Hints and tips for creating and using handouts and visual presentations

Tips for using handouts

- Make the text easily readable, in an appropriate font and size. It should be clearly written and unambiguous. Read through it as though you were a new learner reading it for the first time.

- Don't put too much text or too many pictures on one page and don't mix fancy fonts. It might look good to you, but might not be easily readable by your learners.

- Keep plenty of *white space,* the blank area around the text/pictures. This makes the information stand out clearly. If there is too much on a handout your learners may find it difficult to read and not absorb all the information. Use wide margins, or leave gaps if you would like your learners to make notes somewhere.

- A single sheet, one sided or double sided, is best; too many pages will take too long for your learners to assimilate the information. If you do use more pages, always staple in the top left corner and number each page so they don't get mixed up.

- If you have created the handout yourself, type your name, filename, version number and date as a footer. This will enable you to locate it again to make future changes and ensures you are using the most recent version.

- Consider numbering paragraphs or using numbers instead of bullet points. That way you can direct your learners to important points.

- Make sure the information is up to date. You may need to revise something if there have been changes or developments to your subject.

- If you are issuing several handouts during a session, you could print them on different coloured paper for ease of reference when you are talking about them.

- If you use pictures of people, make sure they represent all aspects of society and that you have any relevant permissions.

- If you cite from books, make sure you use correct referencing.

- A list of relevant references or websites is useful to encourage your learners to research further after the session.

- Arrange to have them copied in good time, just in case there is a problem with the photocopier or printer. Have a few spare copies in case you have more learners than you expected and don't forget one for yourself.

- If possible, give handouts towards the end of the activity they refer to. If you give them too early, your learners may fiddle with them and read through them rather than focusing on the activity.

Tips for using visual presentations

- Always check the equipment and projector are connected and working. Make sure the image is appearing clearly on a screen or a blank wall. Check that the program and version in which you saved your presentation is compatible with the one to be used, and make a backup copy.

- Don't include too much text or use fancy fonts, too many colours and/or animations, as this could distract from the points you want to make.

- Check if you need to insert a logo on each slide as a footer, or use a particular font and size for consistency throughout the organisation.

- Large, bold plain fonts are easier to read, for example **Arial,** *Comic Sans* or **Verdana.** Serif and script fonts are thought to be more difficult to read, for example **Times New Roman** and *Brush Script*. The font size should be readable from the back of the room. Using combined upper and lower case is preferable to using all UPPER CASE as the latter can appear as though you are shouting.

- Be consistent with the colours and backgrounds you use, for example use black text on a white background. Blue-eyed people sometimes struggle to see red, orange, green or yellow text, particularly if it's on a coloured background. Red and green could cause confusion for learners who are colour blind. Some learners who have dyslexia might prefer pastel colours. You could check which fonts and colours your learners prefer by asking them. How you see them may be very different to how your learners see them. If you can, check your presentation on the actual equipment you will use as the colours might differ to those on the device you created it on.

- Use bullet points, three or four per slide, and try not to read them verbatim. Expand on each point and discuss them with your learners. Schedule the bullets to come in line by line, otherwise your learners will be reading ahead of you if they are all visible. Involve learners where possible by asking open questions to make the presentation a two-way process and use anecdotes to bring your subject to life.

- Graphs, pie charts and diagrams are often easier for learners to understand than tables; however, don't make them too complex. It's better to use several slides with a few pieces of information on rather than one slide with too much on.

- If you have time, incorporate a short video or sounds to bring your topic to life and add variety. However, do check any copyright restrictions and/or fair use policies. If you are connected to the internet you can insert the website link into your slide for easy access. Don't forget to check in advance that the site is still accessible.

- If you need to refer to the same slide more than once, copy it rather than moving back through your presentation, otherwise you could lose your place.

- Use a remote control for moving through your slides. This enables you to walk around the room rather than standing next to the keyboard. The remote control communicates via a device which usually plugs into a USB slot in the computer. Don't forget to remove it at the end or you may forget it. Alternatively, you could use a tablet or a smart phone which connects remotely to the presentation. If you don't have a remote device, you could ask a learner to be your assistant and give them a nod when you want the slide moving on.

- Press the letter B on the keyboard to black out the screen, or W to white out (for PowerPoints). For example, if you don't want a slide on display for a few minutes while you focus on something else. Pressing B or W again will restore it.

- If your presentation is given via an electronic whiteboard, you could use features such as adding text and drawings with the pen-like device. You can then save and email it to your learners, print it or upload it to a VLE. Don't use normal white board markers as they will not function correctly.

- Involve your learners; ask them to use the presentation equipment and/or electronic whiteboard whenever possible.

- Don't rely on using too many presentations. Vary your delivery by using other types of equipment, different resources, and teaching and learning approaches.

- Have a paper copy of the presentation for yourself in case something goes wrong. You can then refer to it rather than having nothing. You can also hold it during the presentation and remain facing your learners, rather than looking at and talking to the screen.

- If you want your learners to make notes throughout the presentation, you can print a copy using the *handout* function. That way, they can have several slides on one A4 page with room for making notes. Printing one slide per A4 sheet is just a waste of paper. If you are not sure how to do this, ask someone to show you.

- Supporting handouts can be given at the end, which include further information such as websites and reading lists, rather than squashing it into the presentation.