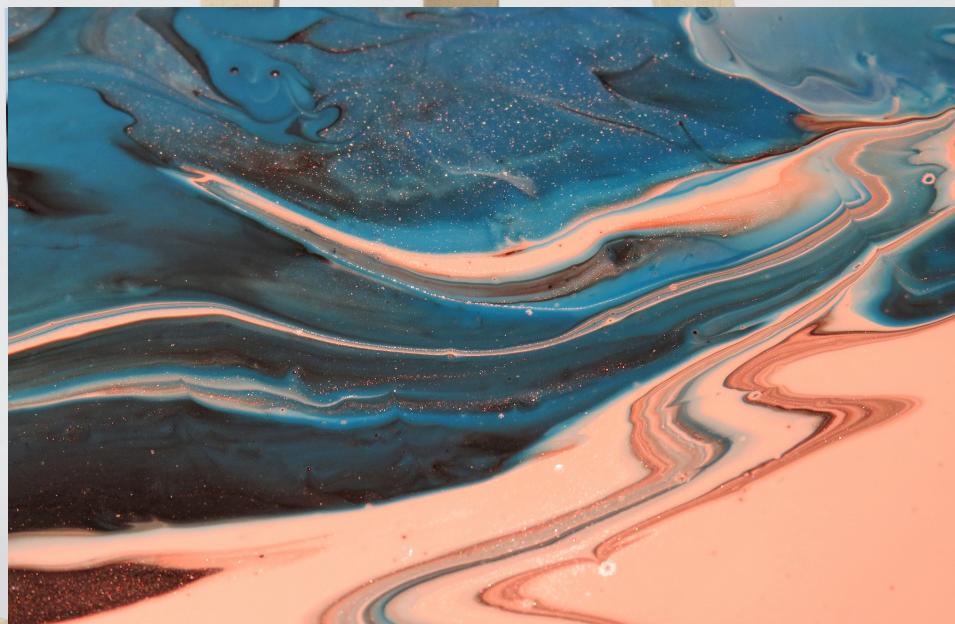


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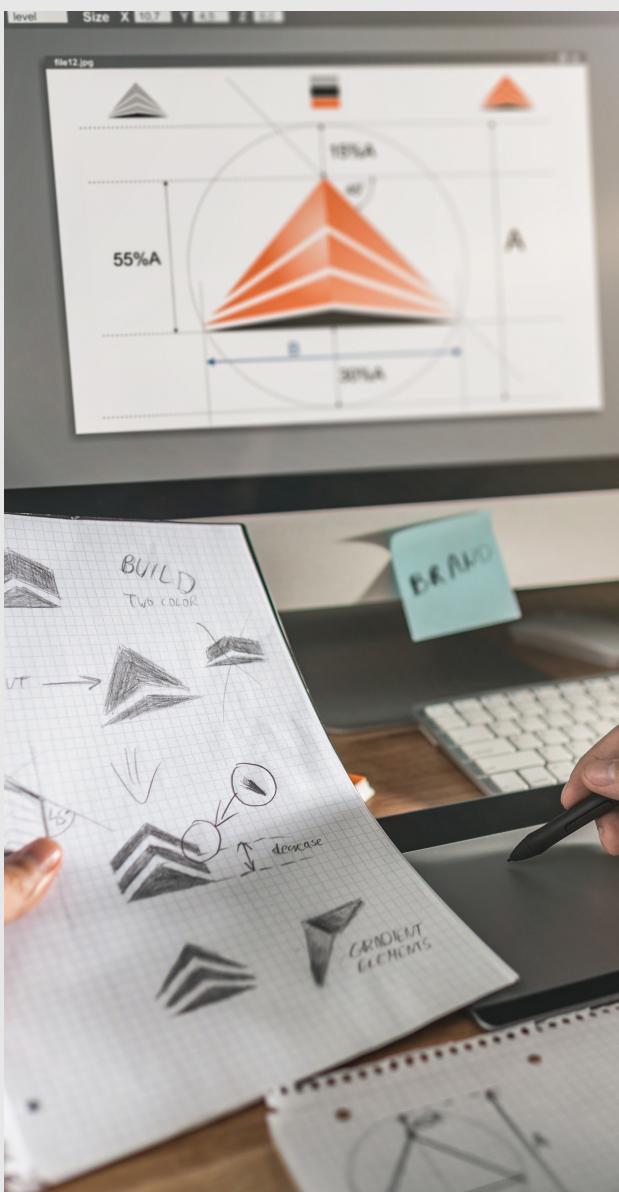
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A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THIS CREATIVE CAREER



When you think of graphic design, do you think of artistic advertisements? Eye-grabbing graphics on websites? Stunningly arranged spreads in magazines? While these examples certainly fit under the graphic design definition, the term encompasses a lot: posters, infographics, book covers, product labels, logos, business cards, signs, website layouts, mobile apps, software interfaces—the list goes on.

