

LISA GRAHAM

basics of

DESIGN

layout & typography
for beginners

SECOND EDITION

basics of DESIGN

layout and typography for beginners
second edition

CENGAGE  Lisa Graham



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**Basics of Design: Layout and Typography
for Beginners, Second Edition**

Lisa Graham

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Preface

INTENDED AUDIENCE

This book is for beginning designers from all walks of life. I use the term “beginning designer” to refer to all who are earnestly interested in improving their pages, whether they are students studying design at community colleges and universities or professionals from varied fields trying to create their own pages. This book takes the approach that anyone, regardless of innate “artistic talent,” can be taught how to design better pages. Fifteen years of teaching university level graphic design courses have taught me that often the most successful students are not the ones loaded with talent, but instead, those individuals who closely study the design principles and then actively apply them to their own pages. An individual’s success in design depends more upon hard work and motivation than exclusively on innate talent.

I wrote this book from my unshakeable belief that design should not be limited to those with elite talent, but that anyone with motivation and a thorough grounding in the design principles can learn how to create great looking pages. Therefore, this book is for anyone who, regardless of formal training or official job titles, needs to create effectively designed and visually well organized pages. These people may already under-

stand that their pages need improvement, but are not quite sure why. This book, through down-to-earth explanations, examples, and exercises covering the basic design and layout principles, will benefit anyone who would like to improve page designs. Some of the people who will gain the most from this book include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Design students studying beginning typography and layout
- Teachers who need to create interesting displays, banners, and handouts for their classes
- Small business owners wanting to design their own logo, business card, and ads for their growing business
- Students who understand that a good paper is one that is both well written and visually well organized
- The secretary who suddenly “inherits” the job of designing newspaper ads for the company
- Professionals of all sorts who must present text, charts, diagrams, sales figures, and other material in formal reports to their bosses or their boss’s bosses
- The seasoned professional and the newly-graduated student who want to create a well-laid-out resume
- Anyone else who, with little or no design training, must create easy-to-read, attractive, and well-laid-out designs on paper

BACKGROUND OF THIS TEXT

This book has evolved out of my experiences as a university professor who has taught all levels of graphic design and graphic design technologies. In my many years of teaching I have taught a broad range of art and graphic design concepts and courses: two-dimensional design, papermaking, drawing, color theory, creative design methodologies, traditional and digital illustration, digital art, advertising design, typography, layout, packaging design, portfolio design, print production, publication design, branding design, motion typography, web design, and multimedia. In every course I have found that

students produce the best work if they continually refer to the basic design principles and actively apply them to their own work. Over time I have learned how to present the design principles simply in a way easily grasped by my students: this book is the result.

Basics of Design: Layout and Typography for Beginners, 2nd edition, introduces the basic design principles through textual explanations, visual examples, and hands-on exercises. As a foundation text, it is understood that the reader will have little or no formal background training in design.

TEXTBOOK ORGANIZATION

This book is written with the assumption that you may have limited time to study design in depth but would like to design better pages. With this in mind, the design principles presented in this book are intended to quickly help you improve the design and layout in your pages.

Chapters 1 through 9 explain foundation design principles as well as how to use images, color, and layout to add impact to your designs. To enhance your understanding of the design principles, at the end of each of the principles chapters is an advanced page analysis section. In each one of these sections a “before” page design is analyzed, and its design flaws are corrected in an “after” page design. Arrows with descriptive text point directly to weaknesses and strengths in the designs, allowing you to clearly see what works and what doesn’t. This unique feature of the text clearly identifies why a portion of a design is “bad” and why a portion is “good,” assisting you to develop a critical eye. Many design texts will show purportedly good and excellent design, but lack explanation of why something is considered bad and how a designer can correct those flaws. Exercises at the end of each chapter reinforce key concepts through hands-on exercises.

