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MEMORY OF INSTRUCTION MANUAL WARNINGS: PICTORIAL ICONS AND
CONSPICUOUS PRINT. S. Young and Dr. Wogalter, Department of
Psychology, University of Richmond.

The present research sought to determine whether the highlighting of warning messages would improve the memory and recall of warnings in proceduralized instructions. Subjects studied an instructions manual for a gas-powered electric generator under the guise that they would later operate the generator. In the instruction manual, the appearance of eight different warnings messages were altered by printing the verbal warnings in salient print or in plain/text print. Furthermore, warnings were either accompanied by meaningfully related icons or the icons were absent. Three kinds of memory tests were given to subjects: short answer questions on the verbal warning message, an icon recognition test, and an icon definition test.

The results showed that the use of meaningful icon in instructions improves recall of specific warning messages compared to instructions without icons. The effect of conspicuous print appeared to be dependent on whether icons were present or not. The results showed that for manuals without warning icons, conspicuous print had no effect on recall. However, for manuals with icons, improved performance was seen when conspicuous print was present. Implications for design of instruction manual warnings are discussed.