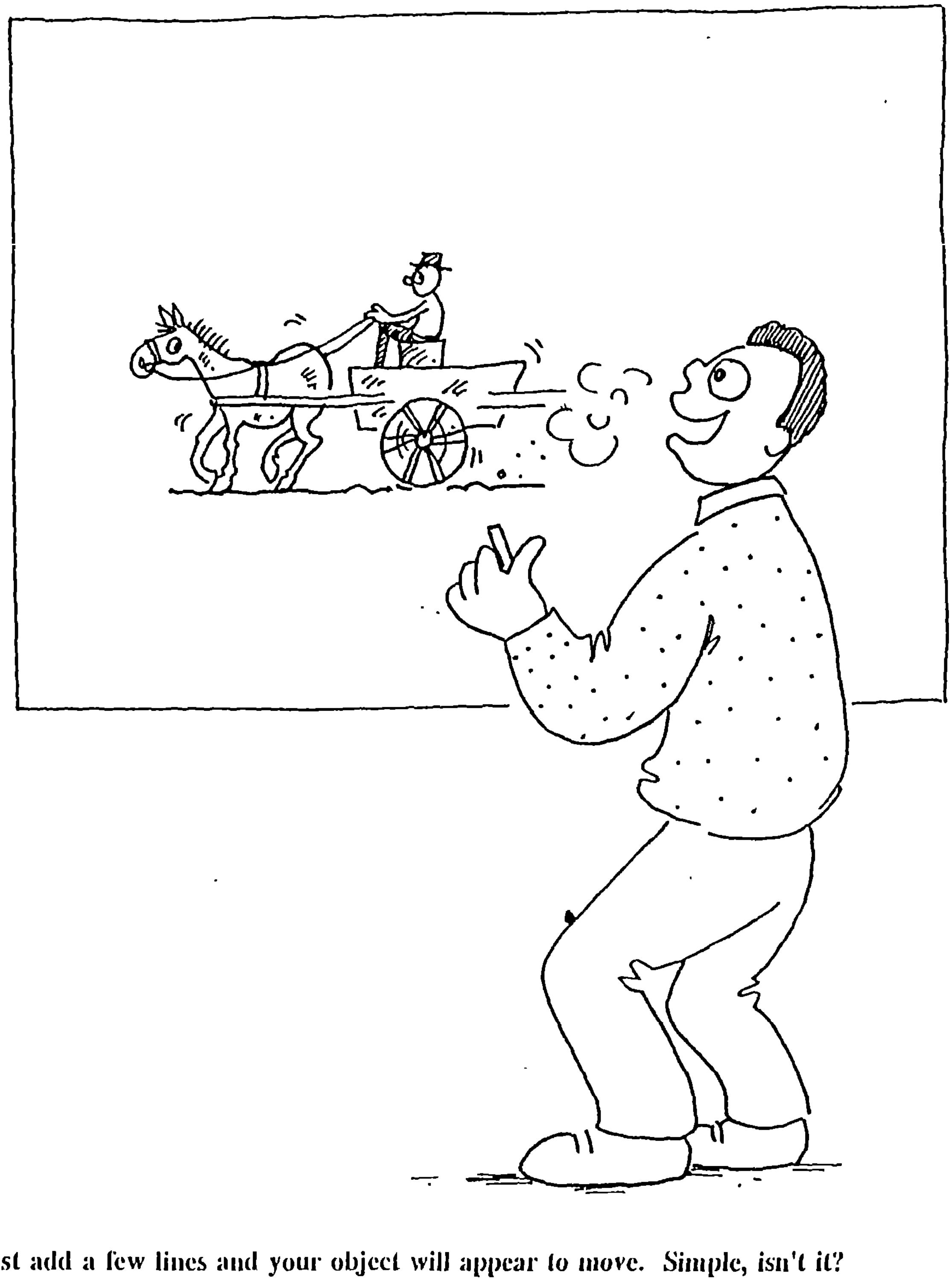
Think of the thing that you want to draw as a collection of geometric shapes: squares, oblongs, triangles, circles, ovals, cones. Then build your picture from a collection of these.



Woman =	Thin man =	Fat man =	Girl =	Boy =
1 circle	1 circle	2 circles	1 circle	1 circle
2 triangles	1 oblong	4 cones	1 triangle	1 triangle
4 cones	4 cones		4 cones	4 cones

Keep your drawing simple and flat (2-dimensional), and don't attempt to make an exact replica of the original. Aim for a simple, recognizable shape. Work out your `rough' picture on squared paper, and use the rulings as a guideline to help keep your work in proportion, symmetrical and tidy.