Chapters 10 and 11 concentrate on the centuries-old basics of typography and how to identify, select, and apply typography with the goal of enhancing your message. Chapter 12 focuses on a number of common design projects (such as logos, newsletters, and business cards) and contains a brief listing of some of the special considerations involved with each type of design project. The exercises at the end of these chapters provide opportunities for readers to learn

through doing: design is best learned through active participation. The exercises at the end of Chapter 12, with higher-level execution, may yield work that can be incorporated into a design portfolio, including logos, stationery, posters, book jackets, and CD labels. Chapter 13 includes a critique guide intended to help you analyze your own and others' work; a brief discussion of typical design tools and technology; and a list of design books and other resources that you may find useful.

FEATURES

The features in this book have been carefully compiled to provide a comprehensive coverage of essential design principles. The information presented here is intended to quickly boost the reader's knowledge of design. The following list provides some of the salient features of the text:

- Coverage conveys practical, ready-to-use information about basic design principles, without the technical jargon.
- The text is thoughtfully structured to provide an easy-to-understand grounding in graphic design.
- Before and after illustrations show readers how to apply design principles, color, images, and typography to improve their own design works; they also show how they may increase the visual impact of their page design while improving organization and readability.
- Advanced Page Analysis section sharpens analytical skills, assisting readers to identify good and bad applications of the basic design principles.
- Skill building exercises and quizzes at the end of most chapters reinforce crucial design concepts.
- Comprehensive overview of typography terms increases reader awareness of this fundamental building block of the written and electronic page.
- Compact format encourages quick scanning to inform the reader of crucial design information.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

This edition functions as a reading resource for both the beginning designer learning these concepts independently of a structured course and those students enrolled in a focused study of design. New to this edition:

- Expanded, more descriptive captions explain design concepts in practical, down-to-earth terms.
- New exercises added to the end of each chapter allow readers to practice what they just learned. Sprinkled throughout the text are more advanced exercises which, with a little time and effort, may yield a good start on a visual portfolio.
- More than 65 new images, 23 of them color, make this a highly visual text.
- Advanced Page Analysis section visually compares bad versus good design, including explanations that point exactly to the weak visual elements and what corrective steps the designer undertook to make the design stronger.

E.RESOURCE

This guide on CD was developed to assist instructors in planning and implementing their instructional programs. It includes sample syllabi for using this book in either an 11- or 15-week semester. Where available, student examples of project solutions are included. It also provides quizzes and test questions and answers, exercises, instructional handouts, PowerPoint slides highlighting the main topics, and additional instructor resources.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Graham is an Associate Professor and the area head of Graphic Communication in the Department of Art at the University of Texas at Arlington. Her students have won numerous design awards (over 100 between 2001 and 2004) and are employed in advertising and graphic design agencies in Texas and throughout the United States. Lisa has taught electronic design and web design for over 15 years and has

instilled that professional knowledge into her publications. Besides this book, Lisa authored *The Principles of Interactive Design* (Thomson Delmar Learning, 1998). In 2002, the American Institute of Graphic Arts selected her for one of its prestigious Illumina Teacher Awards. Her illustrations have appeared in the MIT publications *Computer Music Journal*, *Leonardo*, and *Terra Nova*. She has produced graphic designs, illustrations, and informational graphics for clients in the fashion, high-tech, energy, military, and geology industries. New and upcoming research endeavors include articles in gestalt theory, experience design, and green design.

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Many thanks to my students who willingly served as guinea pigs by trying out the exercises and projects in this book. Without their interest in this project it would not have progressed as quickly as it did. I am amazed and gratified at how genuinely interested my students were in this project and how open they were to my asking them "What do you think about this...?"

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Graphic Communications Department
Baker College of Owosso
Owosso, Michigan

Rebecca Gallagher

Chair, Digital Media Communications
Katharine Gibbs School
New York, New York

Mary Griffith

Graphic Communications Department
Southeast Technical Institute
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Therese LeMelle

Visual Communications Department
Katharine Gibbs School
New York, New York

Don Mangione

Chair, Graphics and Web Department
Baker College of Muskegon
Muskegon, Michigan

Phyllis Owens

Computer Graphics Department
Camden County College
Blackwood, New Jersey

Elaine Reeder

Computer Graphics Department
Camden County College
Blackwood, New Jersey

Terry Rydberg

Graphic Communications Department
Waukesha County Technical College
Pewaukee, Wisconsin

Carl Schumann

Visual Communications Department
Katharine Gibbs School
Norwalk, Connecticut

Lisa Graham

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QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

Thomson Delmar Learning and the author welcome your questions and feedback. If you have suggestions that you think others would benefit from, please let us know and we will try to include them in the next edition.

