50 THINGS I LEARNED AS A DESIGNER WITHOUT GOING TO DESIGN SCHOOL

TARA MCCARTY

GENERAL

COLOR

LAYOUT

PHOTOGRAPHY

TYPOGRAPHY

GRAPHICS

TOOLS

DEDICATION

A designer is inspired by everything. I am inspired by the people around me who push me to do better, answer random questions at all hours of the day, sit with me for brainstorming sessions and agree to be on thesis committees. These people are recognized by all the illustrated animals in this project, labeled with the Spanish form of their names.

INTRODUCTION

This book is for college students like me, high school students, practicing professionals, professors and random people who find it online or in a library.

Welcome to my designerd brain. Here you will discover 50 things I learned as a designer without going to design school.

I have a passion for creating things. I piece layout puzzles together and browse fonts for fun. So naturally, I chose to make my thesis about it.

By the time you read this I will be a graduate of University of South Florida St. Petersburg where I was a mass communications major concentrating in journalism and media studies.

I really got into design in high school, even though I was bent on

being a reporter. Somehow I got roped into being yearbook editor my senior year instead of being on the newspaper. Then fate stepped in and InDesign changed my plans.

Now I have every intention of using it for the rest of my career. Something about how it constantly relieves the stress it causes makes me feel productive and satiated.

This project is my chance to spark the design flame in you, whoever you are. Perhaps you are a

college student like me, already an aspiring designer looking for ideas. Maybe you're that random person who picked up this book or clicked the link because it was colorful and interesting. You could be one of my teachers coming to see if your wisdom is featured. Maybe you're a professional designer looking for a refreshing read.

You are why I made this book. You are why I designed, illustrated and wrote every page.

Originally, there were three parts to this book: things I learned, things I like and things I don't like. The last two were cut in order to make my deadline. One day I'd like to finish them.

I remember my professor (his name's Dr. Wang—I reference him a lot) asked me if it was important to include the stuff I didn't like in the project. Of course it's important, I told him. A designer should have opinions on everything, good or bad, because the field is so subjective. If you don't know what you don't like, how are you ever going to be successful?

The project forced me reflect on my design education, recommit techniques to memory and ultimately reinforce my education.

Turns out, finding the words to explain to others what I've learned taught me even more. I was very conscious of putting my tips to use so I don't get called out for not following my own advice. I also discovered the design section of my school's library —very useful. But I forgot to return my books on time, so I got a $33 fine. Ah, the price of being a designerd.

You may have noticed the vertical, colored stripes a few pages into this book. They are coordinated with broad topics and incorporated throughout the project.

If you want to see what I have to say about photography, find all the blue stripes at the edges of the pages. It's pretty self-explanatory, as are the purple, red, green and orange stripes.

Yellow represents all the tips related to tools used in Adobe Creative Suite. General information and tips that could not fit in any of the other categories are located on pages with pink stripes.

Or, you can browse the index in the back for more specific terms.

1

LET VISUALS LEAD

On a spread, the reader's eyes should focus directly on an attention-grabber. This can be a photo, a graphic or a form of typography. If a viewer doesn't find a foot holder on the page, he or she is less likely to read the content. Even something as simple as a large drop cap can sometimes do the trick. Colorful objects also draw the eye. One of a designer's duties is to use visuals to make a page or product more appealing. I've learned to use visuals, particularly photos, to my advantage. I use layouts to complement and enhance images. Since photos and large text are what draw a reader's eye, it's smart for pages to be designed around them.

2

DON’T CLEAN HOUSE

Keep everything you create. You never know when you’re going to rework a layout or need a generic body shape for a project. I have a design folder on my computer with subfolders for illustrations, videos, photography, cover design, etc. Logos and random shapes I’ve created out of boredom or in a moment of designer’s block have come in handy later on, and I’m always glad I didn’t trash the files. On the same note, it’s important to keep your folders and files organized so you know where to look at crunch time. For example, this monkey will go into my “Animal” folder, in my “Illustrations” folder, within my “Design” folder.

3

MANUAL IS WORTH KNOWING

Cropping a photo or image can be serious business, and in many cases, necessary to get the right effect. Learning how to crop in Photoshop or a similar program is crucial for any media job, but when I joined my high school yearbook staff in 2005 we cropped photos with manual tools. The squared-off gray rulers were resized by adjusting the long metal poles on opposite ends. Once the rulers were in place, we marked all four corners of the photo and sent it in to the publisher. Compared to current software, the manual cropper seems very time consuming, but if the power ever goes out on deadline and a photo needs to be cropped, knowing how to use the manual cropper will come in handy. It also gives you an appreciation for the magic of Photoshop.

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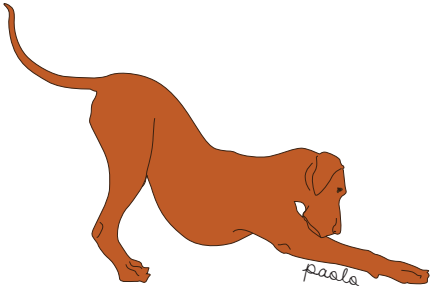
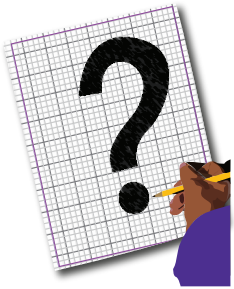


YOU LOOKIN' AT ME?

Display type is used to catch a reader's eye and should be distinguishable from the rest of the page. The font must be at least 14 points to be used for display purposes. This goes for headlines, taglines, decks, subheads and anything else a reader might glance at before deciding to read more. Headlines should be in downstyle, which means only the first word, plus any proper nouns, should be capitalized. Some news publications do choose to capitalize all words in headlines, however, using the downstyle technique enhances readability and saves space.



5

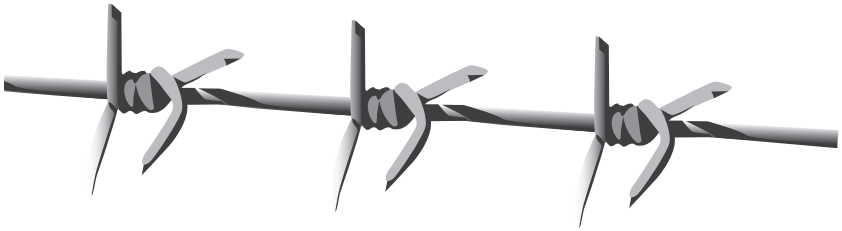
TELL ME WHY

Design with a purpose. Depending on your form of media, the page itself might be set up differently. Are you making a tri-fold brochure? A 20-inch, 12-page newspaper or a horizontal, 48-page magazine? Or are you merely using the document to experiment with logo design? All of these print media jobs involve different layouts and elements. Before setting your cursor to the page, determine the function of your project.

6

GO LONG

It's been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Cliché, I know, but I think the saying has a point. Most photos need accompanying captions of more than one sentence. If an image has a five-word sentence, it's not good enough. Ever. Make the captions at least as long as the photograph and include the five W's: who, what, where, when and why. Not only will it give the viewer more detailed information, it will also give the design a cleaner look.