Making them move



Just add a few lines and your object will appear to move. Simple, isn't it?

4. USING VISUAL AIDS

GENERAL POINTS

1. Plan your presentation around the visual aids but never rely on them completely. Always be prepared for the worst. If the overhead projector breaks down, you must be able to give your presentation without its use.

2. Give your audience time to look at each transparency or flipchart sheet and don't block the view.

3. To point out certain features of each visual

   a. use a pencil in the case of the transparency (to avoid blocking the image with your hand)

   b. use a pointer – in the case of the flipchart – or underline key words with a magic marker.

4. Don't read out the points on the newsprint word for word. Your audience can read themselves. Your job is to elaborate on each point, giving examples and clarifying points.

5. For variety leave some sheets blank so you can involve the audience. Using a question draw out their ideas or experience (as it relates to the topic) and record it on the sheet/transparency.

6. Limit the number of visual aids to be used. For example stick to a flipchart and overhead projector, or just use a flipchart.

7. Talk to the audience, not the visual aid. Don't give them your back, face the audience.

8. Don't fix your gaze on one section of the audience : keep your eyes moving to make everyone feel that you are talking to them personally and so that you can assess their reaction.

9. When you have moved on from the topic requiring the visual aid, take it off or turn off the equipment. Do not leave the audience looking at something that does not relate to what you are saying.

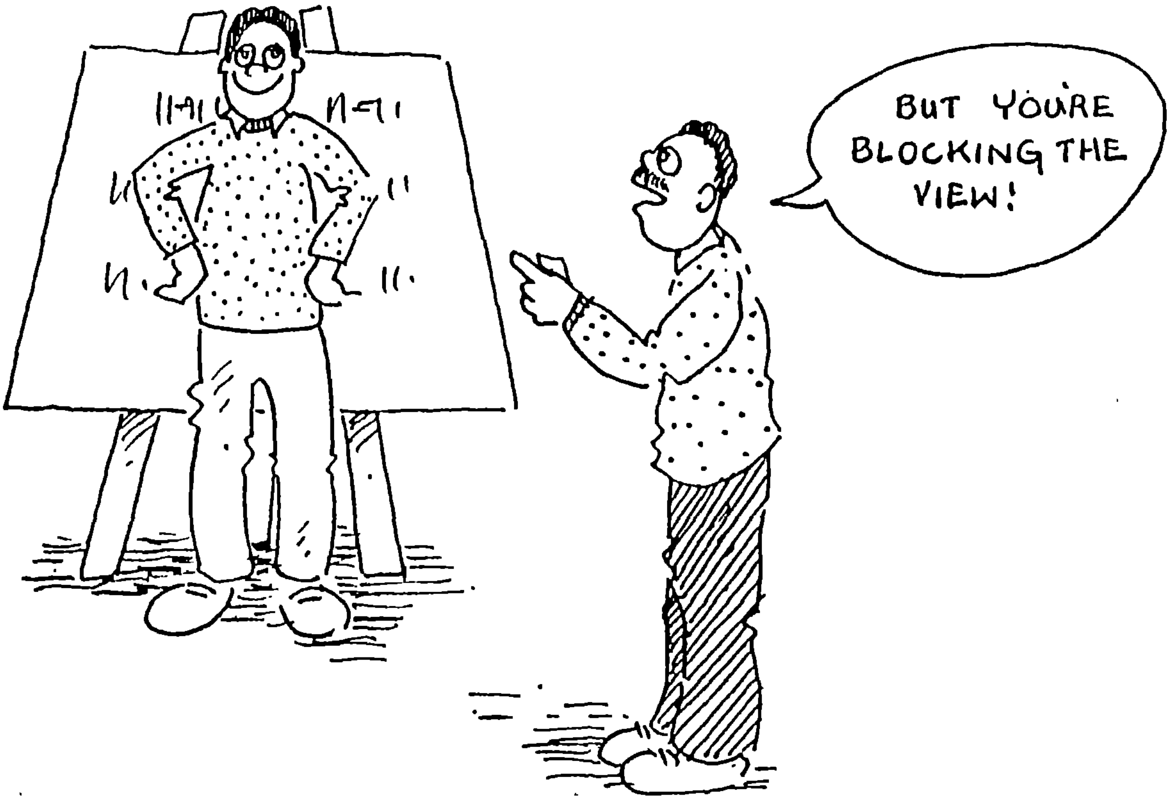
10. Check any equipment before you start your talk. Practice so you are familiar with how the equipment works. Always be prepared for the worst and have extra bulbs and extension leads available.