So what is graphic design, exactly? Listing these graphic design examples is a good start, but it doesn't paint the full picture. While covering the details and intricacies of the entire graphic design field might not be possible in one article, this high-level overview will help you better understand this creative career field.

If you're at all interested in becoming a professional graphic designer, keep reading to learn the basics of the field.



WHAT IS GRAPHIC DESIGN?

Simply put, graphic designing is planning and projecting ideas using text and visual elements. Graphic designs are used to communicate a message that is visually appealing to the audience.

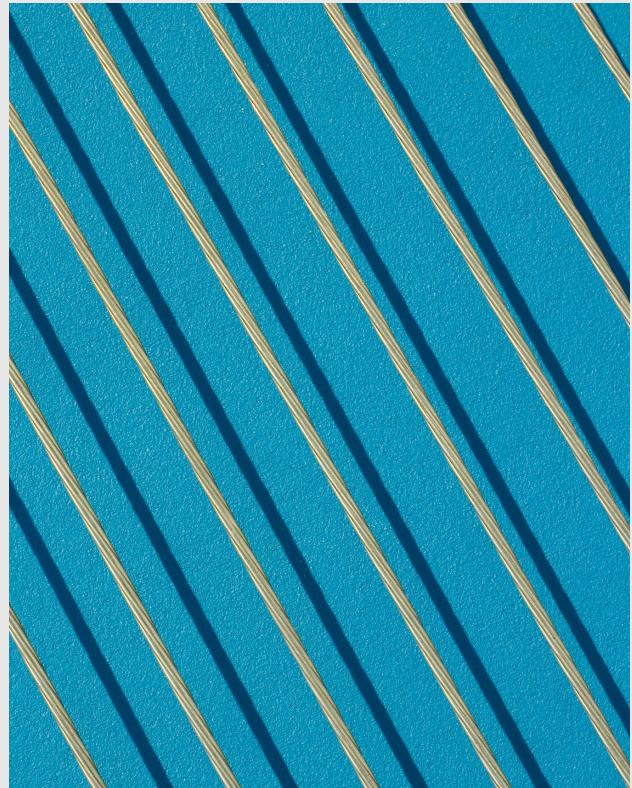
These designs are mainly used to advertise and for marketing purposes but some artists also use it to show their artistic skills. Graphic design also helps with building a brand in an enormous way. Just think about the impact that Nike, Apple, Starbucks, or any other major company's logo has.



ELEMENTS OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

• Line

These are primarily used for separating different elements or sections of a design. It can be short, long, red, black, dotted, or any other kind. Some minimalistic designs have started to use them less and in certain cases not include them at all. The line is usually present in every design, even if it is a solid border of 1px or a dotted one of 5px. Every website has lines, but the minimalist style which became more popular in the past couple of years tries to erase the lines from the layouts, or at least to decrease the use of them. The lines can be long, red, straight, thin, blue, dashed, short, black or curved, they are all into the same category. They are most of the time used for delimitation between different sections of a design, or are used to direct a viewer's vision in a specific direction. The lines can create different effects and visual impact. While a thick, bold line draws attention because of its visual power, the thin lines tend to go the other way.



The color has an impact too, dark colors are easier to see and draw more attention than light or pale colors. And this is not all. The style of a line can also influence the way the user sees it. This style can easily be defined through CSS and can be solid, dotted and dashed among others. The solid lines have a different impact than the dotted ones, because they are more imposing. The minimalist style which I've talked about earlier uses either less solid lines or more curved lines, because they give a dynamic and fluid look to a design, which is also the purpose of the style. They indicate energy, keep the user interested and, if combined with illustration, are very powerful to the human eye. Many years ago solid lines were very popular because they determined the style of the design: rigid, solid and organized. The web changed in the past years and this style is not very popular anymore, especially for designers' portfolios and other pages with a strong need of a personal touch.

