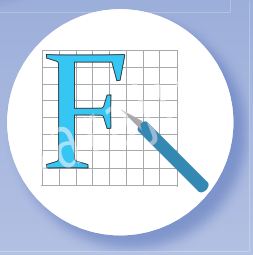

Graphic Design Basics

GRAPHIC DESIGN: BASICS

Glossary

Alias
When the lines of an image become jagged, based on the resolution of the image.

Alignment
Position of a block of text or image. Alignment is typically left, right, center, top or bottom.

Asymmetrical
When the images, logos, text, etc. are not identical on both sides of the central line of a document.

Binding
Putting individual pages together through stitching, gluing, etc.

Bitmap (Raster)
Image that is comprised of pixels such as a photograph. Bitmap graphics can be taken down in size, but it is difficult (and sometimes impossible) to take them up. They are considered "resolution dependent" or they need to be 100% size at the pixel resolution needed for your distribution.

Bleed
Any element that extends past the edge of the page. When printed, this area is cut off so there is no "white space" between the element and the edge of the paper. It looks to continue off the edge of the page.

Body type / copy
Main typeface that is used in a document.

Border
Decorative design around text or an image that creates an outer boundary.

Copy
Basic text provided to the designer to include in the designed piece.

Crop
To cut off a portion of an image or a tool that does so in image manipulation programs.

Cropmarks
Marks that indicate the edges of your printed document. Bleeds (see above) will extend past these marks.

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Die cut
Most printed items are cut into a rectangular shape. For specialty cuts, a die is created that is used on the printed sheet to cut the piece out. You may have seen small die cut machines at your local scrapbooking or craft stores.

Dingbat
A font made up of images or an ornament used to add space.

DPI
Dots per inch. Measures the number of pixels that are in an inch.

Drop shadow
An effect added to an image or letter to make it appear that it is above the background and casting a shadow.

Element
Any specific part of a layout — logo, headline, image, rules, borders, etc.

Export
Save a file from the format it is in to another usable by a different program.

Feather
Edges of an image appear softer, also a tool to make this effect.

Font
A group of characters (alphabet, numbers, punctuation, etc.) created in one style and size. A font family is a group of fonts that are similar and may contain roman, italic, bold and bold italic versions.

Footer
Text which appears at the bottom of the page.

Graphic design
Communicating via text and / or image to present an idea, including digital and print documents as well as the parts to create them.

Grayscale
Images that are black, white or up to 256 shades of gray.

Header
Text which appears at the top of the page.

Headline
Large text used to grab your attention and give you an idea what the body copy is about. Often, the headline is in a different font than the body copy.

High-resolution
File or image has a higher pixel count to allow press printing. For example, a standard press would need about 300 dpi while a glossy magazine would need 450 dpi.

Italic
Style of letter that usually slopes to the right. On a typewriter, it is indicated as underlined text. It adds emphasis within a body of text, but if used too much can make the text difficult to read. Italic letters are usually created separately, unlike "oblique" letters which also slant but are just an adjusted version of the roman font.

JPEG / JPG

Image format that compresses based on how close colors are to one another. It averages the colors and the more it is compressed, the more it drops out. Once gone, those shades (and details) are lost. Do work in a non-compressed format and then save your final file to a JPG for distribution.

Justify

Type that lines up on both sides by placing additional space between letters and words.

Kerning

Spacing between two letters to help eliminate white space and break up the flow of the text.

Layers

Levels to work on a file so that you can control which elements you choose. You may need to flatten (make one layer) before sending out your final files.

Leading

Space between lines of text, measured baseline to baseline.

Logo

A graphic element used as identification on branded materials (print and web). It may be for an organization, company or even an individual.

Low-resolution

File or image has a lower pixel count to allow for faster transmission on the Web. For example, most web images are 72-100 ppi.

Margins

White space on the outside areas of layout that remain blank. For printing, it allows binding without interfering with printed elements and also gives a white area for your eyes to rest.

Master page

In layout software, this page holds elements that will be consistent on all other pages so you only have to lay them out once. Some programs will not allow you to adjust elements from your layout pages that are placed on the master page.

Orphan

Single line, word or sentence fragment is on the top of the next column or page.

Outline

Outside edge of a font or vector graphic. When asked for an “outlined” font, you convert letters to graphics so that the font does not need to go with the job for printing.