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FINE LINE

The great thing about being a designer is that you get a little taste of everything during pre-production. You work with the photos, the copy, headlines, graphics and a lot of other elements. It can be hard sticking to your territory, not because you're controlling, but because as designers we have our own likes, dislikes and ideas about how things should look on a page. Designers have to have a legitimate reason for changing something. For example, on the school paper, I tended to butt heads with the photo editor. It was tough to know when the decision at hand should be made by me or him because we were both such visual people. Keep this in mind as you work on a team. Don't dominate the space and disregard others' ideas.

8

SURROUNDING COLOR

To break up the monotony of a plain layout, group similar objects together with a color box. This works well for sidebars with photos, quotes, news briefs, and extra information like contact numbers and graphs. There are a few important things to remember when using this technique. First, the box can be in any color you choose (as long as it keeps the tone of the layout) but the opacity should be increased. Second, the information or elements roped off by this color block should all be related. And third, the use of the color box should not be overdone. When I started using boxes in the school paper, people loved them. I probably use four or five each issue, but sometimes I catch myself using more than one on a page and have to question if it's necessary. So watch out.

9

NO TABBING

Remember when you were younger and you learned the basic formatting for school essays? Every new paragraph started with a quick push of the Tab key. Tabbing allows a reader to know when a new paragraph has begun and is useful for readability. But now that you're working with design software, unless the look you're going for is dramatic, tabbing should be done with an indent tool. Employing the Space bar or the Tab button is off limits. The correct way to start a paragraph is to set indentations by picas or parts of an inch. Once the measure is set for a text box, all paragraphs starting in that box will be properly indented. This tool saves time and looks great. Side note: indentations should never be used in a paragraph that uses a drop cap.

elisa

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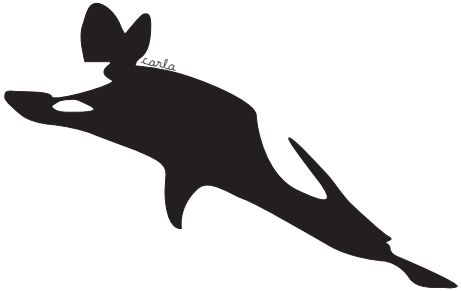
MUSIC MAGIC

There's one thing I constantly use while designing: music. Music is inspiration. Music also drowns out talkers and other distractions buzzing around the work environment. I have invested in a variety of headphones that save my life when working in a newsroom situation. When I just want to zone out and get into my designerd mode, I put on my headphones and it's magic. My favorite thing to listen to while working is old school rap. I have heard the use of headphones is not allowed in some newsrooms because people aren't listening and miss important cues; but having that one earbud in can be a compromise. Although it's not the same, you've got to pick your battles.



11

FLIPPING PAGES

When you think you're done with designing a page, turn it upside down. Look at the design abstractly. See if it feels balanced throughout. I've heard this told time and time again at journalism workshops and seminars. Through this exercise, I often find the pages I've designed are too top-heavy with photos and type. Then I go back and try to level things out. It's one of those things readers and viewers notice subconsciously and the consequence might be that they skip over the page.

12

KEEP THE VISION

Staring at a blank InDesign document can be overwhelming. Before I begin laying out the school paper, I always talk to two people: the editor-in-chief, to see what the three main stories are for the week; and the photo editor, to see which stories have photos. Then, I can think about how the front page will look. Start by placing the photos on the page. Photos will always be the No. 1 eye catcher. Do them justice. Think about your options. Can you crop the photo to make an impactful layout? Would the photo be better as a cut-out? Which way are the objects in the photo facing? The answers can help you determine how a reader will see your page and help you find a good starting point. Before manipulating any photos, talk it over with the photo editor.

13

KEEP IT SIMPLE, SILLY

Think back to that math class where you learned how to draw a graph. Bar charts, line graphs, pie charts—all graphs need lines, notches, starting and ending numbers, titles, labels and whatever else. Fast forward to staring at your computer screen where you're about to make a chart for an assignment. The first time I had to do this was in my information graphics class and my professor said he didn't want all the superfluous stuff. This idea threw me off but it turns out the graph looks less cluttered and just as readable without the extra stuff. Sometimes even putting that "0" at the lower left corner is unnecessary. Most people looking closely enough at an infographic will understand that corner means zero.

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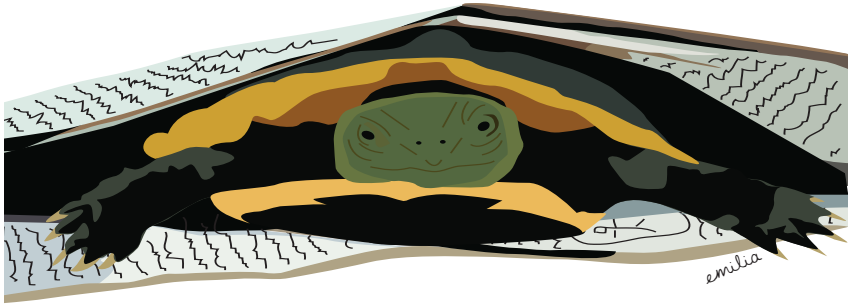

THE FORGOTTEN FOLD

Designing for a newspaper can be tough. You've got to find a way to fit all the inches and columns and ads and photos in and make it flow and on top of all of that, you've got to consider what's going to show or not show above the fold. The fold is a sneaky, often forgotten design piece. I like to keep the headline attached to its copy with any photos and captions above it. In the student paper, the front page photo isn't usually small enough to show itself and the headline before the fold, which I never considered until someone else pointed it out. I made sure to keep that in mind for the next issue and every issue after that. The headline goes above the photo. Other things to be cautious about are how a photo looks if it's cut off by the fold or if there are any phrases chopped by the fold.

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GET YOUR TYPE RIGHT

Until I got into design, I never realized that the font I chose for a project or assignment could be customized. The font pulled from the drop-down menu doesn't have to be taken "as is." This could be the most subtly powerful tool designers have at their disposal. Most people would never consciously notice the difference of a kerning or leading adjustment, though these changes make all the difference in readability, message portrayal and just plain design. Remember: **kerning** is adjusting the space between individual **characters** and **leading** is adjusting the space between **lines**. (Another way to adjust the space between characters is through tracking.) To practice your kerning skills, here's a test I found online (OK, game): http://type.method.ac/.

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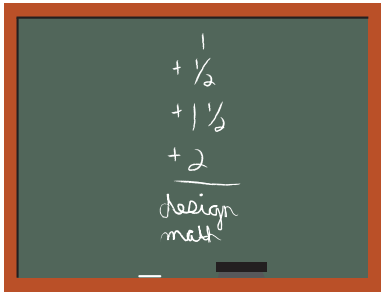

WE DO MATH

Yes, you have to determine and adhere to column inches and know or figure out pixel-to-inch-to-pica ratios, but there is another kind of math. It's a kind I hated when I learned it in class. It is the headline counting point system, used to write a headline based on the width of letters so it fits in the space allotted. I hated counting out how much each letter was worth, capitalized or lower-case, and trying to make one to fit in the space. FYI: 1 point for lowercase letters (except f, i, l, t, j, m, w), capital I, all numerals except 1, question marks and spaces between words. 1½ points for capital letters (except M, W and I), lowercase m and w, $, %, & and the dash. 2 points for capital M and W and ½ a point for commas, periods and other punctuation, the numeral 1 and lowercase letters f, i, l, t and j.