To send us your questions and/or feedback, you can contact the publisher at:

Thomson Delmar Learning
Executive Woods
5 Maxwell Drive
Clifton Park, NY 12065
Attn: Graphic Communications Team
800-998-7498

Or contact the author by e-mail at:
lsergraham@sbcglobal.net



Glossary

Accents: The secondary, tertiary, and so on, focal points in a layout that accent other important points in the page.

Alignment: The visual connection among words, shapes, graphics, images, and lines on a page when their edges or axes line up (align) with each other. A major design principle whose use dramatically improves the organization and professional appearance of a page.

All caps: Abbreviation for “all capital letters.”

Asymmetric: A typographic composition form in which the lines of type are set in an irregular shape with few, if any, of the text lines aligning with each other.

Asymmetrical balance: A layout in which the visual weights of visual elements are distributed on the page to achieve a harmonious balance.

Balance: The equal distribution of the visual weight of elements on a page in order to achieve a pleasing and clear layout. Pages may be symmetrically or asymmetrically balanced.

Banners: Large signs meant to quickly convey a simplified message typically hung in stores, draped across building facades, strung up in

gymnasiums and across bleachers, and dangled from lightposts.

Body copy: The small type that carries most of the information in ads, flyers, brochures, newspapers, and so on. Other names for body copy are body text, text type, or simply body. Body copy commonly ranges from 8 to 12 points in size.

Centered: Lines of type whose midpoints are aligned and right and left edges are allowed to flow naturally ragged.

Closure: The gestalt principle that draws on the natural human tendency to visually close gaps in forms, especially familiar forms.

Comprehensive (comp): A very detailed, polished mock-up of a page design, used to present the page design to a client.

Concrete: Type alignment in which the text is shaped into a form or object.

Content: The words and phrases and graphics on a page.

Continuation: Continuation occurs when the eye follows along a line or a curve, even when it crosses over negative and positive shapes.

Contrast: The design principle of contrast states that visual elements on a page should look distinctly different from one another. Contrast is used to add visual interest to your layouts and to keep everything on the page from looking alike.

Copy: The written text on the page, including all headlines, subheads, body text, picture captions, pull-quotes, and so on.

Cropping: The removal of some of the horizontal or vertical edges of a picture.

Dingbats: A font in which small ornamental pictures are substituted for letters.

Emphasis: The design principle of emphasis states that the most important element on the page should be the most prominent, the second most important element should be second to the most prominent, and so on.

Figure/ground: A fundamental gestalt law of perception that helps us visually identify objects (figure) as distinct from their background (ground).

Flopping: Changing the direction of an image making it a mirror image of the original.

Flow: The visual and verbal path of movement (the order) in which the reader's eye tracks through a page or pages. A major design principle.

Flush left: Text aligned on the left while the right edge is allowed to flow naturally into a ragged edge; also called left aligned or, classically, flush-left/ragged-right.

Flush right: Text aligned on the right while the left edge is allowed to flow naturally into a ragged edge; also called flush right, align right, right or, classically, flush-right/ragged-left.

Flyers: One-sided simple pages advertising a special limited-time offer or a special one-time event.

Focal point: The visual element or part of a page that is most emphasized and that first attracts and holds the reader's attention.

Font: All the characters (letters, numbers, caps, small caps, and symbols) in a typeface at a specific point size.

Format: The size, shape, and function of a design. Different kinds of projects are different formats (a business card at 2" x 3½" is considerably different in format from a poster at 16" x 20").

Gestalt: A structure, configuration, or layout whose specific properties are greater than the simple sum of its individual parts.

Grid: A nonprinted system of horizontal and vertical lines that divide the page and help the page designer align elements consistently.

Justified: Type whose left and right edges are aligned. Justified type is also classically called flush-right/flush-left.

Kerning: Adjustment of the space between two individual letters to improve appearance.

Layout: The placement (the design) of visual elements—headlines, body copy, images, lines, and so on—in the page.

