



Creating Effective Visual Aids: The SCRAP Method

The SCRAP method focuses on basic design principles and applies them to the creation of visual aids, such as posters, PowerPoints, and Prezis. The SCRAP method is easy to use, and it will help you create more professional, engaging, and non-distracting visual aids. Its principles are simplicity, contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. A visual aid should supplement your verbal message, not distract from it. Only include what is necessary; scrap the rest!

Simplicity

Keep the design of your visual aid simple. Slides that are overloaded with text or imagery distract your audience and decrease the overall effectiveness of your presentation. Here are some tips to help you simplify your visual aid:

- Limit the amount of text on a single slide. The more words you put on a slide, the more your audience's attention is directed to reading the text instead of listening to your verbal message. If you must include text, use short phrases or keywords instead of paragraphs. Always proofread your visual aid for spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors.
- A picture is worth a thousand words. When possible, use high resolution images instead of text. Your information should primarily come from your verbal message, and your aid provides visual support.
- Avoid using animations, transitions, flashy colors, and sounds unless they serve a specific purpose.
- Less is more. Whether it is imagery or text, remember this: Too much of anything can overwhelm your audience.

Contrast

Ensuring contrast throughout your visual aid helps your audience easily identify and read information. Some basic principles of contrast are:

- Use a light background with dark text or vice versa.
- Avoid monochromatic colors (colors that are similar to each other), as they tend to blend together.

Repetition

Use consistent design elements throughout your entire visual aid. Here are some tips for ensuring repetition:

- Once you decide on specific font types, font sizes, color schemes, spacing, and other design elements, stick to them throughout your entire visual aid. Each slide does not have to look identical, but they should all look related.
- Use a slide template for easier design repetition, but ensure the template is not outdated, overused, or excessive.

Alignment

Alignment is about balance. Placement of text and objects should appear intentional. Here are some guidelines for proper alignment:

- If you use more than one image on a slide, enlarge or shrink each photo so they are the same size and in line with each other.

- If there are multiple lines of text on a slide, indent them using the same amount of space.
- Balance the amount of empty space when placing text and images on the slide. Your audience should not wonder if something else was supposed to fill the excess blank space.

Proximity

Proximity is about distance. It refers to how far apart or close together items are. Here is how to use proximity to your advantage:

- Group or separate elements strategically to show the relationship between information.
- Use distance in design to cue your audience on what to pay attention to.

Need more information or assistance?

Schedule an appointment with the [Excel Multiliteracy Center](#). We are here to provide one-on-one and group assistance to any and all UCCS students!