**Visual Literacy**

**Advertising**

**It's hard to grab attention in our fast-paced world!**

"Free gift inside!"  
"Dear Jim, You have been specially selected."  
"Calling all Parents."

Every day we're bombarded with headlines like these that are designed to grab our attention. In a world full of advertising and information – delivered in all sorts of media from print to websites, billboards to radio, and TV to text messages – every message has to work extremely hard to get noticed.

As the world of advertising becomes more and more competitive, advertising becomes more and more sophisticated. Yet the basic principles behind advertising copy remain – that it must attract attention and persuade someone to take action. And this idea remains true simply because human nature doesn't really change. Sure, we become increasingly discerning, but to persuade people to do something, you still need to grab their attention, interest them in how your product or service can help them, and then persuade them to take the action you want them to take, such as buying your product or visiting your website.

The acronym **AIDA** is a handy tool for ensuring that your copy, or other writing, grabs attention. The acronym stands for:

* Attention (or Attract).
* Interest.
* Desire.
* Action.

**Of course you are not designers working for an advertising company – you are students of the English language and in this case: visual language! However, in order to understand the “language” of advertising, it will be logical to study their strategy.**

First of all you need to know the following concepts:

**Target audience:**

**Cleaning companies, housewives, people who clean homes, offices, etc.**

**Product:**

**Clorox Detergent**



**Logo**

**Slogan**

**Catch line**

**How to Use the Tool**

Use the AIDA model when you write a piece of text that has the ultimate objective of getting others to take action. The elements of the acronym are as follows:

**1. Attention/Attract**

In our media-filled world, you need to be quick and direct to grab people's attention. Use powerful words, or a picture that will catch the reader's eye and make them stop and read what you have to say next.

**Eye-catching image or picture (describe in detail!)**

**Clever use of language, for example in catchline (Look out for Figures of Speech – explain!)**

**Colour (not in black-and-white exam papers!)**

**Lettering: font, capital letters, bold, reverse print**

**Attractive layout**

One of the best approaches to attracting consumer attention is what’s called **“creative disruption”** – breaking existing patterns of behaviour through a highly creative message. This can be done in several ways:

* Placing advertisements in unexpected situations or locations. This is often referred to as guerrilla marketing.
* Creating shock in advertisements through provocative imagery.
* An intensely targeted message. This is also referred to as personalization.

Essentially, the goal is to make consumers aware that a product or service exists.

**2. Interest**

This is one of the most challenging stages in the AIDA model: you've got the attention of a chunk of your target audience, but can you engage with them enough so that they'll want to spend their precious time understanding your message in more detail?

Gaining the reader's interest is a deeper process than grabbing their attention. They will give you a little more time to do it, but you must stay focused on their needs. This means helping him or her to pick out the messages that are relevant to him quickly – use bullets and subheadings, and break up the text to make your points stand out.

For more information on understanding your target audience's interests and expectations, and the context of your message, read our article on the [**Rhetorical Triangle.**](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/RhetoricalTriangle.htm)

**Visual techniques**

**Cartoons, diagrams, photographs, graphs**

**Linguistic techniques**

**Punchy headlines and captions**

**Puns**

**Repetition**

**Clichés**

**Opinions stated as facts**

**Distorted language**

**Jingles and catchy songs**

**Rhetorical questions**

**Slogans**

**Unusual trade names**

**Emotive language**

**Exaggeration**

**Incomplete sentences**

**Jargon**

**Technical language**

**Direct Speech**

**3. Desire**

The Interest and Desire parts of the AIDA model go hand-in-hand: as you're building the reader's interest, you also need to help her understand how what you're offering can help her in a real way. The main way of doing this is by appealing to her personal needs and wants.

Rather than simply saying, "Our lunchtime seminar will teach you feedback skills," explain to the audience what's in it for them: "Get what you need from other people, and save time and frustration, by learning how to give them good feedback."

**Feature and Benefits (FAB)**

A good way of building the reader's desire for your offering is to link features and benefits. Hopefully, the significant features of your offering have been designed to give a specific benefit to members of your target market.

When it comes to the marketing copy, it's important that you don't forget those benefits at this stage. When you describe your offering, don't just give the facts and features, and expect the audience to work out the benefits for themselves: tell them the benefits clearly to create that interest and desire.

**Example:**"This laptop case is made of aluminium," describes a feature, and leaves the audience thinking "So what?" Persuade the audience by adding the benefits "...giving a stylish look, that's kinder to your back and shoulders."

You may want to take this further by appealing to people's deeper drives "... giving effortless portability and a sleek appearance and that will be the envy of your friends and co-workers."

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Conformity**  **Exclusivity**  **Greed**  **Gluttony**  **Sex appeal**  **Security**  **Envy**  **Success**  **Mother love**  **Health**  **Modernity**  **Hero worship**  **Easy living**  **Beauty** | **To be like many others**  **To be different**  **To get things cheaply**  **To eat well**  **To be attractive to the opposite sex**  **To be safe**  **To want what others have**  **To obtain material wealth, status and fame**  **To care for members of the family unit**  **To have a fit and sound body**  **To have the latest and newest objects**  **To be like a famous person**  **To have comfort in everyday life**  **To be good looking and youthful** |

**5. Action**

Finally, be very clear about what action you want your readers to take; for example, "Visit www.mindtools.com now for more information" rather than just leaving people to work out what to do for themselves.