• Shape

The shape, or the form, is the second most used element of a web design. They are actually lines combined in different shapes. The forms are still popular and this is because if there is something that needs to stand out, forms are one of the ways to do it. There can be circles, squares, rectangles, triangles or any other abstract shape; most of the designs include at least one of these. Minimalistic designs use it a lot, because they are often based on illustrations and drawings. The old style of designing websites included shapes too, so they remained popular throughout the time and will probably continue being like that. Like lines, shapes are also associated by the human mind with different movements. For example, circles are associated with movement and nature, while squares are often seen as structured, basic designs. Just like with the lines, the color, style, background or texture of a shape can totally change the viewer's perception.



• Texture

The textures were not very popular a couple of years ago, but they tend to become more and more used. They replaced (or compete with, if we can call it a competition) the single-colored backgrounds. Textures can look similar to solid background colors, but if they are analyzed closer, small but effective differences can be noticed. Texture styles include paper, stone, concrete, brick, fabric and natural elements, among flat or smooth colors. Textures can also be subtle or pronounced and can be used sparingly or liberally. They work with pretty much everything. Even if they do not seem important, the textures can totally change a website and offer a totally different visual impact.



• Color

The color may even be the most important element of a design, because it offers the most powerful visual impact at a single glance. Color is obvious and does not need basic graphic skills to be noticed. While lines and shapes mean the same thing as in the reality, only at a little more profound level, the color means exactly the same thing as in the nature. Color creates emotions – red is passionate, blue is calm, green is natural. Even if you don't realize this, colors have a clear effect on your mind. Studies have been done and a person who lives in a red environment has a higher heartbeat and pulse than a person living in a blue environment. The human brain sees this and influences the rest of the body. Therefore color theory is very important to know, because not many designers can call themselves experts in this field. Being a master of colors might make the difference between a good design and a stunning one. I am not saying you have to know all of them, but knowing how hue, saturation, shade, tint, tone or chroma work together is crucial for a graphic designer.

• Value

I did not specify value above, even if it is closely related to color, because value is more general and represents how dark or light a design is. Value has a lot to do with mood too, only at a more profound level. Understanding colors will take you close to perfection, but knowing how value works will take you beyond this. Lighter designs offer a different impact and feeling than the dark ones and you need an expert eye to notice differences and decide which one is the best.





• Space

The space and how it is used is crucially important in design. Lately the “white space” (also called negative space) became used widely because it allows the human eye to read easier. For whoever is not familiar with the term “white space”, it does not mean precisely space filled with white, but every area of the design which is only filled with the background color. You can see several examples below to better understand the concept. If there is a lot of negative space in your web design, it offers light and an open feeling. The lack of white space will turn your design into an old-fashioned, cluttered one. The space has also a lot to do with how the design is perceived by the human eye. Even if I said the color is maybe the most important element of a design, the space is definitely present in the top, because it is also very easy to notice by the untrained eye. It can turn a design to your advantage and get the best out of your layout.



Google is the best example on how the negative space can be maximized.

These are the basic elements a beginner graphic designer should know about. Having this knowledge will allow you to think more user-focused and design with a better style. However, this is not everything. Let's talk about design principles.



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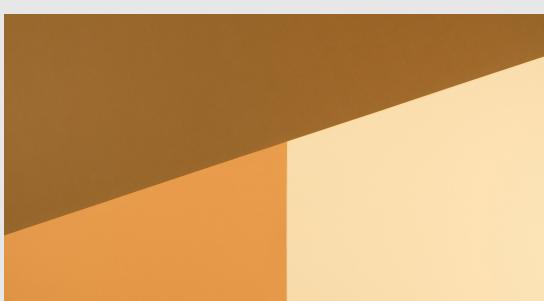
THE PRINCIPLES OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

In the first part we covered the basic elements of graphic design with shapes, lines, textures and color among others. In this section we will go a bit more in-depth and will take a look at the principles of design, which are very important to know because they're what separate the good designers from the amazing designers. Some of the principles we'll cover today are applied unconsciously, but they definitely exist and we will show you examples from the web to illustrate the concepts.

Balance

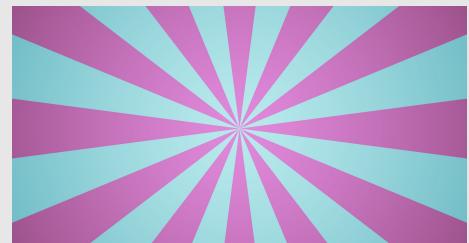
Balance is how the elements of a design are distributed throughout a layout. If the balance is good, then stability is assured, although lately many designers go for unbalanced designs because they are dynamic and offer a totally different perspective. The personal pages are the most suitable for slightly off-balanced layouts, and you will see some examples soon. To be able to notice what kind of balance a website has, you need to know the three types of balance: symmetrical, asymmetrical and radial.

