

6

Designing Documents

Chapter Outline

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5. Decide Whether to Justify Margins
6. Put Important Elements in the Top Left and Lower Right Quadrants
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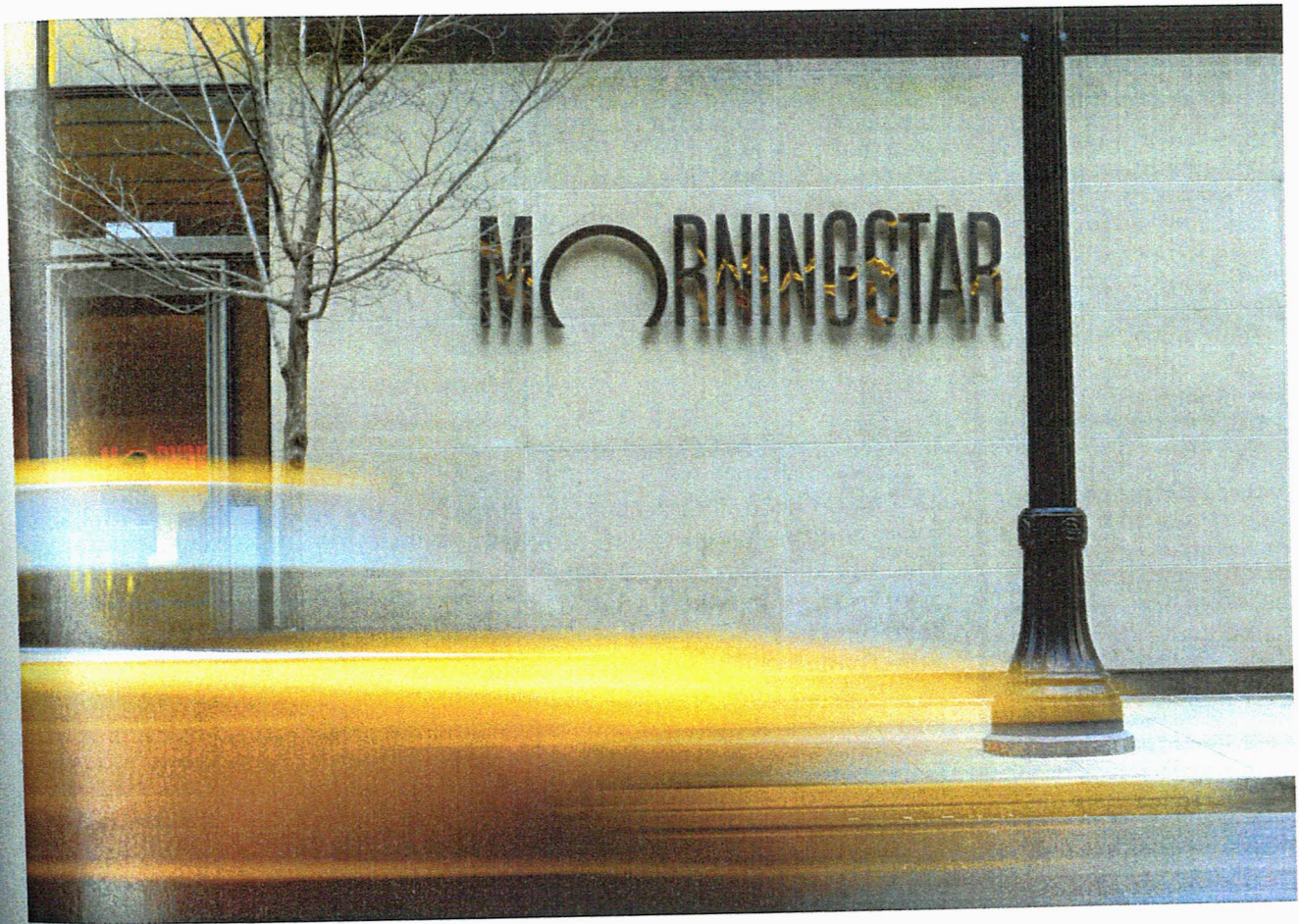
- Attracting and Maintaining Attention
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NEWSWORTHY COMMUNICATION

Designing for Success



With its detailed analysis of pages of financial data, investment research is not usually associated with good graphic design. But for Morningstar, an international investment research firm, graphic design is central to its business. Morningstar's clients count on the firm's well-designed infographics to "demystify and enliven investing."

The dedication to design began early at Morningstar. Soon after it was founded in 1984, the firm spent

\$50,000 for a professionally designed corporate logo. Since then, the company has continued to focus on design, not just in its documents, but also in all of its products, websites, and even the architecture and interior design at the corporate offices.

Maintaining the commitment to high-quality design is so important that the head of the design department at Morningstar is part of the company's executive team and reports to the chairman and CEO.

This focus on incorporating excellent design as a central part of the business model has paid off for Morningstar. It is now a \$3.2 billion company that was included in the *Fortune* "100 Best Companies to Work For" list in 2011 and 2012. According to Morningstar's CEO, Joe Mansueto, a good portion of that success is a result of the company's focus on design: "I think the cost-benefit payoff is very, very high."