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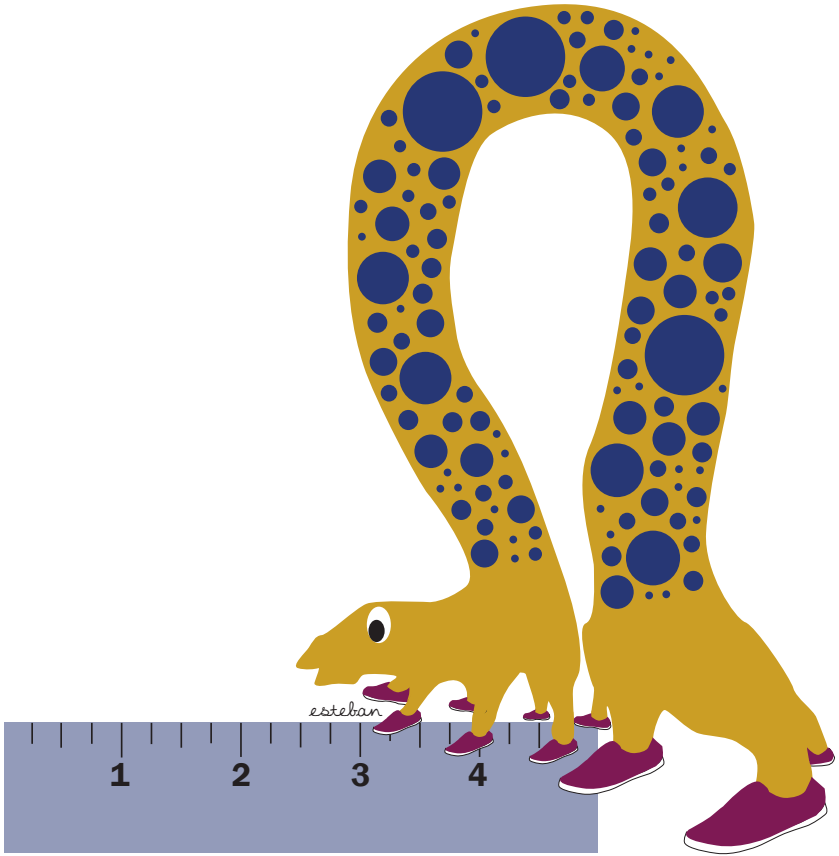
MANY EYES

Looking over your work should be second nature. By the time you finish your project, you should be so sick of looking at it that it's painful. And at that point, you should pass the torch to a fellow designerd to look it over. Once getting approval from that person, hand it over to a friend, then her parent, then your neighbor and then your mail carrier. Get feedback. The more eyes pass over your work, the more opinions you'll hear. Which feedback you choose to apply to your design is up to you.

18

DPI, CHECK.

Dots per inch, more commonly referred to as ppi (pixels per inch), is used to describe the resolution of an image. Print and online photos require different values for dpi because of their different formats. The values can be checked using photo software; in Photoshop, it is under image size. There are two main things to remember about dpi: 1) the sort-of guideline is 300 dpi for print, 72 dpi for web, and 2) never increase the value of dpi. An image can be reduced in dpi for the web, but if an image is at 136 dpi, for example, it should never be changed to 300 dpi unless you're willing to compromise the quality of the image.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MISTAKES MEAN SUCCESS

The worst thing you could do in this line of work is not ask for feedback. Haven't you ever heard the phrase, "Criticism makes the world go round"? No? That's because I just made it up. But really, the only way to improve as a designer is to hear what other people think. This helps in two ways: 1) It makes you see things from other people's perspective thus adding to your knowledge on the subject, and 2) it helps you gauge how satisfied you are with the work you're putting out. If someone critiques something about your work, you might find you feel the complete opposite (this is different from feeling offended) and that could reaffirm your choices in design. The best thing you can do is learn to appreciate constructive criticism.

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I GRID IT!

When I learned layout design, it was on grid paper. My first lesson included creating a spread with a headline, subhead, so many pictures, copy, captions and a sidebar (it was for yearbook). I was careful to leave a pica in between every element and keep each piece an equal distance from its neighbors. Not until recently did I realize that this simple, old-school lesson taught me something many designers still struggle with: the grid. It blows my mind people go through design projects without ever turning on the little blue boxes that so helpfully tell me where my boundaries are. Besides being a tool to determine the simplicity and cleanliness of a design, document grids are especially important for printing issues such as bleeding and margins.

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DEAL WITH THE SCALE

Make sure when you're resizing an image in InDesign or Illustrator that you're not squishing its content or accidentally cropping it. To avoid ruining the image, use the Transformation tool under the Object tab. It takes a little guesswork, but it won't warp your images. If you're comfortable using shortcuts, on a Mac, hold down Command, Control and Shift in InDesign to adjust the size of the object. In Illustrator, it's only Shift. Also, when using shortcuts, make sure all of the buttons are pushed down. I've quickly resized many images in my day only to realize I wasn't putting enough pressure on the Control button and had elongated someone's torso in the image.

