

Flip Chart Magic

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Flip charts, sometimes referred to as newsprint because of the type of paper used, have been around training rooms for decades. They are a handy, versatile tool available to trainers, facilitators, and anyone else who needs a visual writing surface for ideas or information. They are great for quickly capturing participant comments, for creating prepared information and graphics and for displaying material for reference later in a session. One of their greatest assets is the simplicity of use. Anyone can use them to write or draw in a session. Even so, you should take the time to plan their usage and practice your technique so that what ends up being displayed is perceived as valuable by participants. Learning basic presentation techniques and using flip charts effectively adds another dimension to your professional abilities. They can be used in ways that are only limited by your creativity and ability.

- When designing flip chart pages for use in your sessions, ask yourself the following questions.
- Are they clear (meaning)?
- Are they concise (well written)?
- Are they simple (creative without detracting)?
- Are they graphic (right colors and clip art used)?
- Do they add value (will they aid learning)?
- Are they necessary (can points be made in other ways)?

General Tips for Use

Flipcharts are inexpensive, yet effective training aids for small groups up to twenty-five participants (depending on room configuration). They provide an easy way to capture key thoughts or to highlight information in small group settings.

Specific tips for using flipcharts are:

- Make sure the easel is locked into position and balanced.
- Place the easel so that ceiling lighting shines onto the front of the page and does not come from behind where it can cast a shadow and make viewing difficult.
- Don't write on the flipchart and talk at the same time. Write first; then face learners and talk.
- Stand to the right side of the easel as you face your audience if you're right-handed; stand to the left side, if left-handed. This allows you to face your participants and easily turn to capture key discussion points on paper with your writing hand while turning pages with your free hand.
- Don't block your participants' view when pointing to pre-printed information on the flipchart.
- When not writing, **PUT THE MARKER DOWN!!!** Playing with it or using as a pointer can be distracting and communicate nervousness.

- Leave a sheet of blank paper between each sheet of text to prevent participants from "previewing" the next page as you discuss the current one. It also prevents damage to the next printed page should your marker "bleed" through.
- Use large pointers made of wooden dowel rods with a black tip (available at craft, teacher, and home supply stores) or ones with plastic colored fingers attached. You can also use arrows cut out of poster or other heavy colored paper or other props.
- If appropriate, tear off sheets and tape them to walls for future referral.
- Put two-inch strips of masking tape on the side or rear of the easel for use in posting torn pages.
- Consider putting tabs (e.g. a strip of tape attached to the back of the sheet, then folded forward attached to the front edge of the page) on pre-written pages to ease in topic identification. You can then number or label topics on the tabs for easy location when needed. The tabs allow you to quickly refer back to a page later in your presentation and to turn them.
Another option is to use the clear colored stick on strips produced by 3M. Reference the colors in your lesson plan or notes so that you can easily find a desired page.
- Always have extra markers and pads of paper available.
- You may want to write comments or key ideas lightly in pencil in the upper corner of the pages. This allows you to unobtrusively refer to them, as you appear to be looking at the flipchart topics. Your participants will never know you "cheated" since they can't see the remarks from a distance!
- A creative technique used by some experienced trainers and presenters is to use two flip charts in tandem (together) during a session. They either alternate prepared images between the two charts or they have prepared pages on one easel and use the second to capture participant comments or to add more information to a topic during the session. If you plan to use two easels, I suggest numbering them (1 and 2) and indicating in your lesson plan or session notes which easel you will use to make a point. This can prevent embarrassing confusion during your presentation. The other key is to PRACTICE with your easels before participants arrive. Additionally, I find it helpful to have the same colored markers on both easels. This prevents me from carrying a marker used to the other easel and leaving it, only to be without it when I return to the second easel later.

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