This semester you are asked to give a 5-8 minute informative speech, which must include visual forms of evidence and proof. As before, you are required to turn in a full-content outline of the speech. While the exact nature of the assignment will be left to your individual discussion section instructor, the focus for all classes will be on the visual component of the speech. This means that we will focus in this reader on visual aids — what they are, how to use them, and why they can be important additions to speechmaking.

The Importance of Visual Forms of Proof

We live in an age where few presentations are made without the speaker adding visual aids. In some, these take the form of overhead transparencies. In others, video or computer generated graphics predominate. Even the most fundamental classroom presentation often relies on the blackboard to illustrate concepts.

The impact of visual aids is hard to determine with precision, as results of studies on their effectiveness offer mixed conclusions. They appear, at minimum, to aid comprehension and information retention while enhancing, in certain instances, persuasiveness. The reason that it is difficult for researchers to "get a fix" upon the quantifiable impact of visual aids may simply be that they always seem subservient to the speaker and the speech itself. In other words, a bad speech will hardly be made into a good speech simply by the addition of visual aids. But the proper use of visuals can make a good speech better, by making it even clearer, more powerful and therefore more memorable.

The Types of Visual Aids

We live in an age of visual stimuli, with audiences raised on (and expecting) visual components to information. We also live in a time of increasing options for the speaker when it comes to serving that audience need.

It is important to remember, however, that different visual aids serve different purposes, and to simply "stick" a visual aid of some sort into a speech is hardly effective. The choice of your visual aid should be determined by the goal of your speech - what do you want the visual aid to do? Also, you need to be aware of the limitations of your speaking environment and the specific options available to you. In an effort to aid you in this decision, the following is a list of some of the visual aid possibility and their advantages.

►Animate Objects

Live bodies - animal and human - are one type of visual. They are used most effectively when you need to specifically illustrate a process upon a living creature. However, the use of animate objects is fraught with difficulty. For one, the audience's attention will tend to be absorbed by the object, and not placed on you as speaker. Also, live moving objects will tend to move as they will and not as you planned. Both of these considerations must be taken into account by the speaker and planned for. Few of you would probably need to venture into this domain of visuals in this particular speech.

►Inanimate Objects

You can enhance your speech by using an object that you are discussing in the speech. For instance, if you were giving a speech on styles of the automobile, using models of different autos may be helpful to illustrate the different styles. Here too, however, you need to be aware of the distracting nature of these visuals. You always want visual aids to work for you, not against you by deflecting attention from what you are saying. Therefore, it is often wise to keep objects out of the view of the audience (say, in a cardboard box where you have lined them up for easy and quick assess) until you need them.

When you do show objects, be they models or actual size objects, make sure they are large enough to be seen by the back row of the room. It is often necessary to walk around the podium to the front of the audience and show the object to give all audience members a good viewing angle. Do not be too quick with the view, and do not "bury" the object by holding it so low that it is blocked by the front or side of the podium. Make sure (and we might make this a hard and fast rule for all visuals) that everyone in the room gets a good view of your visual aid.

►Symbolic Representations
• *Photographs*: Photos can enhance your speech, signifying that your visual evidence is

newsworthy, accurate and/or concrete. But photos need to be large enough to be seen by the whole audience, and therefore if you need to use photos in your speech, most often you will need to enlarge them. While some people seem to prefer passing small photos around the audience, as a rule the practice is disruptive and ineffective. If you do pass something around, do it at the end of the speech. But the best bet is just to enlarge the photo so that it can be easily viewed from the back of the room.

• *Chalkboard*: Speakers tend to overuse the chalkboard in the classroom setting, simply because it is there and accessible. In point of fact, the chalkboard is only good for illustrating an ongoing process. For instance, if you need to illustrate the stages of a process which unfold as you go along in the speech (and feel you can do that illustrating quickly), it can be an effective visual aid. Remember to write large.

However, if the drawing can be done ahead of time with no loss of effectiveness, it should be done on poster or overhead and brought into class. After all, why waste time drawing in the middle of your speech, allowing the audience to get restless and uncomfortable and losing their attention? So save the chalkboard for such things as time lines or specific line illustrations that unfold a process.

• *Overhead projectors*: Making transparencies ahead of time is easy and cost effective. You can project the transparency to illustrate a list, process or reinforce information. Make sure the writing is large enough. Also, don't leave transparencies up after you are through discussing them. (And don't forget to turn off the overhead when it is not in use; it can be distracting as well.) Make your point with the transparency, then move on. (Projectors and other equipment can be checked out from the IRC, on the first floor of Dudley Moorehead Hall, with a permission slip signed by your instructor. Overheads can be checked out the day of their use. Most other kinds of equipment need to be reserved ahead of time.)