22

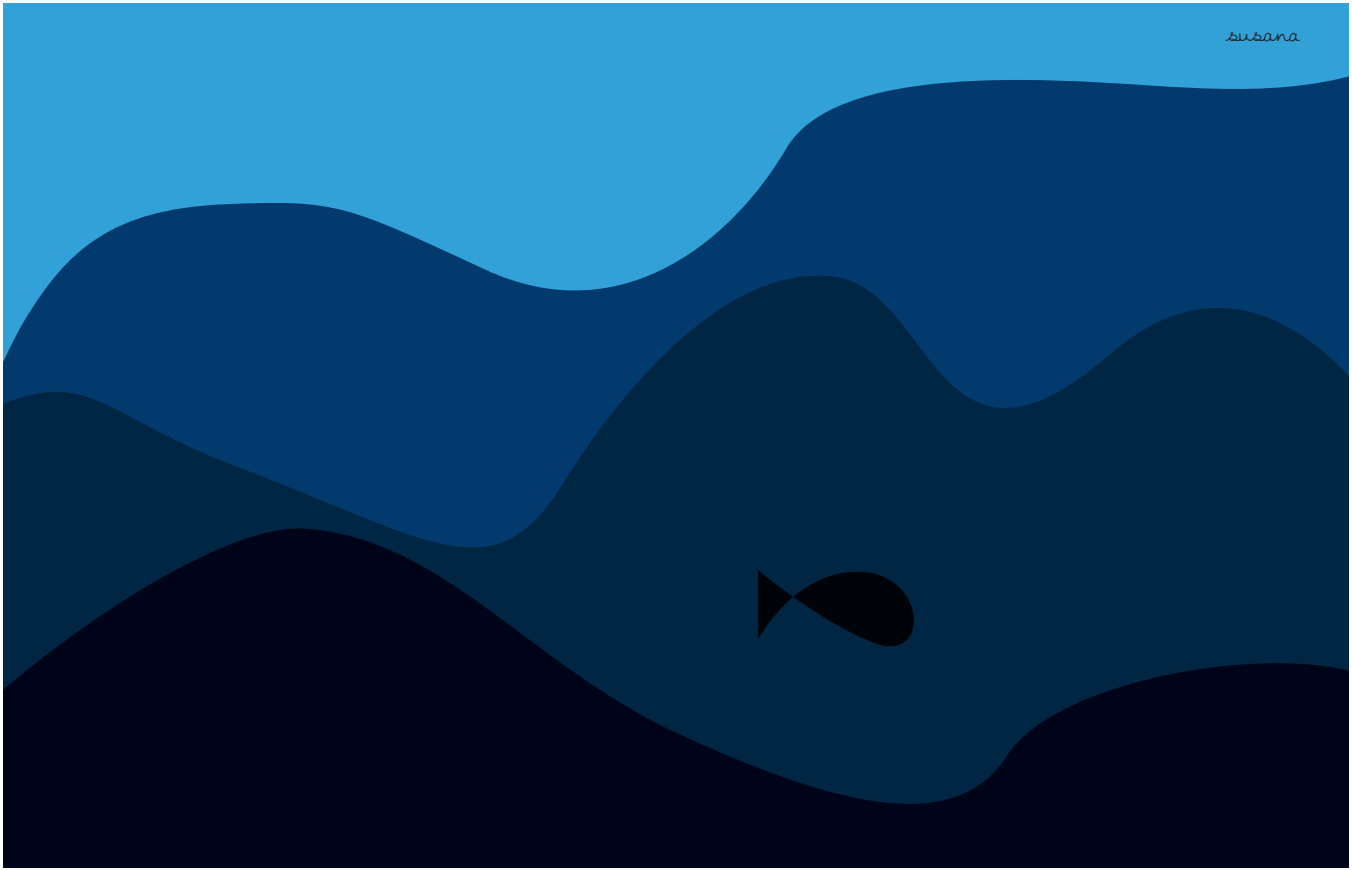
PICK YOUR WIDTH

Sometimes you'll have control over the width of the text columns. Sometimes you won't. As the designer, you can bring your skills and knowledge of readability to the forefront and make sure the width of each column is long or short enough to be convenient for your readers. Most experts agree each line of copy should have between 50 and 75 characters for optimal readability, giving some leeway in designing. Any shorter and the reader will experience stress from moving his or her eyes rapidly back and forth. Any longer and the reader will have a hard time focusing on the text and get bored.

23

FOUR + BLACK

Someone once told me a good rule for simple design was to keep the colors down to four plus black. Limiting the range of colors to five helps control where the viewers first look and allows them to digest the information on the page without being overwhelmed. Of course, several colors may be used in more complex illustrations and artistic pieces. Black is the most dominant color and its use is inevitable in design.


susana

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PERFECT THE TECHNIQUE

The origin of this tip remains a mystery to me. Somewhere between workshop conferences, classes and textbooks, I learned how people read newspapers. My professor confirmed this shape is, in fact, a “Z.” When you’re laying out a front or inside page, give the reader some points to flow between. Put something in the top left corner, midway down the page on the far right, just lower than that on the far left and in the bottom right corner. By placing visuals that draw readers’ eyes to those spots, you are guaranteeing they will view the whole page.

25

THE TICKING CLOCK

As a college designerd, I had all the time in the world to create things. I took my time designing whatever I wanted whenever I wanted. I like to compare those days to naptime in kindergarten. Little kids get all this time to sleep and they hate it. They don't want to sleep, but they should take advantage of the opportunity. I had all this time to design but I found a thousand other things I wanted to do because I couldn't find the motivation and inspiration. One day I'm going to look back and call myself an idiot for not taking advantage. Make good use of your time because you won't always have the leisure to call your own shots. Side note: When the pressure's on, don't forget to take breaks. Take your eyes away from the computer and occasionally go outside. It's important.

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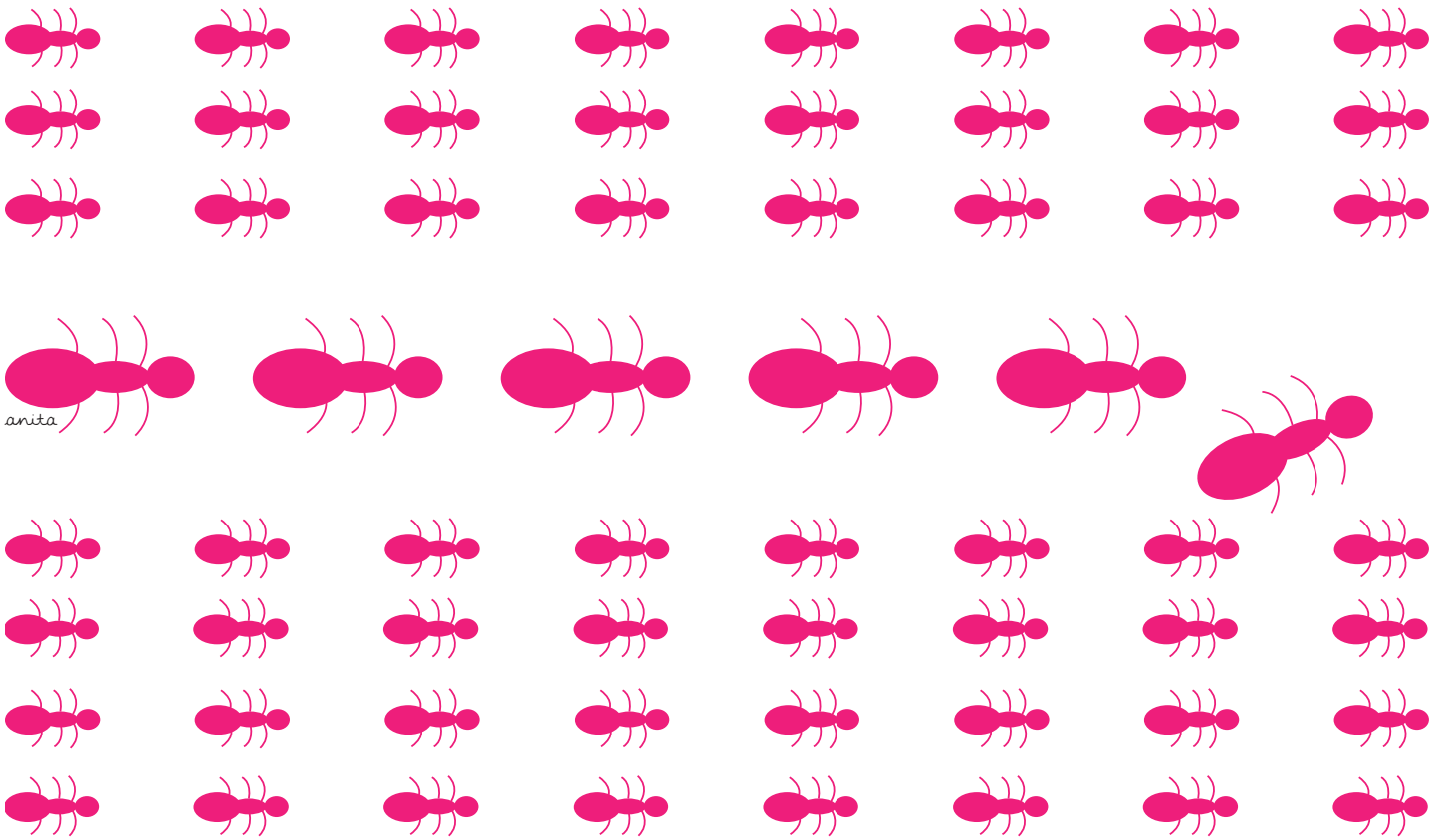
ALIGN YOURSELF

