Transcript for Introduction: Visual Strategies

Animation: youtu.be/G-eWHlHreXw
Module page: www.visabli.com/work/visual-scicomm-toolkit

0:00 In science communication, we use visuals to help our audience process information and construct mental models. This is because visuals help us understand certain concepts better than words alone.

0:15 Whether it is describing a simple shape like a triangle, or a more complex technique used in an experiment. By creating visuals, we can clarify the science for our audience as well as ourselves.

0:30 So how do we create an effective visual? We can turn to three visual strategies graphic designers use to direct and focus their audience's attention.

0:40 **Layout** is the way in which we present information to an audience. This is the foundation of your visual, a roadmap that helps your audience navigate information in an intuitive way.

0:53 Designers often refer to Gestalt's principles of visual perception to organize and structure information. When we look at objects, we view individual elements as a sum of its parts, rather than in isolation.

1:10 Thus, the way objects are arranged, how close they are to one another, how similar they are to each other, and how they differ from another affects how your audience navigates your visual. We refer to these principles as **alignment, proximity, repetition** and **contrast.**

1:32 **Colour**, when used appropriately, strengthens our layout and reinforces the principles of design. Colour can categorize information and create relationships between them, whether it is to connect or separate information.

1:50 Colour, when used in combination with alignment, proximity, repetition and contrast, can direct attention and make certain information prominent. We refer to this as making something **salient**.

2:06 And last but not least are **graphical elements,** such as **arrows**, that guide readers through information or point out relevant information. **Labels and callouts**, that can focus attention on an element of your visual and clarify it. **Symbols and icons**, that represent ideas and objects quickly understood by a group of people.

2:29 And **typography**, that can clarify the structure and meaning of text, reveal the emotion of text, and influence the credibility of your visual.

2:41 And since these strategies are **audience-centered**, we need to know our audience and design with them in mind. When designing for a general population, we can make our work **more** accessible by avoiding jargon and using a color-blind friendly palette. Or for an aging population, designing a layout suitable for readers with lower visual acuity and sensitivity.

3:08 And while these are all great strategies, we need to choose and combine them carefully. Because when visual strategies are used poorly, they confuse and disorient our audience, undermining the message we're trying to convey. Let's examine a communication piece and improve its effectiveness using the principles of design.