RECORDING CONTRIBUTIONS ON NEWSPRINT

When a discussion group is answering a question and providing answers to the newsprint recorder fast and furious, the temptation is to scrawl quickly and verbatim whatever has been said.

This doesn't work. What we suggest is as follows:

1. Remain in control – take the comments one at a time and in your own time.
2. You may wish to divide up the work – assigning one person to field the questions and another person (or two people writing on two different flipcharts) to reword what is said.
3. Listen first – then record.
4. Summarize the comments, extract the key points.
5. As much as possible try to use people's own words – this affirms their contribution.
6. Precisely and legibly write these points on the newsprint.
7. Cross through any mistake you might make firmly and add the correction.
8. Stand clear of the flipchart while assessing the next comment.


BUT YOU'RE BLOCKING THE VIEW!

TECHNIQUES FOR USING OVERHEAD PROJECTOR

Visually complex information can be difficult for the speaker to convey and for the audience to comprehend easily. The end result can all too easily be confusion and/or boredom

To overcome this problem, there are display techniques which can allow a speaker to

a. introduce a complicated subject in simple stages

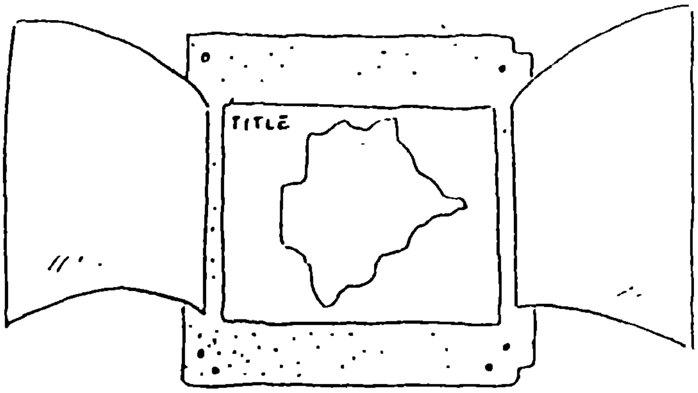
b. pace the rate at which the information is put on view according to the needs of individual groups of people.

There are four basic approaches:

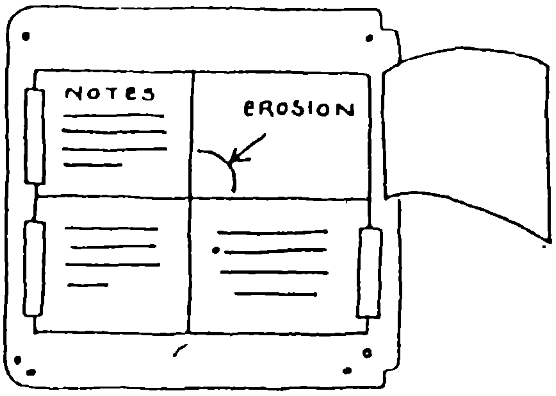
OVERLAY · MASK · REVEAL

OVERLAY

The overlay technique is used for a step-by-step breakdown or build-up of information. The transparency has a base picture which shows such elementary facts as outlines, a title, or the first stage in a process. The overlaying sheets of film contain the additional data, separated into its component parts. These are taped to the frame and can be overlayed in any sequence to build up the complete picture.



MASKING



These windows can be overlapped to prevent gaps - but will then have to be opened in sequence.

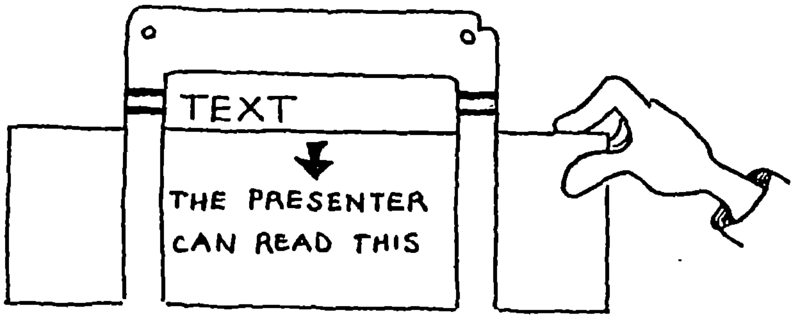
The masking technique allows individual blocks of information to be shown independently from one another - yet another way to show the steps in a process, unfold a story or prevent the audience from reading ahead of you. The masks are made from card or from paper hinged to the frame with tape, and can usually be opened in any sequence; it is helpful to have a note on each 'window' of what lies underneath, just in case you forget or someone else has to use the transparency.

