

# Three Cardinal Rules for Interacting with Visual Aids

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So often when people make presentations using visual aids, they fail miserably. They lose any connection with their audience by reading to them and focusing on the screen versus the listeners. If you want to be perceived as confident and knowledgeable when making a presentation, follow these three cardinal rules.

1. **Pause.** First and foremost, pause every time you put up a new slide.

**Why?** You want your listeners to read what is on the slide. If you are speaking while listeners are reading, you create a tug-of-war. They want to listen to you, but they also want to understand what is on the screen. Remember the visual is six times more compelling than the auditory. Not pausing also creates the potential for “side-bar” conversations. If people miss what you have said because they have been reading what is on the visual, they start asking others for information. It becomes very annoying to have people talking among themselves when you are trying to make a presentation.

**How long?** The question always comes up, “How long should I pause?” Pause long enough for people to read everything that is on the visual. You will know when they are done because their eyes will come on you. Pause long enough for you to read what is on the screen. When you are done, typically your listeners are done.

**Hint:** You can shorten the amount of time it takes people to read your slides, by previewing what they will see on the next slide before you show it to them. You can also create headlines for each slide that focus the listener on what is important about the slide.

2. **Move.** Secondly, make sure to move. You do not want to obstruct people’s view of the slide. Also, by moving, you take people’s attention off of the slide and on to you.

**Hint:** If you have the opportunity to control the environment, position the screen in the front of the room in either corner versus in the center. This will allow you to move freely without being part of visual. Even if the screen is in the middle, move to either side of it to command attention. You will only be on the screen for a second or two. It is worth the momentary obstruction.

3. **Talk to Eyes.** Your eyes should be on your listeners. It is the only way you will be able to determine buy-in. If your eyes are not on your listeners, your lips shouldn’t be moving. There are times when as the presenter, you will need to cue yourself from what is on the visual. Simply, pause. When you have absorbed what is on the visual, begin speaking again. The more your eyes are on your listeners, the more they will feel they can trust and believe you. The more they will feel you have personalized it for them.

**Hint:** Try to remember the image of the weatherman or woman. The weatherman focuses on viewers out there in TV land because that is where he gets the ratings. You should do the same thing.

By following these three cardinal rules of **pausing, moving and talking to eyes**, you will demonstrate to your listeners that you know your stuff. You show them that you are not dependent upon your visuals for your information. As a result, they feel they can trust you. People close business with those that they trust and believe. Effectively interacting with visuals will help you to receive high marks from your listeners.

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