Abstract. For hundreds of years verbal messages—such as lectures and printed lessons—have been the primary means of explaining ideas to learners. Although verbal learning offers a powerful tool for humans, this presentation explores ways of going beyond the purely verbal. An alternative to purely verbal presentations is to use multimedia presentations in which people learn from both words and graphics—a situation that I call multimedia learning. Recent advances in graphics technology have prompted new efforts to understand the potential of multimedia as a means of promoting human understanding—a potential that I call the promise of multimedia learning. In particular, my focus is on whether people learn more deeply when ideas are expressed in words and graphics rather than in words alone. During the past 20 years, my colleagues and I at UCSB have been conducting dozens of research studies on multimedia learning. This presentation provides a systematic summary of what we have found. The outcome is a set of 12 principles for the design of multimedia messages and a cognitive theory of multimedia learning. In short, this presentation summarizes research aimed at realizing the promise of multimedia learning—that is, the potential of using words and graphics together to promote human understanding.

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