OVERHEAD

PROJECTION
Ease of operation  The O.H.P. is a very simple machine, and very little can go wrong with it. If you have your spare lamp and you know how to fit it, you’re almost infallible. You can produce your own software easily and cheaply. You can face the class whilst talking to a visual (unlike the chalk board). This has obvious advantages when you have the odd problem student or three.

Flexible  If you're desperate you could use a white wall as a screen. Mistakes on visuals can be easily corrected. The O.H.P. can be used as a chalk board or a projector of prepared visuals. A wide range of techniques can be used.

Colour  Colour acetates are available, overlays can be done in colour to highlight certain points on a visual. A wide range of O.H.P. pens are available. Colour adds interest to visuals and, used wisely, can greatly improve a presentation.

Large area  Compared with the chalkboard, large diagrams can be drawn with great ease. The image size can be much larger than that of a normal TV monitor. Carefully designed visuals can have just as much impact as the hallowed TV.

Economical  It’s worth spending extra preparation time on some visuals if you think you might use them again. The more times you use a visual the more economically you have spent your time. Don’t become lazy though. Some teachers and lecturers have been known to use the same O.H.P. transparencies for decades.

OPERATION

Spare globe  You should always ensure that you have a spare globe in your projector before you start your lesson. Projector lamps have a limited life. If you use an O.H.P. projector regularly, you will eventually have a lamp fail during one of your lessons. You can minimise interruption and demonstrate good professional practice by replacing the lamp.

Replacing spare globe  Each projector has a different position for the bulb so make sure you are familiar with the ones you use. Some have a side panel and others lift the whole top up. Always use a cloth to handle the globe as oil from your fingers will create a hot spot on the globe and it may decrease its life.
Placement of OHP and Class Make sure everyone can see the screen and that the machine is placed to avoid distortion.

TECHNIQUES

Chalk board The OHP can simply be used as a substitute for the chalk board. Remember to keep letter size within an acceptable range. Simply the change of medium can maintain interest during a lesson.

Pointing You can use your finger, a pen, a cut-out arrow, a knitting needle etc. This is the simplest way of drawing attention to a particular part of your visual.

Silhouette Many objects can be usefully silhouetted on the OHP. For example, a protractor is a geometry lesson, coins can be used when talking about circles or even the planets. If you're talking about set theory you could use cutlery to illustrate your lesson.

Masking Masking should be used to regulate the transmission of information and remove distractors. You can use hinged pieces of card or simply slide a piece of paper under your transparency and progressively reveal the visual. The extent of masking is only limited by your imagination.

Overlays Content Information can be built up through a series of overlays. This is another way of regulating the flow of information. In certain cases it can greatly improve comprehension.

Colour Colour overlays can be used effectively to highlight certain areas of a visual. For example, you could trace a path through a circuit to indicate current flow or in Biology lesson to trace a path through a vein to indicate blood flow. Whole sections of a visual can be given different background colours.

Mounts The use of mounts facilitates masking and overlaying techniques. This generally improves the presentation, but the cost incurred is that storage becomes a little more difficult.

DESIGN

Advance organiser This may simply be a title for your transparency. It warns the receiver of what is about to come. The mind gears up to slot information into a specific category. This strategy can greatly enhance comprehension.
**Back up notes**  By providing students with back up notes and letting them know that you will do so, you enable them to give their full attention to your lesson. They are then able to reap the full benefit of the visual and aural messages you transmit. Let them know of your intentions as soon as possible.

**Letter Size**  This is a fairly subjective variable since it depends on the eyesight of your students, the number in your class, the layout of your visual etc. As a rule of thumb, try to use letter sizes smaller than 3mm. At any rate, it would be better to choose a letter size larger than necessary, rather than use one that's too small.

**Upper and lower case**  Research has shown that lower case text is more easily read by the majority of people. Because UPPER CASE print is of uniform height, there are smaller differences between the letters. Lower case letters can be full height, half height, or even extend below the line. Because of this greater variation in form, lower case text is easier for the brain to process.

**Iconic symbols**  According to research, comprehension and retention are improved when concepts or ideas are supported by iconic symbols. Giving the brain stimuli increases the chances of storage and memory.

**Seven points**  Research has shown that for the majority of the population, up to 7 pieces of information can be easily accommodated in the short term memory. Any more than 7 and reliability drops off dramatically. By restricting the number of points to 7 (or less) for each visual, you can be sure that you're not going to overload the majority of your students. Evidence also suggests that retention in long term memory as well as comprehension are more reliable if this rule of thumb is observed.

**Layout**  Poor layout or composition can be distracting or lead to ambiguities. Good layout will aid comprehension. The mind likes things to be logical and organised. Your brain tries to make sense of everything that is sent to it. Try to save brain time by ensuring that all the messages are well organised in the first place.

**Simplicity**  Keep your visuals simple. Too much information will be confusing and students will switch off. Use key words. More detailed information can be given in the back up materials.