

the 3 clues for communication

for your association

How do you tell a story to a preschooler? There is, indeed, an art to the process. *Sesame Street* and *Blue's Clues* might seem like toddler fodder, but they were heavily-researched, tested, and monitored to provide both the best visual and educational experiences for their audiences.

Malcolm Gladwell's *Tipping Point* shares insights into the precision that went into developing those classic children's shows. It turns out, we can learn about better communication from Big Bird and Steve.

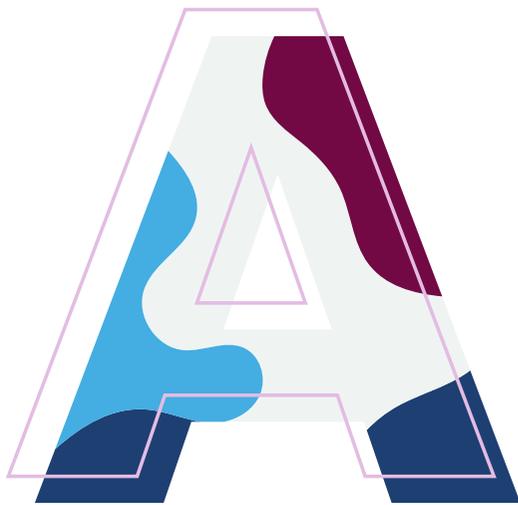
Clue 1: Add a bird.

Tipping Point shows us that when the most beloved children's show on television was facing a ratings disaster, they didn't go to Oscar and ask for his garbage can. Instead, they added Big Bird. They created a spokesperson representative of their value proposition and made him impossible to miss in the show. It doesn't have to be a literal bird, unless that fits the bill.



Clue 2: Spell it out.

Following the success of *Sesame Street*, Nickelodeon developed *Blue's Clues* for an audience that didn't need a lot of information to understand what the bigger messages was in each episode. In fact, all that was needed was a reference point. The dog has blue coloring, so we call her Blue. The mail goes into a character called Mailbox. Sometimes reducing context clues makes the information easier to find.



Clue 3: Spell it out.

One of the most effective methods applied by the research team behind *Blue's Clues* was the concept of repetition. From the structure of each episode, to the way Steve paused after a question and repeated the answer back to the audience, and even the scheduling of the same episode back to back in children's programming calendars all contributed to the way that information was cemented into the minds of children (and even many of us. *When it comes, I want to wail, MAIL!*)

