



Trial Graphic Fundamentals Part 2: Basic Rules to Follow

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Good trial graphics can unify your presentation and drive home your most important themes. (Refer to [Part 1](#) of this series to learn how early graphics development can benefit your overall case strategy.)

On the other hand, bad trial graphics can make you and your client look unprepared; the worst can destroy your credibility. Following these basic rules can dramatically improve the impact of your trial graphics.

Basic Rules for Trial Graphics

Consider Contrast

It is important to be aware of how your demonstratives ultimately will be presented during trial. Factors such as the quality of displays and the jury's distance from screens will determine how you incorporate contrast and colors.

Choosing shades that promote quick and easy reading will help jurors to get your point more quickly. In some settings, the use of light lettering on dark backgrounds—especially in titles—can make it easier for the eye to pick up text. (This is one reason the combination is frequently used on interstate signs and television news graphics.) On the other hand, if courts have individual monitors and HD TV screens, the display will be sharper, and a light template may be used to allow more options for color coding and emphasis.

Economize Words

Jurors don't want to, and sometimes can't, read long passages of text or even long sentences. Filling a graphic with words can make it look too busy and lead your reader to give up. Limiting text imposes discipline on the advocate; you should be able to make your point thoughtfully and thoroughly, but also as directly and succinctly as possible. The same goes for your graphics.

Choose Words Wisely

Remember, no matter how long you've worked on a case, your jury is hearing everything for the first time. Whether you are describing an obscure medical condition, a dense patent concept, or complicated contract language, word choice will have a big impact on jurors' comprehension of these concepts. Take the time to wordsmith your graphics with your trial team and your client. Additionally, if you have terms of art that will be used throughout your case, consider a standalone graphic with just those words and short succinct definitions.

Maximize Your Titles

A graphic's title should tell the jury what it means and, when possible, reinforce your theme(s). There's always a chance a judge could sustain opposing counsel's objection, but look for opportunities to pose questions, make statements, or reinforce themes. In the event opposing counsel wins an objection, oftentimes electronic graphics permit quick and easy changes to your titles.



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Tell a Story

Coordinate your graphics so they tell a story—and know for yourself what that story is.

Do you want to show that your product has improved over the years as science has advanced? In this and other examples, you will need to guide jurors through establishing a knowledge base, then build on that with each additional slide. Using consistent colors and graphics forms will help jurors to follow your lead, understanding that successive images are part of the same story.

Up Next

In [Part 3](#), you'll learn which tools are essential to incorporate in your trial graphics.

This article series is based on a program originally presented to the International Association of Defense Counsel (IADC) by IMS Client Services Advisor Adam Bloomberg and Bryant Spann, Partner at Thomas Combs & Spann PLLC.

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