

9 Strategies for Appealing to Visual Learners

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To appeal to your visual learners, add a variety of visually stimulating images and objects to your learning environment. Some ways to do this include the following.

- 1. Animate Visuals.** Include animation in multimedia presentations that you create. For example, you can buy add-on animation software like VoxProxy®. This software has a variety of animated characters that sit, stand, walk and talk based on words that you type into the software. You can also download animated clip art at www.microsoft.com to enhance your written messages on your PowerPoint slides. Just make sure that the graphics tie to the concepts in your text so that they reinforce rather than detract from your meaning.
- 2. Quote Memorable Sources.** Before learners arrive, spend some time creating a series of flip chart pages that have quotes from famous people. Add cartoons, caricatures, or other graphics with an assortment of marker colors. Make sure that the quotes tie to your workshop content so that they add value and reinforce session material.
- 3. Add Color.** Use an assortment of colored markers, various colors of bright paper on handouts and workbook covers, posters with images and content that relates to session topics, and colorful props (e.g. party decorations that tie to concepts that learners will experience). For example, you might have paper clocks taped to the wall or small colored hour-glass timers as incentives for a session on time management. When selecting colors to use on flip charts and slides, it is best to limit the number of colors to one for the title line and no more than two alternating colors for lines of text. Follow the same color scheme on all similar visuals. This allows learners to anticipate upcoming colors mentally and limits possible “surprises” or distractions that might take their focus from what you are saying. It also allows them to form mental images to connect content while providing reinforcement of key program elements.
- 4. Make Materials Visual.** Add simple colorful cartoon characters, graphics and caricatures to handouts, flip charts, and other visual aids to add a splash of color. When using these items, be conservative rather than adding too many images. Your goal is to highlight not draw attention away from your written message.
- 5. Demonstrate Something.** Give a demonstration to your learners using an actual item or a model before you ask them to attempt to perform a task or follow a process. For example, if you wanted learners to complete a function on the computer that you discussed in class, have them watch a projected screen image as you accomplish the task. Doing this will allow them to see operational functions, potential applications, and encourages questions.

6. Create Flash Cards. Have learners create flash cards made of small cardboard or poster board strips with images or key concepts written on them. Use various colors of poster board to add additional visual stimulation. You can add visual stimulus by using these cards in a small group activity to review session content one point at a time as you tape them to a board or flip chart easel. You can also have learners form small groups and present concepts learned to their peers in order to reinforce what they have learned. Put masking tape on the back of the cards to post them to a wall or flip chart, or use small magnetic strips (available at craft and teacher supply stores) to attach them to a metal writing surface.

7. Design Mind Maps. By using graphic displays of key concepts that branch out from a central idea called mind maps, you can visually indicate the flow and connection of key session components. You can draw these on a handout, writing surface, projected on a slide or drawn on a transparency. Have learners create their own mind map as they take notes from a lecture or discussion in order to help cement the concepts in their mind. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_map for more information on mind maps.

8. Use Photos. You can incorporate images of actual items that can illustrate a concept that you are trying to convey. For example, a picture can help learners extract emotional messages from the photo subject's facial cues in a session on non-verbal communication.

9. Use Film Clips. Show a brief portion of a popular movie in which concepts related to the workshop topics are illustrated. Follow the viewing with an activity in which learners discuss what they saw.

Source: Lucas, R.W., *Energize Your Training: Creative techniques to Engage Learners*, ASTD Press, Alexandria, VA. (2010).

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