Production procedure.

Working within the frame area.

1. Plan 'rough' transparency, including notes and so forth.
2. Mark masking division on the rough.
3. Transfer information (less the dividing lines) to film.
4. Frame the transparency, using the rough as a guide.
5. To make masks, cut carefully along the dividing lines on the rough.
6. Tape the masks into position.

REVEAL



Revealing is a simple but effective way of focusing the audience's attention on to what you want them to see and when you want them to see it. Displaying one line or section of text at a time stops the viewers from reading ahead and possibly not giving their full attention to what is being said as at that particular moment.

It is, however, better to show a section of several lines that make sense than one that does not, and the alignment marks on the frame will act as a reminder of where each division ends.

Simply place a sheet of paper underneath the transparency and pull it towards yourself, aligning the paper with marks on the frame to keep it straight.

5. PRESENTING STATISTICS

Bear in mind the essentials of a good visual.

Accuracy, brevity and clarity

and extend the formula to include.

Analyse
Breakdown
Camouflage

Analyse:

Select and mark up the facts that must be seen. Ignore what might be useful in case you forget to mention it or someone asks an awkward question. You can always refer to your sheet of figures when you talk – nobody will expect you to remember the lot. Or you can issue the audience with comprehensive handouts; some will read them, some will not, but none of them will be able to read the overcrowded visuals anyway.

Decide what:

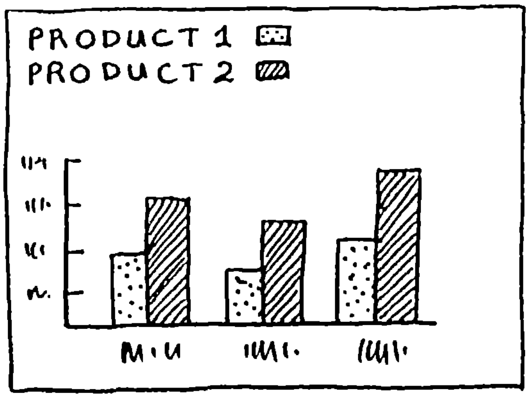
1. Is suitable as a handout but not as a visual.

2. Contains the essential points taken from 1 and is far easier to read and remember.

Bar charts (histograms are useful for showing comparisons as they save the viewer the bother of mentally comparing the difference between quantities.

Breakdown:

Separate complex information into sections and use one visual per section or use one of the display techniques described in Section 3 to present a lot of facts in easy–to–comprehend stages.

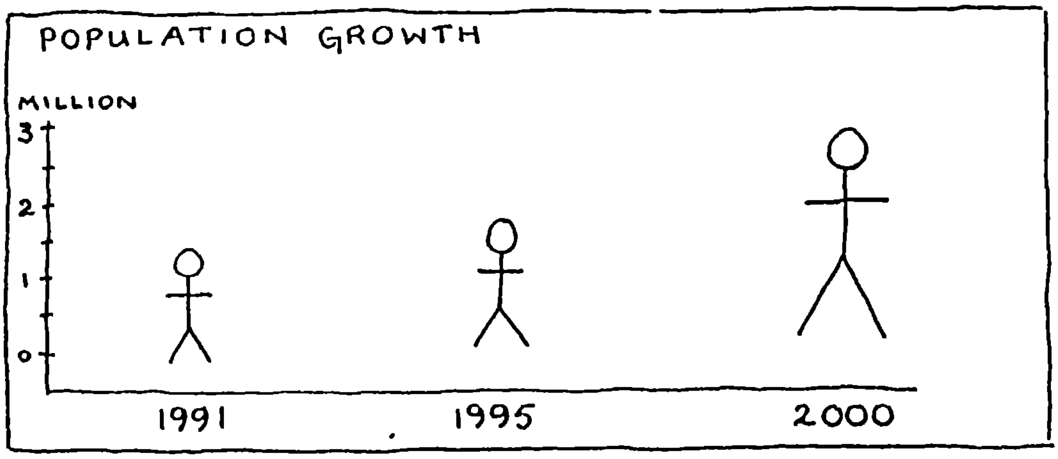


Camouflage:

No, not to disguise the facts, but to make a dry topic more acceptable by using visually interesting introductory and summarizing visuals to lift the presentation.

For example: a sales or marketing session could be introduced with a cartoon lion cued in with, `Who'll get the lion's share of the market in 1992?' And next year the title and product will be the only alterations needed to update the visual, so making it a useful time-saver too.