I found the alignment tool on my second day shadowing a features designer at the Tampa Bay Times. I couldn't believe I'd been eyeballing and manually adjusting my layouts for so long. This tool is a lifesaver—and a time saver. Select all the items you want lined up and click to align or distribute them. Using it, I feel like a general lining up my troops for battle. Except this is a battle of precise designing, one that is often surrendered due to laziness and lack of time management. Enter alignment tool.


anita

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NUMBERS DON’T NEED FEET

A professor in college used to stress that numbers should always be sans serif. In charts and tables, numbers with no feet make the rest of the design look clean and simplified. The exception to this rule is when numbers make an appearance in-copy, and therefore as serifs, and they often do. When this occurs, make sure the numbers in the font you’re using do not dip down like descenders. All the numbers should share the same ascender and descender lines.

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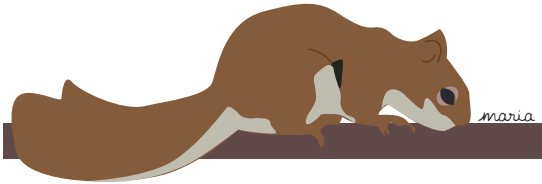
LOGIC IN BEAUTY

When you're unsure of which colors to use when designing, refer to the color wheel. There are several forms of the color wheel (Google "color wheel"). Some are simple, some more detailed. The most basic form includes the six colors of the rainbow (three primary, three secondary). When put in a circle, the complementary colors of purple and yellow, red and green, and blue and orange naturally fall across from each other. Using these pairs add logic and reason to your work, and your designs will come out looking more cohesive than just thrown together.



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VERTICAL VENTURES

If, for whatever reason, you need text that reads up and down instead of side by side—and most designers choose to do this at some point or another—do not stack letters on top of each other. This was one of the first things I learned from my college professor and it's stayed with me. Stacking letters vertically to spell out a word is messy, jagged and difficult to read. A better alternative is to take the word as it sits horizontally and rotate it up so that the first or last letter is at the bottom of a tall column of sideways letters. The reader might be forced to turn his or her head a bit, but the type looks cleaner because all the letters line up at their base.

30

GET IT TOGETHER

Be sure to keep your headlines and copy together on a page. Your readers will thank you and you will thank yourself. Here's how it works: A reader picks up a publication and sees an intriguing photograph or image. He or she looks at the next largest visual, which should be the headline. If the headline is interesting enough, he or she proceeds to read the accompanying article underneath. It's an easy flow of readability, and that's what it all comes down to. There are two exceptions to this rule: 1) when the headline must be seen above the fold on the front page of a publication and 2) for feature-y pieces in newspapers, magazines and other forms of media.

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MAKE IT EASY

Some people think in stories and words, others in numbers and comparisons. At our newspaper meetings, I told people I could create infographics for their stories, but sometimes they would forget. They were the stories and words thinkers. I learned to take it upon myself to pull out the numbers and facts for infographics. I kept a list of keywords and topics in the back of my mind that indicated a graph could be helpful: multiple event dates, increase or decrease in money (funds, salary, wages), contact information, hours of operation and words with definitions, to name a few.

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GOOD FONT, BAD FONT

In my sophomore year of college, I was shocked to learn fonts had histories and creators, and weren't just computer-generated. Part of being a good designer is exploring the histories of fonts. You get to know which ones are overused and which are practical. For the most part, the fonts online are unfit for large amounts of text. But all the weird fonts out there that will never become a fixture in popular programs like Word have the potential to be interesting choices for main text. Also consider how many weights a font has. A good choice has many varieties, like thin or light, regular or bold. Sometimes fonts don't even come with capitalization and lower-case options and might be missing characters, so double check.

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BE PATIENT

When you're up against deadline or you've put hours into a design and someone requests a change or says something negative about your work, take a breath and handle the situation with class. People do not always understand the work that goes into design, or even realize that someone specifically does it. Halfway through my senior year, I had a sudden realization that I was a design diva. If someone criticized my design before it went to print, clear the way because I was ready to charge. But I adjusted my attitude. Sometimes you've got to consider whether the person (or people) has a good point. Be patient and try to see things from the other's perspectives. Don't get too caught up in your own vision.

margherita

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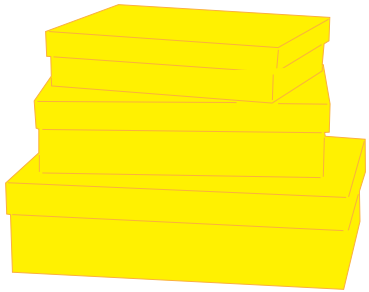
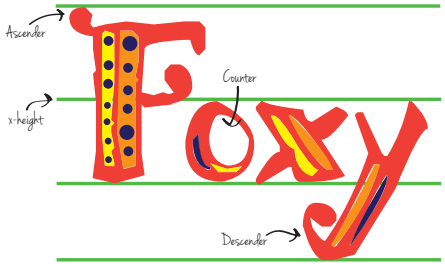


CREATE CORNERS

The freshest, simplest looking designs are modular. This means every page is created in a square or rectangle and every corner of the shape is filled with an element of the page. My college professor stressed this format over and over. It has everything to do with using the grid (see more about the grid with tip 20) and keeping consistent spaces between elements. Keeping this in mind while designing a page can help you avoid messy, uneven layouts. Using modular design also allows consistency to flow through a multi-page project, keeping the pages lined up and equally clean.



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ANATOMY OF A LETTER

When choosing a font, x-height is important to consider for readability. The x-height is the amount of space between the baseline and median lines of a font and is usually seen with the letter x. Letters with roughly the same x-height (rounded letters like c, s and e are a little higher than x, w and z on that scale) make for easier readability.