The symmetrical balance takes place when both sides of a design are the same in shape, lines, texture and so on. Because this is the way we design today, this happens most of the time along a vertical axis, so when we talk about the two sides of a design, we talk about left and right. There are also examples along the horizontal axis and sometimes even along both of them, but these are rare. The symmetrical designs are pretty much most of the websites on the internet until 5 years ago.



The asymmetrical balance occurs when the two sides of a website do not look like each other, but still have elements that are similar. Although it is called asymmetrical, they still provide some symmetry, like the first type of balance, only at a lower level. Asymmetrical websites are becoming more and more popular nowadays (see WordPress layouts with content on one side and sidebar on the other).

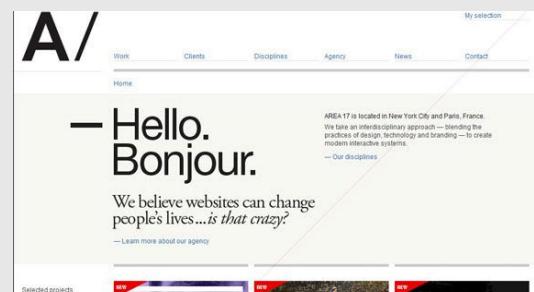
The radial balance takes place when design elements are placed in a circular pattern. They give a sense of movement, dynamism, but it is not seen very often on the internet, because even the most experienced designers have problems laying out such a design. As said earlier, balance is achieved through shapes, colors, textures, lines and the other elements we've talked about



Dominance and Priority

These two principles are together because they are strongly linked. They both have a lot to do with the user experience because a lack of priority and element dominance can be confusing. The dominance level is the one which prioritizes the importance of different elements, such as menu, logo, content or footer. Sure, this is also done by playing with the font and size, but let's go a bit deeper and see what dominance and priority mean. There are three main levels of priority. We have the headline or call to action, which comes as a primary element; then we have the secondary elements like images needed to make a point or, most of the time, the navigation. They are obviously not the most important element of a website, but you can't do it without them either. The tertiary elements are information like footer links, meta information on blogs or different elements, and a website can most of the time exist without them. However, they are used frequently because they complete the design in different ways, either by offering more information, or by completing the layout with some elements.

Area17 emphasizes the dominant element in the top left corner and the welcome message pulls you in as well because of the color.



Proportion

Proportion is important and represents the scale of elements compared to each other. They have a strong effect on the user and are also linked with the previous principle. It is no surprise that larger elements have a stronger impact on the user than the small ones. Dominance, priority and proportion work together to assure the user sees the information properly on a website. Having a larger font in the footer than in the content is a mistake because it does not respect these three principles.



Bluecadet Interactive uses proportion to draw the attention on the image.

Contrast

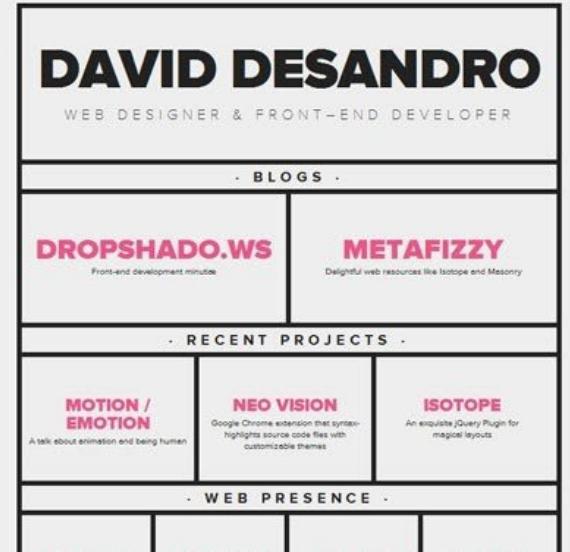
This is another important principle not only of design, but also of photography and any other visual art. I don't think we need to go too deep into this, because everybody knows what contrast means. Having enough contrast between elements makes sure that some of them stand out more than others. If designers wish to blend elements together, they do it by having minimal contrast between them. If the contrast is high, the elements are distinct from each other. If balance is created through shapes and lines, the contrast can be created through color. However, lately the contrast has also been changed through typography and texture, so this becomes more and more popular. Having perfect typography can help you achieve not only the perfect contrast, but also proportion, dominance and priority. It is easy to see that the last three concepts we've talked about are slightly linked to each other in some ways. If we would talk a bit more general about this whole topic, we would be able to put all of them into the same paragraph.



eHarmony's "Find My Matches" button stands out because of a good use of contrast.