Page size

Final size your layout will be printed or displayed. This may be standard such as US letter (8.5″ x 11″ or 216mm x 279mm) or A4 (8.26″ x 11.69″ or 210mm x 297mm) for printing. For more effect, an odd size may be used.

NOTE: The AEP uses 8.25″ x 11″ for a standard paper size so that all materials can be printed at 100% without adjustment.

PDF

Portable Document Format (Adobe Acrobat). Universal digital format to allow materials to be shared online, archived or printed in a consistent manner.

PMS
Pantone Matching System. Color system used to define colors and gives formulas to recreate the colors so it is consistent.

PNG
Portable Network Graphics format. Graphic compression format similar to JPG frequently used on the Web.

Primary colors
Colors needed to create a full range of colors. For additive means (monitors), it is RGB or Red, Green, Blue. For subtractive (print), it is CMYK or Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black.

Spread (layout)
Two page that face each other placed so that the design can carry over them.

Template
Basic information for a job — size, shape, folds and sometimes style sheets.

Text wrap
Shaping (wrapping) text around an image.

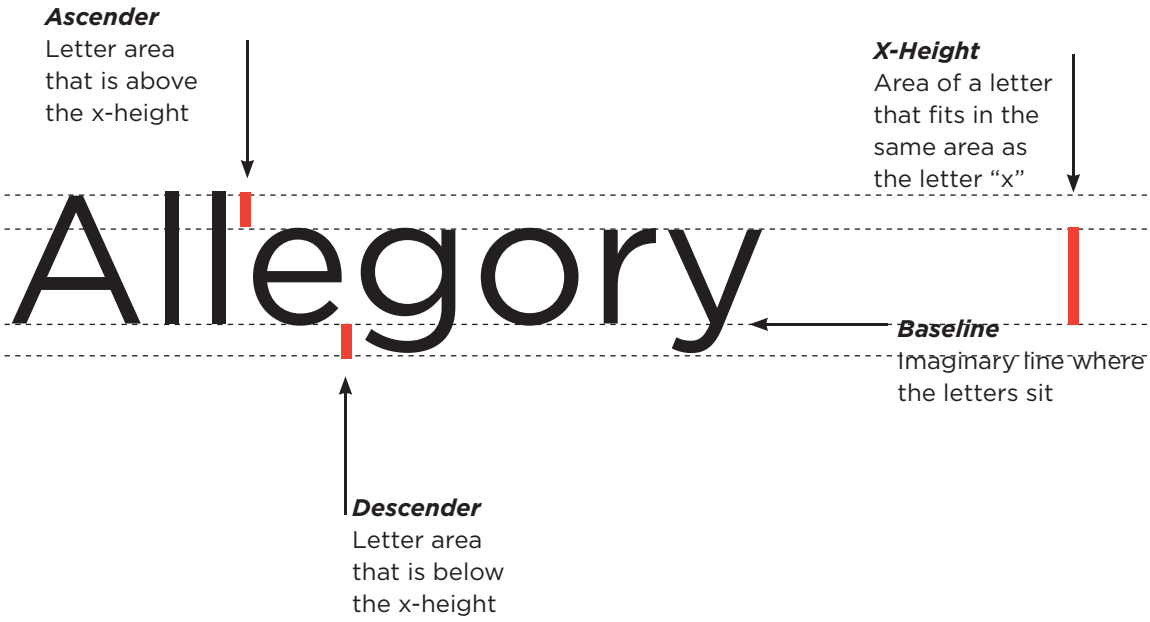
Uppercase
All letters are capitals, making text more difficult to read. This is usually done for emphasis or in headlines.

Vector
Graphic that is created in a drawing program, mathematically combining dots and lines to make a graphic that can be resized with no loss of quality.

Widow
Single line, subhead, etc. at the bottom of a column or page.

Graphic Design: Basics

Visuals: Type



NOTE: Each of these fonts is set in a sample style. The styles can be broken down further, but this is a basic list. The size and style is the same for each.

Sans Serif
The word above is in a sans serif fonts. It does not have serifs or "feet."
In print, use this for headlines. For the web, use this as body copy.

Serif
Fonts such as Times are serif. They have serifs or "feet" which allow your eyes to follow the serif from one letter to the next. This paragraph is set in Times. In print, serif fonts are often used for body copy.

Cursive / script
Decorative fonts are those that are designed to look like they have been written. They are great for invitations, but reading large blocks of copy can be difficult. Use these only when a small amount of copy is used.