Action words are:

**A = ACTION**

**‘Buy one, get one free’ offers**

**Limited term offers**

**Easy payment plan**

**Toll-free numbers to call**

**Free gifts**

**‘Bargain of the century’ offers**

**Clearance offers**

**Phone now**

**Limited stocks**

**Money-back guarantees**

**Mystery discounts**

**Guarantees**

**Reduced interest rates**

**Sales**

**Reduced prices**

**Order immediately**

**Persuasive language:**

There is a way of using language to make someone believe in something, or to convince them to see something in a certain way or to agree with a certain opinion. These are mainly about persuading people to buy a product (adverts), winning votes in an election (speeches), and putting across our views on a particular subject with the aim of showing that they are more valid than those of an opposing side (debate). There are three main forms of persuasive language: logical appeal, ethical appeal and emotional appeal. The word ‘appeal’ means ‘request’ or ‘plea’.

**Logical appeal** refers to the part of an argument that is the evidence and the logic or reasoning that follows on from the evidence. Logic is not necessarily true – the speaker persuades the audience by supporting a statement with evidence. The speaker uses the word ‘because’ and phrases such as ‘as a result’, ‘it follows that’ and ‘we can therefore conclude’.

**Ethical appeal** is the part of an argument that shows the speaker’s beliefs, values and morals towards the subject that is being discussed. This convinces the audience that the speaker is a good person who is aware of right and wrong, and that her or his argument is valid and correct. The speaker also acknowledges that there are differing viewpoints on the subject. This makes the speaker more persuasive – the audience sees the speaker as someone who is ready to acknowledge other viewpoints.

**Emotional appeal** is the part of an argument that appeals to the emotions of the audience. The speaker refers to real-life stories or personal experiences which can be sad and unfair to a particular person or group of people.

Persuasive language makes use of the following elements:

**Intensifiers** are words such as ‘extremely’, ‘very’, ‘really’, ‘remarkably’, ‘definitely’ and ‘strongly’. Using intensifiers implies that the extent to which we believe in something is great. We use these words to suggest what the reader or the listener should feel about the topic under discussion.

**Power words** are words like ‘proven’, ‘guaranteed’, ‘real’, ‘right’ and ‘truth’. These words make statements seem scientific and therefore valid. For example: “It has been proven that corporal punishment in schools results in more negative behaviour”, “It is guaranteed that this product will make your skin look younger.”

**Cartoons**

Political and social trends are often reflected in cartoons. Cartoons help people to come to terms with serious issues by treating them in a light-hearted manner. Often the message is more effective and hard-biting than a serious, academic article on the same topic.

**Stereotype (labelling)**

A fixed, generalised image of a character or person.

Cartoonists often create stereotypical images in order to appeal to a specific target audience,

e.g. the macho man, the perfect mother, the jet setter, the popular teenager.

Sarcasm

One thing is said but something else is intended, like irony. The difference is that sarcasm intends to hurt, insult or humiliate.

“You must have worked *very hard* to be bottom of the class!”

“Oh, you think you’re God’s *gift to mankind*, don’t you?”

### Satire

In an amusing way, social or political weaknesses or stupidities are highlighted. The satirist uses sharp wit, irony or sarcasm to expose these follies.

(Caricatures in cartoons are often examples of satire.)

### Anti-climax (bathos)

Also a build-up of ideas, but the final statement is often flat and unexpected. Humour is created.

They lost everything in the fire: their home, their possessions and their lunch.

I intend to be a great writer, to write short stories and letters to the press.

Size is an important element in cartoons and one that is often quite obvious.

* Is anything disproportioned?
* Exaggerated? Under-exaggerated?
* What is large and what is small?

Speech bubbles

* Who is speaking?
* What are they saying?
* To whom is the person speaking?

Focus

* The focus of a cartoon can indicate the main issue or situation.
* What is in focus?
* What is in the foreground and background?

Facial expressions

* Facial expressions are key to the character’s thoughts, feelings and emotions.
* What facial expressions are used?
* Do they change (sequential cartoons)?
* How do expressions compare to another’s expression?
* Is it an expression we expect?

Action

* The speaker is contemplative (silently thinking) and passive.
* In Frame 4, the scene is in stark **contrast** to Frame 2. The girl shouts, as **indicated by** her wide open mouth.
* He is leaning backwards with his hands behind his head.
* The action lines clearly demonstrate....

Action: In frame 2, the speaker is contemplative and passive., and it results in the boy's tumbling on the bed. difference between Frames 2 and 4.

Font: The font in Frame 4 is bold **as opposed** to the smaller font in Frame 2. **This highlights** how the girl shouts out her statement.

Text: The diction in Frame 2 denotes her sincere (or apparently sincere) 'caring' concern at waking her brother, **whereas**, in Frame 4, she is bullying and this is shown by the domineering tone.

Action: In frame 2, the speaker is contemplative and passive. In Frame 4, the scene is in stark **contrast** to Frame 2. The girl shouts, as **indicated by** her wide open mouth, and it results in the boy's tumbling on the bed. The action lines clearly demonstrate the difference between Frames 2 and 4.

Font: The font in Frame 4 is bold **as opposed** to the smaller font in Frame 2. **This highlights** how the girl shouts out her statement.

Text: The diction in Frame 2 denotes her sincere (or apparently sincere) 'caring' concern at waking her brother, **whereas**, in Frame 4, she is bullying and this is shown by the domineering tone.

#### Caricature

Grotesque (misshapen) and usually comic representation of characteristic features in a picture, writing or mime.

Newspapers often publish caricatures of politicians.