Rhythm

This might be a new one for you. The rhythm of the page is the principle that makes the human eye move from one element to another. It ensures the flow of the eye and in which order users should see the elements. Now this is a difficult one to make, because everybody has their own way of looking at a website and making all of them do it the same way might be too overwhelming. There are two types of rhythms: the fluid and the progressive. The first one is a variation and the best example is the movement of water, which flows in the same direction basically, but has a lot of variation in how it moves. The progressive rhythm occurs when there is a clear sequence on how the eye should move between elements.



David Desandro's portfolio follows a very regular, progressive rhythm

Harmony and Unity

The last principle of design wants to ensure that even if all the principles above are used properly, it is still impossible to create a stunning design without harmony and unity, and this is quite often seen in real life. We often hear of rich people who have everything they want, but lack harmony and unity in their lives. It is the same rule in design. If all these elements work together properly, then you've achieved what we call unity. Only placing all these elements on a page without linking them to each other does not create a design, but a page with a bunch of elements. If the elements complement each other and the website is easy to the eye and offers a good user experience, then the work you've done is more or less finished. There is no really need for an example here, we all know that websites with harmony and unity can be spotted all over the place; think of a website that you like a lot and that you always remember. That's probably a website that has harmony and unity.



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BASIC COMPOSITIONS OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

The second was about the Principles of Graphic Design and we took a look at concepts such as Balance, Dominance, Contrast and Harmony. Today we go a bit more in-depth with the last article and talk about the composition and its basic elements.

Single Visual

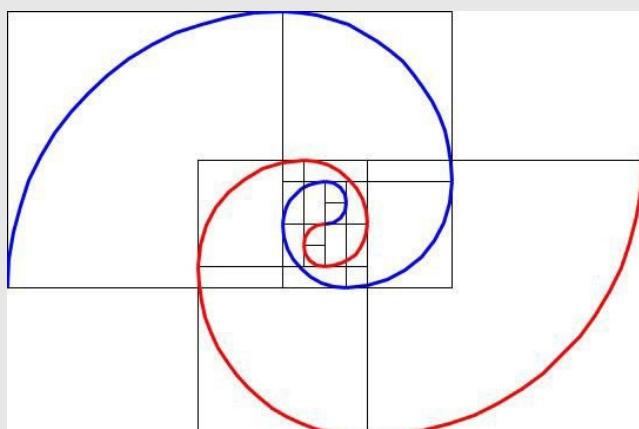
This composition is where a single image is used for the design. This means the image is usually powerful, creates an impact and the whole design is built on it. Examples of single visual pages include landing pages, but this is more popular in print than in web. The single visual composition is one of the easiest to achieve, although you need to carefully select the image, otherwise it won't have the desired effect. The main principle behind this pattern is to make sure the typography and the other design elements reinforce the visual element and do not compete with it. There has to be a clear definition over which one is more important and in this case the image, illustration or graphic element used have to be the most powerful.



Glitter Denmark is a very good example of a single visual pattern design.

The Golden Ratio

The Golden Ratio, which is also known as the Fibonacci Spiral or Phi, is around 1:1.618. The Fibonacci Spiral is found all over the world in different things and the web is no exception. It is a good idea to place the elements into a website along the lines of the Spiral, because this is the way the human eye works. Managing to use the Golden Ratio properly will bring the focus of the visitors onto specific things you wish to emphasize.



Focal Point

This is another important one because the focal point is the one who gives the viewers something to look at. The focal point adds a more specific idea to the design and acts as a starting point for most of the visitors. The focal point can be represented through simple typography, a button, illustration, a picture or any other element. It is totally up to the designers which is the way he wants to create a focal point through.



The focal point has to be in focus and has to be the first element a viewer sees when he enters the page (especially for the first time).

However, making it too important and visible will break the balance of the layout. Keep the focal point within your site's goal and make the purpose of the page be shown through it. For example, having a call to action button is a focal point, because that is the final action you want the user to take on your page.