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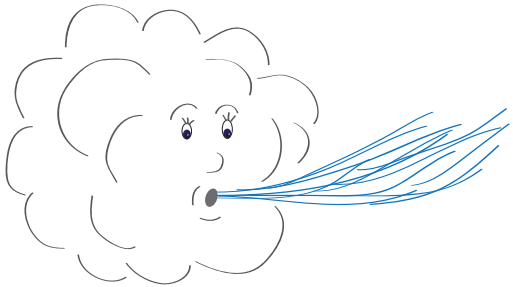
THE KEY TO DESIGN

Here is the most important tip in this book: design is subjective. I once designed an event poster for an underground hip hop show. I recreated one of the artist's album covers using only type. My professor said it was too similar to the actual album cover. He suggested adding color to part of the design; I disagreed. I was confident in my design, but I adjusted one copy as he requested and printed them both. When I met the artist and asked which he preferred, he chose the original. I realized I could take a design to 10 people and get 10 opinions. Having confidence and reason in my own designs will go a long way toward building others' confidence in me. But it's important to know when to design with your idea of "best" and when to comply with your client's requests.



37

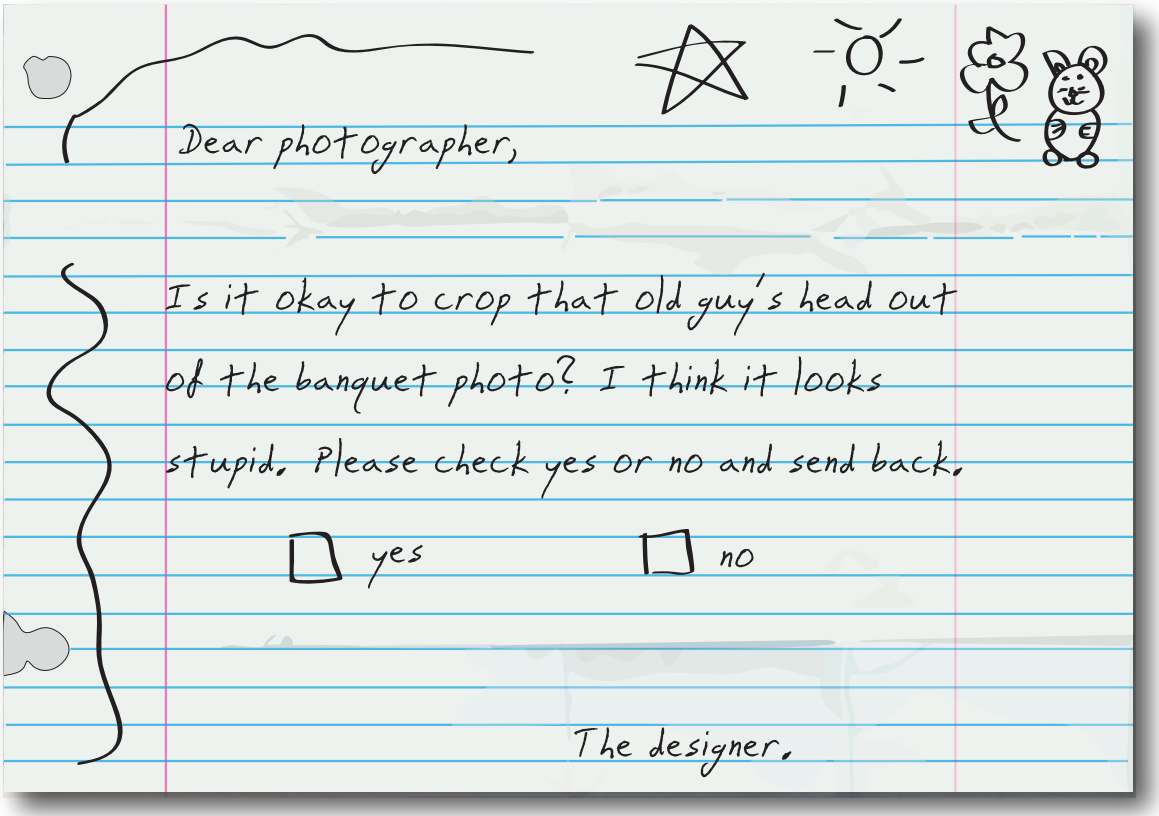
HEE, HEE, HOO

Let the elements on the page breathe. Use white space as an element, don't just see it as something to be filled. Side note: white space is not to be confused with wide space, something that does not exist as an element or even a term in designing. If you allow white space in between images and text, your design will miraculously and automatically become cleaner and simpler.

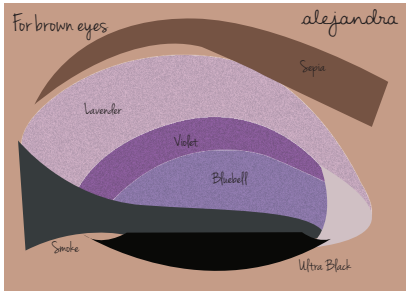
38

PERMISSION BEFORE MANIPULATION

Altering an image is risky business. Altering includes, but is not limited to, cropping, cutting, flipping and stretching. Editing a photo taken by someone else should be done with purpose and permission. As a designer, I sometimes have a vision of how a page should look before gathering all the materials for it. Other times I create a layout and leave a spot for a photo only to realize it isn't the correct size. At this point there are only a few options: adjust the layout to fit the photo (probably the best), find another photo that will fit better or discuss editing the image with the photo editor. While this last option may not be easy to work out, it is necessary to follow protocol and take the photographer's thoughts into consideration.


Dear photographer,
Is it okay to crop that old guy's head out of the banquet photo? I think it looks stupid. Please check yes or no and send back.
yes
no
The designer.

39



INTENSIFY

Have you ever seen those eyeshadows at the drugstore used to enhance the color of your eyes? There are palettes with three or four colors sold for each of the four common eye colors: brown, green, blue and hazel. I got excited when I saw them for the first time because it's a technique I was taught in high school with yearbook spreads. We'd get all the pages laid out, look back at each spread as a whole and determine the color that pops out the most. That color would take over the headline, subheads and any borders we used. Using the color wheel (see tip 28), we could choose another color to make the dominant color pop even more.