• *Posters*: When you wish to show the relationships of various parts to a whole or between variables across time, graphs are particularly useful. They can be shown on transparencies or on prepared poster board. There are a number of different kinds of graphs.

Bar graphs show the relationship between two or more sets of figures. Line graphs show relationships between two or more variables. Pie graphs show percentages of a whole. Pictographs show size or strength through the use of symbols.

With all graphs (and we can also include flow charts, organizational charts, flip charts and tables in this group), make sure the visual is large enough. If using poster board, it is wise to get a very large board (again, so it can be seen clearly and easily from the back row). Eight by ten boards tend to be much too small. When you write on the board, make sure that each poster contains no more than ten lines of information. Make sure lines are straight and neat. Illustrate drawings with contrasting colors that show up easily. Your illustration should be clear at a glance, and with you pointing to relevant information, easy to follow. (Point to visuals with your "inside" shoulder, so that you can still maintain eye contact with the audience while pointing.) Do not make the audience "work" for an understanding — they need to be following the overall argument you are making, not trying to figure out what the visual aid says. The following page offers some examples of graphic illustrations.

• *Video tape and slides*: Both of these are valid forms of visual aids, but each present different possibilities and problems. Video tape is great at showing a televised event or giving a moving account of something that needs to be looked at from a variety of perspectives. Remember, however, that the audience will pay little attention to you the second the television begins. Therefore, turn it on and off at appropriate times to keep distraction to a minimum. Also, have the tape ready to go and cued up, and the volume set before you begin the speech. Finally, make sure you can work the equipment efficiently. Anticipate breakdowns and distractions. By the way, it is not necessary to turn off the room lights for television presentations unless some particular light is reflecting off the screen at a bad angle.

In using slides, preview the presentation to make sure all slides are in their proper order and that none are sideways or upside down. Know how to work the equipment and check out the room ahead of time — is it capable of being

dark enough to see your slides? If not, try another form of visual proof.

• *Handouts*: Handouts help the audience to remember lists after the speech is done, and to follow illustrations that are highly detailed during the speech. If you are referring to the handout during your speech, pass it out before you begin and ask the audience not to refer to it until asked. If it is information you wish them to carry from the speech, simply wait until the end of the speech to pass it out. Make sure you have enough handouts for everyone and that they are clear and easy to read.

Rules for Visual Aid Presentations

1. Design them with care. Watch sloppy writing, misspellings, and crooked .lines of writing. All of these make the presentation less effective. Use contrasting colors (red on white, black on yellow) that can be seen clearly. Highlight the material that is particularly important.

2. Keep charts and graphs clear and simple. Research tells us that bar graphs are the most effective form of graphic presentations. Make sure they are not too complicated and that simplicity rules.

3. Make sure your visuals are large enough to be seen clearly and easily by all. This is perhaps the most often violated rule in visual aid speeches. Large poster boards, large printing or large models are the most effective.

4. Anticipate the use of the visual aid and problems that it may present. Know when and where and how you will use the visual aid. If it is a poster, bring tacks or tape to hang it up securely. 00 NOT use the chalkboard tray for posters. They will generally not only not be seen by all if you do, they will often fall over. (This is why they call it the "chalk tray" and not the "poster display mechanism.") Know where the video monitor is pointing as you are using it. If you are showing slides, make sure the room is dark. If you are using overheads, make sure the projector is pointing at the screen and is in focus. Be alert to any distractions your visual could create, and be prepared to compensate for these should they occur.

5. Coordinate your visuals with your spoken word. Remember that the visual aid is just that, an "aid." It cannot replace the speech. A general rule may be this: If I took away your visual(s), would there still be a solid speech left to give? The answer should be "yes." On the other hand, if I took away your visual, would it noticeably diminish the audience's understanding? The answer here should be "yes" as well. What this implies is that you still need to do all the planning and organization and preparation that you normally do for a speech. You need, then, to add the visual as a strong component of the speech — one that helps the audience to a deeper appreciation and understanding of your topic but one that does not substitute for the solid structure of the speech itself.

6. Consider the audience and occasion. Always good advice for any speech, here it means that you should tailor your visual aids to those aspects of the speech that the audience needs further understanding or further awareness of. Do not use visuals just for the sake of using visuals, but employ them to supplement what you believe to be the audience's needs and knowledge. If you are not sure what the audience might or might not already know, check out your information with your fellow students ahead of time. Remember, the speech occasion is one that moves the audience to a new place of thinking and feeling. If the audience already knows what you are speaking about, there is no need to give a speech.

The structure of the overall speech is generally topical, but that will depend on the particular assignment given to your seminar section. If you have further questions, consult with your seminar instructor.