Grid Design

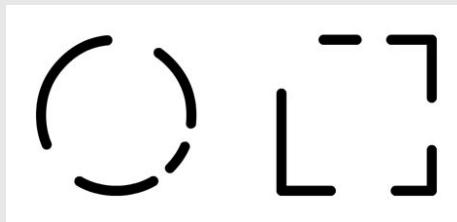
This should not be a new one for you. Grid theory is maybe the most popular element of a composition, because we do it all the time even without realizing. Grids add structure to a design and are used to hold a good proportion among the elements on the page. You can find lots of grid frameworks on the internet, which are free to download and build on, and I actually recommend you to use them if you are a beginner in this domain. Working from the beginning with grids will make you feel comfortable with this approach and this is good for your layouts.

A screenshot of a website titled 'The Grid System'. The page features a grid layout with various columns and rows. The main title 'The Grid System' is centered in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below the title, there's a quote from Josef Müller-Brockmann. The page is organized into several sections: 'Articles', 'Tools', 'Books', 'Templates', 'Blog', and 'Inspiration'. Each section contains a list of items, such as 'Musings on the Relationship Between Grids and Grids' under 'Articles' and '960px Grid Templates' under 'Templates'. The background of the page is a light pink color, and the overall design is clean and modern.

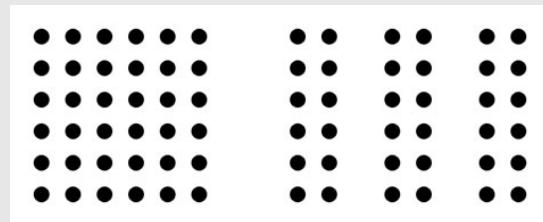
Grids do not have to be rigid all the time, they can also be subtle, but if you go for this option, then make sure the design will still be clean and refined before the delivery. When working with grids it is always a good idea to ask feedback from the ones around you, because working for hours long with a grid framework in front of you will probably make your eyes not see small mistakes that need adjustments.

Gestalt Law

The laws are the result of the human visual perception of things, including websites and elements. The laws are created by the way different elements impact the viewer. There are five principles Gestalt Laws: closure, similarity, continuation, alignment and proximity. Shortly explained, the law of closure says we are accustomed to close things in our imagination that are not really closed. A good example is a near circle which you draw only on 330°. The human brain will perceive it as a whole, completed circle. The law of proximity shows we tend to group objects that are closer to each other, while the law of similarity emphasizes the same thing, only that we group things that have the same color, shape or texture. The law of continuation emphasizes that objects will be grouped as a whole if they are co-linear or follow a specific direction, while the last rule, the one of alignment, shows that objects are aligned based on their edges (very popular pattern), or based on their centerlines. The objects can also overlap each other.



The Gestalt Law of Closure



The Gestalt Law of Proximity

There are actually more Gestalt Laws, but not all of them are important for designers. At the end of the article you can find a link with all the laws and you can learn more about each one of them.

The Z and F layout

The so-called “Z” layout is based on the normal movement of the human eye. As the name says, most of the people who’ve been eye-tracked look at a webpage in a Z shape, meaning they start in the upper left corner and finish in the bottom right one. Managing to align all the objects on a home page along this shape will definitely provide better results and will make your design more efficient.

There is another type of layout as well, shaped as an F. This means users read the first line and then continue to read the second, continuing like that in a specific order.



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GRAPHIC DESIGN TOOLS

The graphics play a major role in creating the outlook of your website. As a graphic designer, this is your territory. In order to create a website with such intriguing visuals, you will require a graphic design software tools that will help you improvise the images, models, and text.

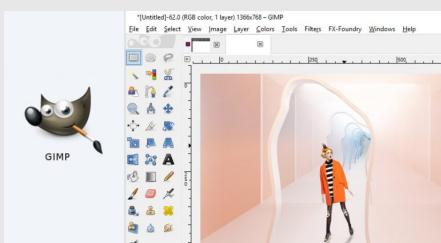
Photoshop



The road which led to photo editing was never so interesting. The automatic options infuse life to your images making your work ‘the talk of the town’ even if you are a newbie. With Photoshop you can easily combine multiple images and even remove unwanted objects from the image. It offers basic features like perspective correction, channel mixing, and clone stamp tool. Photoshop runs on both Windows and Mac. Photoshop is also considered as one of the best graphic design software for beginners as it comes with simplified options like:

- Basic: Cropping, straightening, rotating and flipping.
- Auto-Fix: One touch adjustment.
- Blemish Removal: Ability to remove any spot or dirt from the image.
- Colour: Slide controls to enhance the colors of the image.
- One-Touch filter: 20 eye-catching effects to choose from.
- Image Rendering: Panoramic image option.
- Borders: Add your personal touch.
- RAW photo support: RAW format support.
- Sharing: via sites like Facebook, Revel, Twitter, Tumblr, and more.