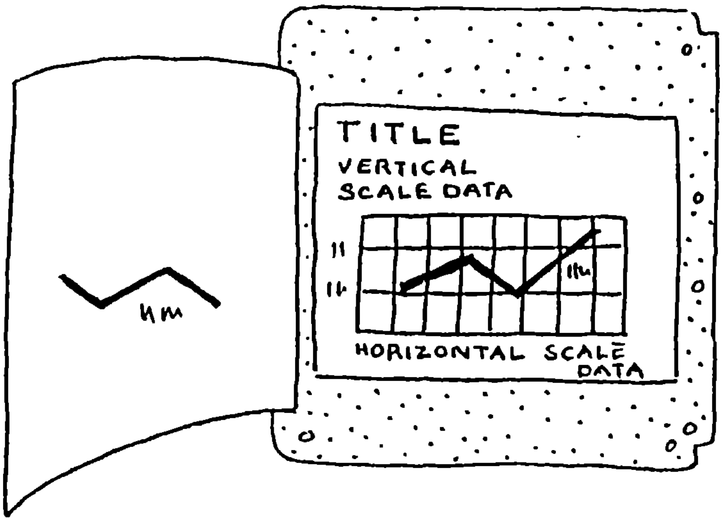
The reasoning behind this is simple. The introduction should attract the audience's attention and make them think, `This looks interesting I think I'll read the handout'. If you intend talking for any length of time, you will need a few reasonable visuals between the statistics.



Graphs.

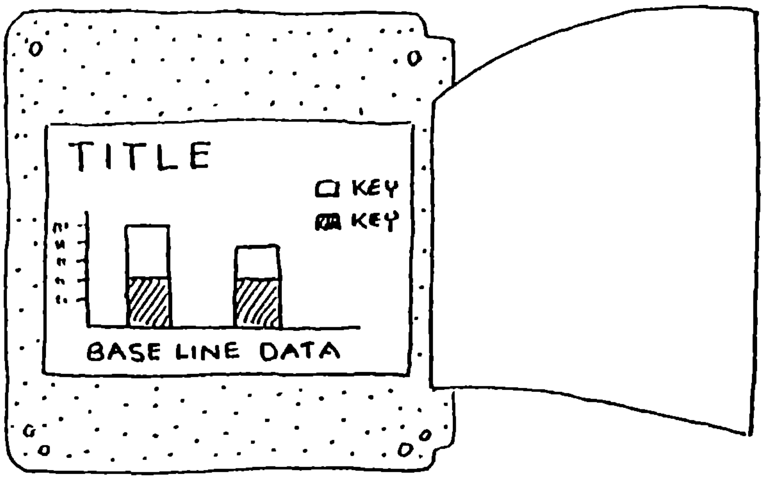
Graphs are one of the simplest ways pictorially to present figures, and they can be improved by the use of colour, as the diagrams show. Neither the horizontal nor the vertical scales need to start at 0; if all the data is over 2 000, start at 2 000 to save space. Scales need to be identified, but avoid writing the vertical scale title from top to bottom since it will make it more difficult to read.

Use thick, coloured graph lines; again, these can be overlayed if necessary.



Bar charts

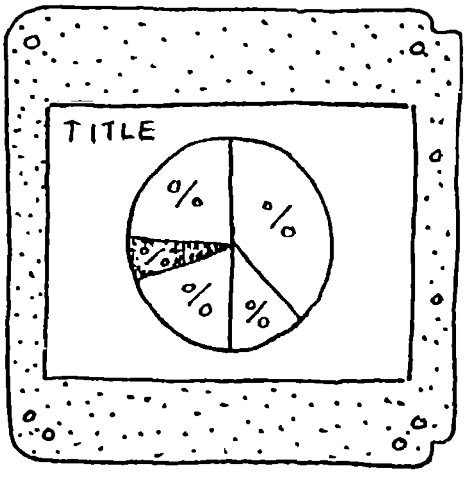
Histograms are useful for showing the state of affairs at a given point. Colour and overlays can be used to separate the information, and scale data and base-line data should be marked If the bars are divided, numerical information should be included since it can be difficult for the audience to assess the amounts quickly.



Pie charts

The precise division of circles requires a protractor, but for visuals there is no need to be that accurate so long as the numerical data is indicated in or near each section.

The easiest way to divide the 'pie' is with a straight edge and pencil - ½ = 50 per cent, ¼ = 25 per cent, ⅛ = 12½ per cent, 1/16 = 6¼ per cent and so on. Thus approximately 20 per cent is obtained by adding ⅛ to 1/16 of the circle.



Colour should be added to highlight main points, but avoid using strong shades on unimportant sections.

And, of course, overlays will help to emphasize the section.