

Flip Charts

What is it?

- Visual aid for presentations, group work
 - Large (27"x34") pad of paper
 - With easel or other support, or posted on walls
 - With broad tip markers
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What are some examples?

- "Welcome" sign to greet participants
 - Communicate agenda, objectives
 - Visual reference for icebreakers, introductions, group activity instructions
 - Visual aid (presentation materials) for presenter
 - Silent reference material (common text) for participants
 - Capture and display group thinking for brainstorming, problem solving, planning, discussion, comments
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Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

- Versatile, flexible, can be used in many settings, indoors or out
- Suitable for common learning situations of 5-35 people
- Commonly available; no electricity, special hardware or room setup required
- Familiar and non-threatening for participants
- Encourages participants to focus on material rather than sleep, daydream, or be distracted by special technical effects (as might happen with slides, view foils, or PowerPoint presentations)
- Supports and reinforces visual learning
- Provides visual "chunking" of material
- Aids note-taking
- Use of graphics can convey emotion and complex concepts
- Useful reference for section review
- Several sheets can be left visible at once around the room, allowing silent participant reference and review
- Good for group participation and interaction
- Can be prepared in advance or spontaneously; easy to add material or take tangents on the fly

Weaknesses

- Not suitable for groups larger than about 35
 - Bulky
 - Presenter/creator needs decent handwriting and spelling
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Steps to Success

- Use lined or gridded paper to aid keeping text lines straight
 - Use water-based markers such as Mr. Sketch rather than permanent markers or white board markers
 - Print (don't write) neatly using mixed case (not all UPPER case) letters about 2" high
 - Use two dark markers (blue, black, purple, brown, dark green) on alternate lines of text to visually distinguish separate items/concepts
 - Use a third, bright marker (red, orange, yellow, pink) for bullets, emphasis (and avoid using them for text as they're hard to read)
 - Limit of one topic per page
 - Leave plenty of white space
 - Limit words per line and lines per page to 6-8
 - Use only top 2/3 of page (line-of-sight to bottom may be blocked for some participants, and it's difficult for presenter to write there during session)
 - Stand to the side so you don't block participants' view (non-dominant arm closest to chart when facing class)
 - For smooth delivery, pencil in notes and reminders in margins
 - If preparing charts in advance, storyboard topics, then work out spacing on 8-1/2"x11" mockup pad before making presentation charts
 - Leave a blank page between each page of text to prevent markers bleeding through to next page, and next page text showing through
 - For seemingly spontaneous in-class chart creation, pencil in text and graphics ahead of time
 - Don't talk while you write (you'll have your back to the class and be talking to the easel!); learners can read and absorb while you write
 - Post key pages around room for easy reference and reinforcement
 - Use perforated paper if you'll be tearing sheets off pad
 - Practice to develop skills and comfort level
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References

- *The Big Book of Flip Charts* by Robert William Lucas (2000)
 - *Graphics for Presenters* by Lynn Kearny (1996)
 - *Beyond Words* by Milly Sonneman (1997)
 - <http://www.llrx.com/columns/guide42.htm>
 - <http://www.ohscanada.com/Training/flipcharts.asp>
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 - http://www.3m.com/meetingnetwork/readingroom/aa_ae_me_flip_charts.html
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