GIMP



GIMP or GNU Image Manipulation Program is the perfect alternative to Adobe Photoshop. The professional graphic design tools make it ideal for not just graphic designers but photographers as well. The photo manipulation feature is highly enhanced. The flexibility of the tool allows you to create crystal-clear graphics. Once you begin using GIMP, it will definitely achieve the pedestal of being your main desktop publishing tool. The interface is totally customizable and the full-screen mode allows you to view and edit at the same time. Yes, not all the extensive features are available. Still, there are many features that will provide you a great experience. GIMP runs on GNU/Linux, OS X, Windows and other .OS. Being a cross-compatible graphic design software program, it has a strong support community. This is, hands down, one of the prime choices when selecting best graphic design software for beginners. You can check difference GIMP vs Photoshop.

Adobe Illustrator



If you want to use vector art to create logos, sketches, typography, icons or even complex illustrations for videos or mobile then Illustrator is the tool for you. You can create artwork with seamless alignment by drawing pixel-perfect shapes. With Illustrator designing could never be faster. Illustrator comes with its own plugins that help in making a blank web page into a brilliant looking web page. Some plugins are made for older versions of Ai and have a zest of new features for new versions like Creative Cloud, making it an ideal and best graphic design software.

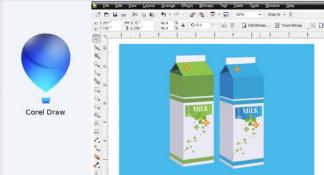
Inkscape



Inkscape is a professional tool ideal for vector art lovers and graphic designers who use SVG file format. The tool is perfect for Windows, Linux, OS, and Mac as well. It doesn't matter whether you are a professional or just a person who wants to create vector images for a personal blog. In terms of sketching, coloring or making illustrations Inkscape is very easy to use. With the Ghostscript extension .eps files are easily readable. You can check difference between Inkscape vs Illustrator. Inkscape also comes with awesome features like:

- Ability to directly edit the source code.
- Keys to move screen pixels.
- Edit clones on the canvas.
- Edit gradients.
- Fill paint-bucket with one click.

Coreldraw



CorelDraw has some cool productive functions and such an ease of use that no other vector editor can match up to. The tools give you full control so you can get fast and dynamic results. With CorelDraw version X5 and above, you get an inbuilt organizer (Corel CONNECT) also. With tools like Twirl, Smear, Repel and Attract – vector object editing was never so easy. The Alignment guide enables you to position objects as per your requirement. CorelDraw works smoothly with large files in Corel Photo-Paint, making it a must-have in the graphic design software list. It also supports apps like Barcode wizard, Duplexing wizard, Bitstream Font Navigator, etc.

Adobe Indesign



InDesign is the business leader for creating clean layouts for desktop and mobile devices alike. Adobe InDesign is ideal for layout design usage like online magazines. Whether you want to create layouts for printed books, brochures or digital magazines Adobe InDesign is the tool you need. The flexibility is great as it allows you to easily drag-drop isolated layers and you can resize images with ease. Being part of Creative Cloud you get easy access to the desktop app for PC and Mac. You also get the comparison app Comp CC available for tablets and Smartphone devices including 29 desktop apps and 10 mobile apps.

10 TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

Select the Right Fonts:

Clarity in design and readability is highly important. Make sure not to restrict your designs to one font only. Try to experiment with different styles of fonts and stick to a unique font style for your current project you're focusing. Explore different opportunities, instead of picking those dull default fonts.

Make your Colors pop-up bright:

In order to capture your viewer's notice at one look, you can use a color pop technique, especially when your text amount is short and you want to make an utmost impact. High contrasting palettes like yellow and white or black, red and black along with lively background colors work fine. Also, check the cohesiveness of your design and attempt to put an ideal impression. You can take the help of Adobe Color CC online tool to pick a pleasant palette for your design.

White Space is Strong and Worthy:

White space is valuable in the trendy graphic designs where they showcase simplicity, and the best example is of Apple. While executing text on a big canvas, select a high-quality typeface and then centralize your type and rest of the canvas left white. Overall, the canvas would really look good.

Select Consistent Images:

Ensure that the quality of images remains absolutely consistent throughout your design. The quality, framing, style, proportions, and lighting of those elements should stay constant all through your design. The graphics, diagrams, images, and illustrations that you use should add a perfect meaning to your project. Try to consider Couponobox.com to save money on premium graphic design tools & applications.