40

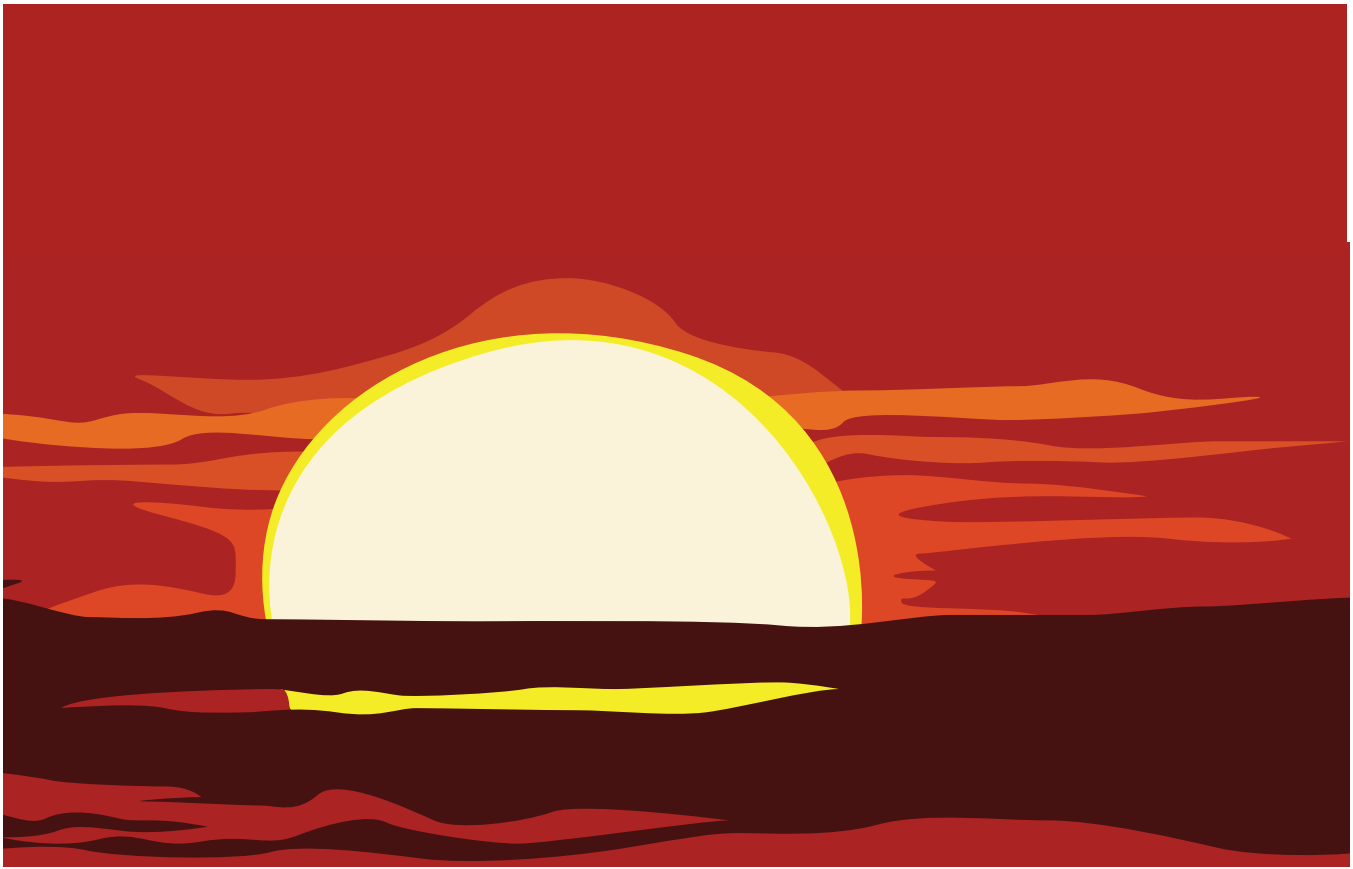
BUILD YOUR WEB

Make it a personal goal to network as much as you can. Use social media, conferences, local events and word of mouth. If you go to a seminar or workshop, talk to the speaker afterwards. If you meet other designers, get their business cards. Have your own so you can reciprocate. You never know when these contacts will come in handy. On the design wall (mentioned in tip 41) in my office I have more than 20 business cards from people I've met. These include designers at my local paper (*Tampa Bay Times*), reporters from Arizona, Indiana and New York I met at seminars, and media professionals from Africa. Get feedback, talk to people in the field, send emails and stay in contact. Keep up on their projects and use them as conversation starters.

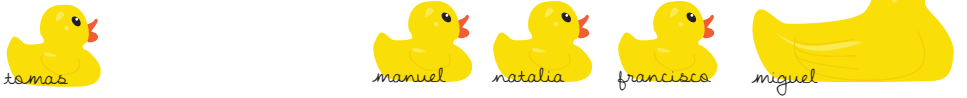
41

INSPIRABILITY

The hardest part of going into this field is finding enough inspiration. I get stuck and frustrated all the time. Sometimes I want to rip my hair out and cry. The solution? Remember what has inspired you in the past. I'm often searching for the next thing to take my breath away, rather than going back to what's already been done. So here I am. In the past, what has inspired me? Colorful birds at the zoo, the many textures, prints and colors at the fabric store, music, lists, the design wall in front of my desk, music, brainstorming sessions, the great outdoors, music, the St. Petersburg Pier, architecture... the list could go on. My problem is that I am always seeking the next best thing, when really, the secret to inspiration is that it finds you.

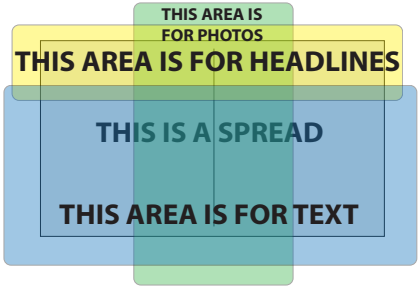


42



NO WORD LEFT BEHIND

In copy, sometimes a word ends up alone on the last line of a paragraph or at the top of a column. These words are called widows and orphans. I learned widows are at the top of the column and orphans are at the bottom of a paragraph. They interrupt a person's flow while reading. At the student paper, my rule was to keep at least two words at the end of every paragraph and beginning of each column. While selecting the text box, make sure the 'hyphenation' box under paragraph is checked. With a portion of the text highlighted, adjust the tracking of the words in the character tab. With the cursor at the start of the last word of the last full line in the paragraph, hold down the Shift and push Enter to do a soft return and jump the word down to the next line to join the orphan.

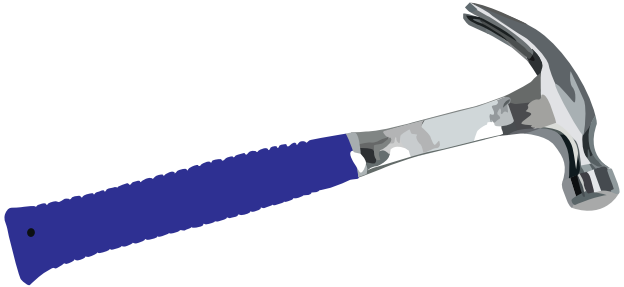


43

PAGE PLANNING

One of my habits originated in high school—start with the visuals and end with the text. When you're sitting in front of that empty spread and don't know where to begin, put all the photos on the inside of the spread, huddled around the center margins. Once they're in place, set the copy and other text like captions and pull-out quotes on the outside. I was taught text should always have a way off the page. If you don't think before you start designing, you could end up with a rookie mistake such as trapped copy or even trapped white space (not to be confused with wide space—see tip 37). Besides, the images on a page should be the most dominant, eye-grabbing elements.

44



QUICK FIX

There will be times when you want to do something cool (or maybe you have a relatively simple idea) but you're not sure how to do it. Google it. Search YouTube. Online tutorials can teach you loads of information in a matter of minutes. I taught myself how to fishtail braid my hair from an online tutorial one afternoon. Not design-related, I know, but the concept is the same. I've looked up videos and step-by-step websites to discover new techniques as well as refresh my memory on old ones. The 'help' tab available in most programs can also help you out in a jam by pointing out where the tools that you're looking for are located.

