

Build Anticipation

To increase their appetite, tell your audience what you're going to show *before* you present it: "Let me show you a chart that demonstrates this trend." Then, present it and wait a moment. Let the eyes roam, get adjusted, and absorb. *Then* you can become more specific and focused. You'll get maximum attention when you prepare your listeners in advance and then let them discover on their own a little. This gives audiences that sense of power and independence, therefore the desire to learn more and stay tuned in.

Keep Materials Organized and Neat

Nothing looks worse than messy, disorganized materials. Keep transparencies neatly stacked in boxes, charts in portfolios. You'd be surprised at how carefully your audience notices small details and gives bad marks. It not only looks unprepared but shows less respect for *them*, as though you approached this encounter very casually.

Stay Active with Your Exhibits

Use them as an extension of yourself, to underscore your points. Learn to handle them comfortably, to master whatever medium you will be using. Write and underline often, to show your control of the subject and help your audience get your point.

A final note: Lots of people feel uncomfortable about using visual aids. They think that visuals look too pedantic, sterile, stuffy, deliberate, etc.

I suggest that you try a few—in the interests of your audience. Not only do they really work and vastly improve your listener's comprehension; we are now such a visual society that you can buy a much longer attention span by making ideas visual.

Try it . . .

The bottom line on designing presentations: Unfold your material with full awareness of what learning/listening systems we, as your audience, use to understand you. Choose different styles for further impact but always keep the basic progression logical and orderly, letting your audience "see " your outline and your material.

Now—on to Close Encounters.