Leading: The vertical space between lines of type.

Legibility: How easy it is to identify text in short phrases such as headlines, signs, slogans, and so on.

Letterspacing: The space between individual letters and characters.

Logos: Combinations of type and graphics that represent a business's, group's, project's, brand's, or individual's identity.

Logotype: A name constructed out of unique typography or lettering and used to represent a business's, group's, project's, brand's, or individual's identity.

Nameplate: The area usually at the top of the front page of a newsletter that holds the newsletter's title in a designed type treatment.

Newspapers: Limited page publications, typically four, eight, or twelve pages, used by businesses, nonprofit organizations, or groups to provide business and personnel updates, inform clients about product releases and upgrades, review business services, and review the activities and successes of the organization.

Pica: Traditional layout unit of measurement: 12 points equal 1 pica, and 6 picas equal an inch.

Pictograph: A symbol or icon used in international signage that is intended to cross language barriers.

Points: Traditional type measurement system. There are 72 points to an inch.

Posters: Large, single-page formats used to inform readers about schedules, special events, current offerings, or to promote awareness about causes, companies, service organizations, and special places.

Proximity: Items that are spatially located near each other seem part of a group.

Pull quotes: A sentence or two "pulled" from the text and set in a larger point size than the body copy and placed in the text column or in a margin.

Readability: How easy it is to read lots of text: sentences, paragraphs, and pages of text.

Repetition: The design principle that states that repeating lines, shapes, images, colors, textures, and other visual elements within a layout helps establish a unified, cohesive design.

Roughs: A refined version of the original thumbnail sketch, usually half size or full size. Roughs are constructed with an eye toward refining the layout, typography, placement, and overall concept of the original thumbnail sketches. An intermediary step between the first crude ideas of a thumbnail and the refined polish of a comprehensive.

Runaround: Lines of type that wrap around a photo, image, graphic, or some other element. Some computer programs call this option text wrap.

Sans serif: "Without serifs." A style of typeface without serifs.

Script: A style of typeface with flowing letter-strokes.

Serif: The little ending stroke on letterforms that sticks out from the bottom or top of a letterform.

Silhouetted photo: An image or photo with portions selectively removed (not strictly horizontal or vertical portions as in a cropped image).

Similarity: The gestalt principle that asserts that we see visual elements that are similar in shape, size, color, direction, and motion as part of a group.

Square serif: A category of typefaces in which the serifs are shaped as slabs or squares.

Stationery sets: Letterheads, business cards, and envelopes. Also called business identity sets, corporate identity sets, or business systems.

Symbol: A simple sign or icon that represents another thing, for example, a dove represents the concept of peace.

Symmetrical balance: A layout in which visual elements are placed in such a way as to create a mirrored image from side to side or top to bottom.

Thumbnails: Small, quick exploratory sketches created by designers in order to rapidly generate and capture ideas.

Trademark (a.k.a. mark): A designed name or symbol used by a business or a corporation to identify a brand or product.

Typeface: A set of letterforms, numbers, and symbols unified by a common visual design.

Type family: A whole related group of type styles (such as italic, bold, condensed, expanded and so on) based on a single typeface.

Type style: Modified versions of a typeface such as italic, bold, condensed, or extended.

Typography: The art and process of skillfully arranging type in a layout.

Unity: Unity is achieved when all of the lines, shapes, images, headlines, body copy, and objects on the page look like they belong together.

Visual elements: The individual objects on the page. Lines, shapes, images, headlines, body copy, and anything else on the page are visual elements that help you build your design. Elements can be individual objects, such as an image, or a group of objects that are close enough together that they are perceived as a single element (such as a grouping of body copy).

Visual hierarchy: The arrangement of visual elements such as type, shapes, graphics, lines, and objects on the page according to their order of emphasis.

Visual weight: The illusion of physical weight of an element on the page. A bold headline, for example, will have more visual weight than the author's byline.

White space: The space in the page that does not contain visual elements such as text, images, shapes, or lines.

Word spacing: The space between words.

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A Final Thought.

yesterday is **history**
tomorrow is a **mystery**
today is a **gift**
the Present that is why it is called 