Improving the Use of Multimedia Technology for Lectures

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Instructors who use computer-generated graphics software to develop presentations face many choices such as what typefaces to use, what colored backgrounds and colored letters to use (i.e., positive or reverse type), and what level of visual complexity to include in the background of the slides. In addition, they have to decide whether to supply listeners with handouts of the presentation and in what format those handouts should be. This research summarizes several experiments that examined the effects of different typefaces, type, complexity, and handouts on student performance.

For some variables (e.g., typefaces and type), the effects on short-term student recall of information were insignificant. Added background complexity reduced the accuracy of information recall. Student notetaking on lined paper did not improve recall. However, student notetaking on detailed outlines with blanks significantly improved the short-term recall of presented information. Students also may have preferences about the detail of the handouts. They like the outline format with blanks and prefer more blanks even though the number of blanks did not appear to affect test scores.

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