Scanning your Sketch:

If you are sketching your design, make sure to scan it on your PC; make use of a smartphone camera to do so and import the scanned sketch into the Illustrator or Photoshop directly. You can develop your design as normal now, but make sure to use the scan as a background guide.

Flat Design goes a Long Way:

Flat design has been very popular over the years as its design has moved from slightly bright to more classiness. You should also have a good sense of alignment and spacing while using flat design techniques where the look will come out outstanding.

Use Character and Paragraph styles:

Select your header carefully and apply its style. Headers are somewhat in separate positions along with different font sizes or line heights. Tools like InDesign and Photoshop hold fixed tools to make sure that your characters and paragraphs have an ideal steadiness among them. Such tools can surely save your time from constant scrolling between pages, thus emphasizing and checking to make sure that your styles are placed well.

Utilize Italics carefully:

You should also make use of italics in some of your projects to get a superb effect. They should be applied with big respect as they can pretty well balance your headers and sub-headers. Italics should be used in small sentences only. Avoid them for long sentences as they will be a disaster for your project.

Respect Page Balance:

If you want to become an excellent graphic designer, you need to learn about symmetry and balance all through the process. Ensure that the balance should be stable as it puts an impact on your design greatly. The document you're working on should be evenly loaded on the left and right, or upwards and downwards in specific situations.

Separation Lines for Style and Impact:

Making use of line separation for an exact piece can fetch you a modest piece up to scratch if you are trying hard to make it seem complete. In place of a solid line, try using half lines on either side of a small text filament. Using a 3-pixel line below the header and above the sub-header, or between the image and the title, will make your work appreciable and will go a long way.



WHO IS A GRAPHIC DESIGNER?

Graphic designers create visual representations either by hand or by using computer software. They are masters of communicating by combining technology and art. A major objective of a graphic designer is to captivate viewers by communicating ideas that inspire and inform. Graphic designers are responsible for structuring the layout of an advertisement, t-shirt designs, websites, magazines, etc. and use visual elements with design principles and their expertise on the subject to do so.

A graphic designer has to do a lot more than just designing something. Some of the typical tasks include:

- Determine the scope of a project by meeting with clients or the art director
- Advise clients on various strategies to reach their goal
- Define the message the design should portray
- Design graphics that help identify a product or convey a message
- Generate graphics for product illustrations, logos, and websites
- Select colors, images, text style, and layout
- Change and modify the final design to meet the client's requirements.



TYPES OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

From the logo of a company to the icons on a website, from the illustration on a billboard to the designs on your t-shirt, we can see examples of graphic design all around us. Here are the different types of graphic designs:

Visual Identity : This refers to the branding aspect of a company. It creates a relationship between a business or organisation and its audience. It includes logo designing, style guides, typography, colour palette, etc.

Marketing and Advertising : Companies depend heavily upon their marketing campaigns to promote their products/services to the correct audience. All these marketing campaigns have multiple visual elements which attract the user to interact with a specific brand. The different marketing collaterals can be:

- Signage and trade show displays
- Email marketing templates
- PowerPoint presentations
- Menus
- Social media ads, banners, and graphics
- Banner and retargeting ads
- Images for websites and blogs
- Postcards and flyers
- Magazine and newspaper ads
- Posters, banners, and billboards
- Infographics
- Brochures (print and digital)
- Vehicle wraps

User Interface : This defines how a user gets to interact with a website, mobile application, or any other product. Examples of designing UI includes:

- Web page design
- Theme design
- Game interfaces
- App design

Publication : Designers are needed to curate designs for publications like the newspaper, books, magazines etc. They work on curating the cover images, page layouts, custom illustrations and any other element that might be needed in a publication.

Packaging : Most products come in professional packaging, which means they would require designs for the same. This can include designing boxes and bags in which a particular product is delivered to the customer.

Motion Graphics : These are graphics that are moving or are in motion. These can include typography, audio, animation, imagery, video, and other effects that can be used in television, films, or various online media.

Environmental : These designs aim to improve the overall experience of people going through places. Examples include:

- Signage
- Wall murals
- Museum exhibitions
- Office branding
- Public transportation navigation
- Retail store interiors
- Stadium branding
- Event and conference spaces

Art and Illustrations : Graphic art and illustrations involve creating detailed, visually appealing, and original pieces of artwork.

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*"It's through mistakes that you actually can grow.
You have to get bad in order to get good."*

-- Paula Scher



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