

How to Create an Effective Overhead Transparency

Note that overhead projectors normally have stages that are either square or the same shape as a typical 8 1/2 x 11-inch page. That is, it is in a "portrait" format rather than "landscape." Therefore, it is important to be sure you design your overhead transparency in the portrait format so it will fit on the stage of your projector. There are other hints that can help you produce an effective transparency.

- Limit the amount of text you show on one transparency to no more than six lines and no more than six words in each line (sometimes known as "The Rule of Sixes"). Less is more. Transparencies serve as a framework for your presentation—not as a script to be read.
- Limit yourself to one major concept per transparency that takes no more than One-half minute to explain. If longer is needed, use more transparencies.
- Keep transparencies clean and simple.
- Use one type style throughout and use large enough fonts; 48 point for titles and at least 24 point for bulleted points. If you want emphasis, try 60 point.
- Times New Roman or Arial font styles are usually considered to be the easiest to read.
- Normally, you should never copy a page from a book and project it. However, if there is a legitimate reason for doing this, be sure to use your photocopier capability for enlarging the text before converting it into a transparency.
- Using color will make your points more interesting and, thus, more learning occurs.
- Color affects the viewer: blue suggests calmness, maturity, and stability; red generates excitement; green gives a comfortable feeling; yellow is most effective for gaining attention; gray suggests sincerity; and black has little appeal. However, making sure you have high contrast is probably more important than the use of color.

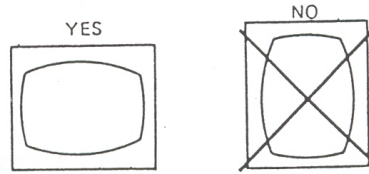
- Since your eye is drawn to lighter colors, some researchers recommend that you use dark colors in the background and lighter colors for the text. Some others feel that dark colors on a light background provide greater contrast and this approach is easier to read.
- If clip art or photos will add to the content, use it because pictures will be more effective than words in conveying meaning.
- Create handouts (2 or 3 slides to a page with room for note taking).
- If you are using PowerPoint to make your transparency masters, use its presenter note pages capability to make notes for yourself; use at least 18-point type so you can read the notes during your presentation.
- If you can do it smoothly, turn off the projector lamp as you change transparencies to avoid distracting the audience.
- One technique that adds interest and focuses attention is "progressive disclosure." Either slide a piece of cover paper down to reveal one point on your transparency at a time or make overlays with one point on each overlay.
- You can make overlays by creating a master transparency with the introduction on it. Then, print all of your bulleted points on another transparency; cut them apart. Next, lay all parts of the cut-apart transparency on the master transparency. Finally, tape the edge of each strip to the side of the master transparency so they can be flipped over the main transparency one-at-a-time.
- In the past, teachers made their overhead transparencies by hand or on a typewriter and then converting them to transparencies on a thermal copier. Today, most educators make their transparencies by creating them on their computers and then printing them on transparency material on their laser or ink jet printers. Or, they print the material on paper and then copy it on a photocopier on transparency film (coated acetate sheets).
- You have to make sure you use the correct transparency film for your copier or printer. Since photocopiers use heat to fuse the carbon particles, the acetate sheets have to be heat-resistant or they may melt in the copier. The acetate you use in your printer has to be coated to absorb the ink or it will smear.
- After making your transparency, lay it out flat to dry. It can take up to 15 minutes for the ink to dry.

- You should mount your transparency in a frame, cardboard, plastic, or one such as 3M's Flip-Frame protectors, include space for notes and block out excess light around the edges of the transparency.
- Overhead projectors are usually bright enough that you can leave the room lights on. This will help your audience be more attentive than in a dark room and you can establish eye contact.
- Where possible, limit your use of overhead transparencies to groups of less than 40 participants.

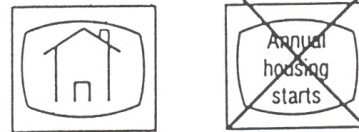
HOW TO...

DESIGN OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCIES

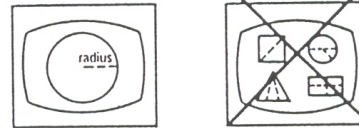
- Horizontal format



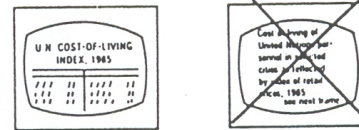
- Visual ideas



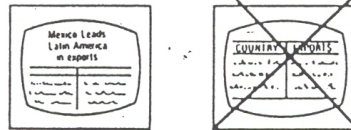
- Single concept



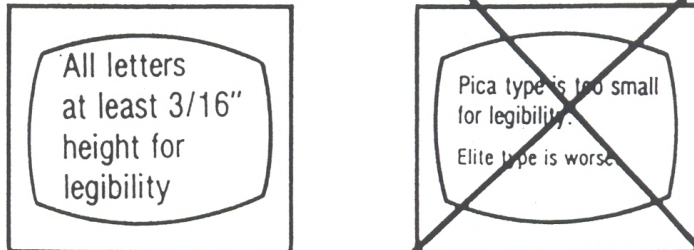
- Minimum verbiage



- Key words



- Legibility



- Overlays