45

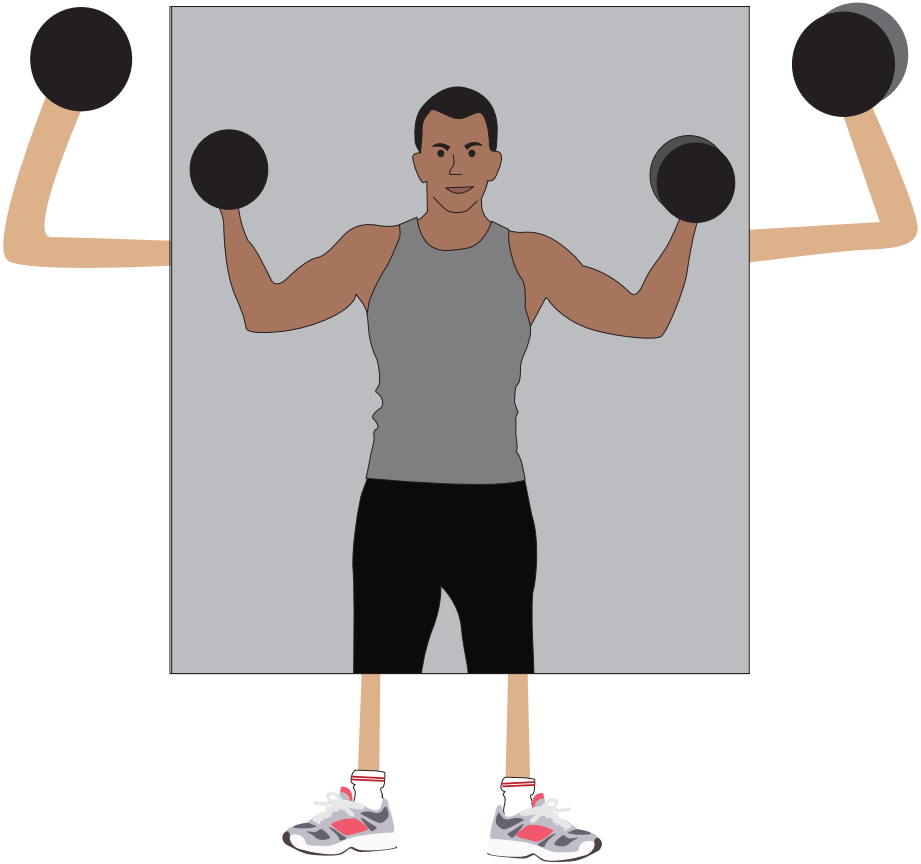
WHEN NOT TO USE PHOTOSHOP

Logos should never be made in Photoshop. Why anyone would attempt this seemingly hair-wrenching task, I have no idea. This tip was thrown out at me during a conversation with my good friend and fellow designer Stephen Cook. I was telling him about this project and he mentioned how making logos in Photoshop was a terrible idea. I'd never heard of such a thing, nor do I think the idea would have ever occurred to me. So, just a heads up: InDesign and Illustrator are tools for logo creation. Leave Photoshop to image resizing and manipulation.

46

GET TONED UP

During my time at the USF St. Petersburg's student paper, The Crow's Nest, I worked closely with the photo editors. In the beginning we couldn't figure out why our photos looked so dark and muddy in print. After a meeting with our printers, the answer was clear: toning. Every editor I've worked with has had a different method of toning images, but the goal is always the same: lighten and adjust the exposure of the photos until they look too light to be used. This technique creates a beautifully printed photo in the paper due to dot gain through saturation of the cheap newspaper material, known in the business as glorified toilet paper.



47

GIMME WHATCHA GOT

Any project you work on is going to have drafts. There will be changes to be made, especially after tip 16. So before you submit the piece to the printers, your professor, your client or your boss, think to yourself, “Is this the best I can do? Am I satisfied?” By questioning yourself once, and only once (because any more than that and you might seem to lack confidence in your work), you can take a step back and think about what your purpose was (tip 5) and check to see if you really achieved that goal. Also, by double checking to see how you feel about it, you might see a thing or two that is out of place and have the opportunity to correct it.

48

SELL YOURSELF

Your goal going into an interview is to persuade the employer that you're the best person to get the job done. You should have a portfolio ready to go at any given time. Have 10 to 20 pieces of your best work, your contact information and résumé available on a disc, as a hard copy and/or on a website just in case. An advantage of being a designer is knowing how to set all your accomplishments in a good font and arrange them neatly on a page. You should be your worst critic and be very selective when choosing work to display.

49

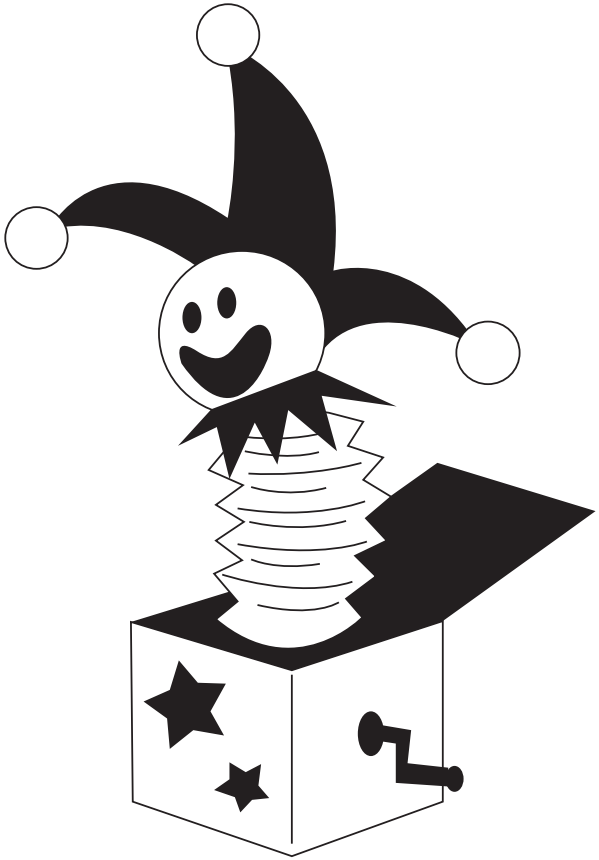
ALL OVER THE PLACE

The best way to push yourself to reach your greatest design potential is to learn by doing all variations of the practice. Wear as many design hats as you can. If you only stick to what you know, you're limiting your range of capabilities and talents. There's a whole spectrum of design outlets for you to try. Between print design, copy editing, photography, videography and coding for the web, there are many opportunities to learn how different elements work together to create an amazing multimedia piece. The more outlets of creativity you possess, the more you have to offer future employers and/or clients.

50

POP, GOES THE BLACK

Black pops more effectively on white paper. This does not mean white paper should only have black on it. Other colors on white paper are actually easier on the eyes than black, but any black object will show better on white than, say, orange. As opposites, the darkness of a black object contrasts sharply with a white background because black is the culmination of all the colors and white is the absence of them. A lot of times designers get so caught up in using colors on the page that the combination of black and white gets overlooked. When looking for something subtly effective, pair these two for something different.



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