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Eye-Catching Visual Aids for 4-H Demonstrations

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When used effectively, visual aids such as posters can help hold your audience's attention and make it easier for them to understand the information you are presenting. However, when visual aids are difficult to read, cluttered, or too small, they are more distracting than helpful. Following are suggestions for preparing effective visual aids. Although this fact sheet refers specifically to demonstration posters, the same principles apply to PowerPoint presentations or other visual aids.

General Tips in Making Posters

- Use heavy weight poster board that does not bend or buckle easily, or use foam core poster board.
- Avoid using a tri-fold (science fair type) poster board for your demonstration. These boards exhibit all your visual information at once, so rather than focusing your audience's attention, the visual aid actually distracts your audience from what you are saying.
- If possible, have all posters oriented the same way to avoid having to turn posters during the presentation.
- Use permanent markers to make your posters. They do not fade or run easily.
- Anything attached to the poster should be glued on very well with no loose edges.

Neatness Counts

- Prepare your posters in a clean work area.
- Use a yardstick or ruler to make guidelines in pencil. Make sure to erase guidelines.
- If your handwriting is poor, or for a more professional look, use stencils to trace your letters.
- If using computer-generated letters, cut the border size the same when piecing the letters together to form words.

Size

- Make sure your posters can be read easily.
- Letters should be large enough to be read from 20 to 30 feet away (usually 1 1/2 to 2 inches high).

Spacing

- Leave enough space around the edge of the poster and between words and graphics so it does not look too crowded.
- Take special care to leave extra space at the bottom. Easels often have a ledge on them that may cover words written too close to the bottom.

Easy to Read

Your poster may be beautiful, but can your audience read it?

- Use capital letters for emphasizing an important phrase or word, but do not use them for your entire poster.
- Do not overcrowd. Write key words on the poster rather than the entire script!
- Save fancy or script letters for catching the reader's attention, but do not use them for all the lettering. Double check fonts for ease of reading.

"This is eye catching and pretty, but it is also hard to read."

- Space lettering carefully. Your poster will be difficult to read if the letters are spaced too close or too far apart.

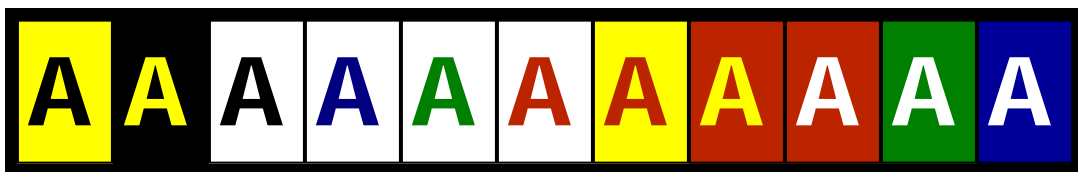
T O O C L O S E T O G E T H E R T O O F A R A P A R T

- If you use stencils, fill in the lines from the stencil to make a complete letter without any breaks.

THIS IS VERY HARD TO READ.

FILL IN THE STENCILS TO COMPLETE THE LETTER.

- Contrast is important. Use dark lettering on a light background and light lettering on a dark background.



- A combination of upper and lower case letters is easier to read than all capital letters. It may be difficult to find large, lower-case stencils. To make the poster *appear* to have upper and lower case letters, use a combination of larger and smaller stencils. For example, use a 2" stencil to make the "T" in the word "This," and use a 1 1/2" stencil to make the letters, "his."

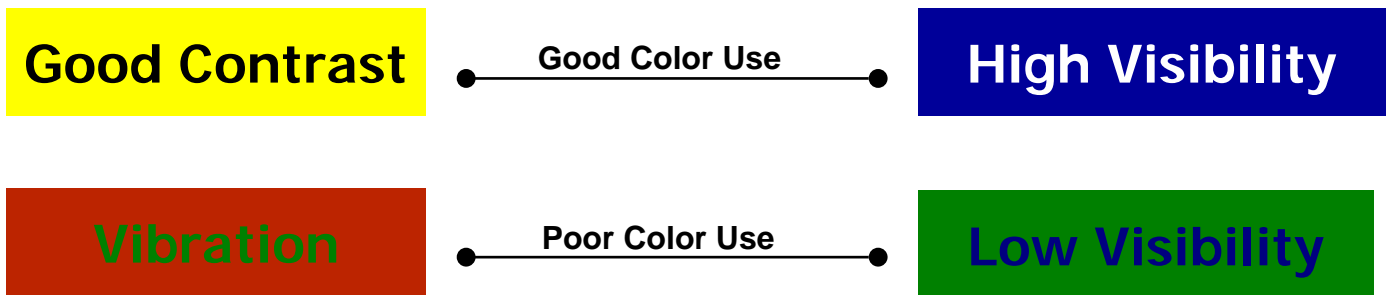
This Is Easy To Read.

THIS IS MORE DIFFICULT TO READ.

Color

The smart use of color can really make posters more attractive and help gain your audience's attention. However, color used incorrectly can make your posters very difficult to read.

- Avoid light, pastel colors (pale yellow, pink).
- Decide on a color scheme and carry it throughout your presentation. For example, a demonstration on raising pumpkins would look nice with orange and black lettering on white poster board. Smart use of color will enhance your overall demonstration.
- Color combinations make a difference. Scientists have studied different color combinations and found that deep red and green on white, black on white, yellow on black, and white on dark blue or black are very effective. Avoid such combinations as blue on orange, red on green, purple on yellow or vice versa.



Creative Touches

Have fun with your posters and let your imagination run wild!

- Clever title posters help you get your audience's attention. "Fit for the Fair" will attract more attention than, "How To Wash and Groom a Lamb for the County Fair."
- Titles should be short and catchy.
- Velcro can be used to attach objects or signs to your main poster during the demonstration.
- You can use fusible webbing to iron fabric letters or borders onto your poster.
- Borders are an easy way to pull together a color scheme. Borders can be made of fabric, colored vinyl tape, etc. It is important to attach borders securely.
- Artwork is an excellent way to add interest to your posters. You may draw or stencil directly onto your poster or attach a picture, drawing, computer-generated artwork, etc. to your poster. Again, make sure it is attached well.
- Punch out letters can be glued onto posters for a quick, professional look.
- Interactive and/or moveable parts can be attached to the poster to add dimension and creativity.

Number of Posters

Use the number of posters you need to effectively get your point across. Do not use a lot of posters just for the sake of having visual aids. A typical demonstration or illustrated talk will utilize:

- *Title poster*—a very eye-appealing poster that includes the title of the demonstration or illustrated talk.
- *Body*—two to three posters covering the main points of the demonstration. These posters may include recipes, step by step procedures, nutrition charts, maps, diagrams, etc.
- *Summary poster*—a poster that lists the main points of presentation that is used during the summary.

General Tips in Using Posters

- It is easier to pull posters from behind to the front during the presentation.
- A pointer is a good tool to use during your demonstration to refer to key points during your demonstration.
- Avoid facing your poster when talking. Angle your body so you can glance at your poster, but also be able to look at your audience.

Taking Care of Your Posters

You will use your posters for a long time. You may present your demonstration or illustrated talk to your club, at 4-H contests, or for community groups. You need to properly care for your posters.

- Store your posters flat, preferably in a poster carrying case that can be made or purchased.
- Do not leave your posters out in the weather, car, etc. Your posters will warp and the colors will fade.

Resources:

National 4-H Council (1995). Making Posters.

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