Monospace
`Monospace fonts have a fixed width like a typewriter. Each letter takes up the same amount of space.`

Graphic Design: Basics

Tips and Hints: Type

- Flush left is the easiest to read.
- Centered type is the hardest.
- Upper and lower case is best for titles.
- Initial caps and lower case is best for text and some headings.
- It is best not to use ALL CAPS, accept for acronyms.
- Avoid hyphenating more than two consecutive lines.
- Don't leave orphans (a word or short line at the top of a column or page).
- Don't leave widows.
- Serif vs. sans serif type. It is best to use serif type (like Times) for printed text. Sans serif is best for signs, Web viewing, presentations, graphics and large headings. When using more than one type face, make sure they are different enough for easy identification.
- Italic. Use italics for book titles in text and bold for subheads or very sparingly for emphasis as an attention getting device.
- Leading—the space between lines— and how to use it. Leading should be two points more than the point size of the type (e.g. 9 point type, 11 point leading) for legibility. More leading makes your type more inviting and easier to read. If you need to pull up a line, try reducing a paragraph by a tenth of a point size. By the way, 72 points equals one inch.
- Kerning. Letter spacing or tracking can be adjusted so that letters are closer or farther apart. Bigger type needs less space between letters. Kerning makes spacing look more even because it adjusts for individual differences in letter combinations.

Tips and Hints: Page Layout and Design

- When deciding page size consider cost and standard envelope sizes. Using standard paper sizes saves on cost!
- Keep design elements consistent: i.e. subhead use and styles, photo caption placement and styles.
- Text should be easy to follow: sequence of photos and art should be logically placed.
- Use columns for text layout—avoid lines that are too long. The easy way to test this is to read across a line. If you feel your eyes move because you can't see the entire width without moving them, it's too wide.
- Don't overdo the design. Use a few colors and typefaces. The best looking documents use minimal colors and effects.
- White space in a document is good.
- Unless you're creating a photo montage, limit yourself to one graphic for every dollar-sized area in your layout.
- Proofread. Ask your friends to proofread. Studies have shown that if you are working on a project for a long time, you don't see what's on the page, you see what you "think" is on the page.
- Create a style sheet when you create a document so you don't have to "reinvent the wheel" when you create a similar piece the next time.
- Consider creating your own graphics or taking your own photos so you won't have to worry about violating someone's rights.
- Make your backup when you have completed the project. If you're going through a printer or email service, wait until it's completed. That way, you're assured to have the correct version on file.

Spot a Newbie

Alignment
All of the type is centered on the page.

Boxitis
Overuse of boxed items, rules and screens can cause confusion. It's a fight to visually move through the page and often your reader will just go elsewhere.

Fontastrophy
Too many fonts makes it hard to read and difficult to output. Limit yourself to 2-3 fonts. you can have a couple extra for special call-outs, ads, etc.

The worst job I was ever given to output from a new designer came in and it took forever to open. After writing down the first twenty or so fonts I didn't have, I contacted the designer. I was asked, "I used every font on my computer. Don't you have them all?"

Gray pages
Too much type, not enough white space and graphics to break it up.

Hierarchy
You should have elements on your page that are more important and least important. That is also how your eye should travel through the page. Type sizes and weights should vary. Images used when needed to communicate and move the story.

Hyphenation
Multiple hyphens used to indicate en-dashes and em-dashes.
Inch and quote marks used interchangeably.
Investigate ASCII characters if you need help and utilize your Character Map.

Image overload
Too many images will have your reader looking at the images and not your words.

Inappropriate graphics
Placement of images because they "look cool", not because they help the copy or move the story forward.

Lack of white space
Solid set copy filling the entire page is hard to read. Too much happening in your page design makes it difficult for your reader to focus.

Lost elements, part or all
When you move items layered on a page, you'll sometimes cover text or images you do not intend to. Check these before distributing.

Narrow columns
Narrow columns with justified type end up with gaping holes that draw your reader's attention instead of your copy.

Orphans and Widows
See the definitions for these. Watch where your copy falls.

Text wraps

One text wrap draws attention in. Wrapping everything is distracting.

Unbalanced type

Long lines of small type or short lines of large type, making it difficult to read.

Unnecessary spacing

Only one space after periods. (My personal pet peeve.) Don't leave graphic elements such as bullets floating. Hyphenate to eliminate large gaps or massage your type by moving different words to find better ways for the copy to fall.

If you're ever unsure of your design, ask someone to review your layout. They might not be able to tell you how to fix it, but they can tell you what is bugging them.