Source: Barbara T. Armstrong, "Good Design Is Good Business. Just Ask Morningstar," *Forbes.com*, April 2, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/barbaraarmstrong/2013/04/02/good-design-is-good-business-just-ask-morningstar/>.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know

- LO 6-1** Why document design is important and how to incorporate it into the writing process.
- LO 6-2** The four levels of document design, and how they can help you critique documents.
- LO 6-3** Guidelines for document design.
- LO 6-4** How to design brochures.
- LO 6-5** How to design infographics.
- LO 6-6** How to design web pages.
- LO 6-7** How to do basic usability testing on your documents.

Good Document Design Saves Money



Document design changes are not just cosmetic. Information Mapping International, a communications consulting company, reports these savings among its customers:

- A major brokerage firm found 5,000 document inconsistencies by using Information Mapping services. After creating a new document system, the firm experienced a 30% reduction in costly errors.
- A leading credit card company reduced the average length of phone calls to its customer service center by 60 seconds after improving the design of its reference materials. This time reduction reduced costs by 20%.
- A leading health care provider redesigned its customer claims manual and saw the number of calls to the help desk decrease by 50%.
- A major government agency struggling with information overload used Information Mapping to create "uniform information architecture" agencywide. Newly trained "mappers" changed more than 60,000 pages, and the agency reported over \$17 million in cost savings.

Adapted from "Resources—Case Studies," *Information Mapping*, accessed May 8, 2013, <http://infomap.com/en/resources-en/case-studies>.

Good document design saves time and money, reduces legal problems, and builds goodwill. Effective design groups ideas visually, making the structure of a document more inviting and obvious so the document is easier to read. Easy-to-read documents enhance your credibility and build an image of you as a professional, competent person. Many workplaces expect you to be able to create designs that go beyond the basic templates you'll find in common software programs. Good design is important not only for brochures, infographics, web pages, reports, and newsletters but also for announcements, letters, and e-mails.

The Importance of Effective Design as Part of the Writing Process **LO 6-1**

When document design is poor, both organizations and society suffer. The *Challenger* space shuttle blew up because its O-rings failed in the excessive cold. Poor communication—including charts that hid, rather than emphasized, the data about O-ring performance—contributed to the decision to launch. More recently, after the *Columbia* space shuttle disintegrated during reentry, poor communication was again implicated in NASA's failure to ensure the spacecraft was safe. Mission leaders insisted that engineers had not briefed them on the seriousness of the damage to the shuttle when a piece of foam struck it on takeoff. But after studying transcripts of meetings, Edward R. Tufte, who specializes in visual presentations of evidence, concluded that engineers did offer their concerns and supporting statistics. However, they did so using visuals that obscured the seriousness.¹

In 2000, the badly designed Florida ballot confused enough voters to cloud the outcome of the U.S. presidential election. More recently, the *Des Moines Register* faced backlash from readers for a poorly juxtaposed cover spread. The top of the front page featured an article about global leaders coming together to help millions fight worldwide hunger. The article below the fold was about a local bar that serves a five-pound burger.²

Design isn't something to "tack on" when you've finished writing. Indeed, the best documents, slides, and screens are created when you think about design at each stage of the writing process.

- As you plan, think about your audience. Are they skilled readers? Are they busy? Will they read the document straight through or skip around?
- As you write, incorporate lists and headings. Use visuals to convey numerical data clearly and forcefully.
- Get feedback from people who will be using your document. Do they find the document hard to understand? Do they need additional visuals?
- As you revise, check your draft against the guidelines in this chapter.

Design and Conventions

Like all aspects of communication, effective design relies heavily on conventions. These conventions provide a design language. For instance, most graphical interfaces are organized around the desktop metaphor, which uses files, folders, tabs, and trash cans. Commercial websites use the metaphor of the shopping cart. We have a mental image of the way brochures, e-mails, or business cards are supposed to look.

Conventions may vary by audience, geographic area, industry, company, or even department, but they do exist. Some conventions work well with some audiences but not with others, so careful audience analysis is necessary. The British and Americans prefer serif typefaces; the French and Dutch prefer sans serif. Instruction pictures for office equipment generally show feminine hands using the equipment. Some female readers will relate more readily to the instructions; others will be offended at the implied assumption that only women perform such low-level office jobs.³

Conventions also change over time. Résumés used to be typed documents; now most companies ask for electronic ones. Today we rarely use Courier font; we italicize titles rather than underlining them; and we space once rather than twice after periods at ends of sentences.

Conventions also change with new software. When Microsoft Word 2007 and Word 2008 were launched, they broke long-standing Word conventions. They used the font Cambria for headings and Calibri for body text, instead of the traditional Times New Roman. The default spacing changed from single to 1.5. Time will tell if these settings become new conventions.

Social media platforms are no exception to design conventions either, especially when it comes to user interfaces. When Facebook revises its user interface, which seems to happen often, many users are constantly frustrated with the changes because their conventional understanding of how to use the program has altered. Users have to adapt to new conventions.

Violating conventions is risky: violations may not be interpreted correctly, or they may signal that the author or designer is unreliable or unknowledgeable. Brochures with text that does not fit properly into the folded panels, free-hand drawings in a set of installation instructions, or bar charts with garish color designs can destroy the reader's trust.⁴

Design Research Is Key



Designing directional signs for streets and subway systems should be easy, right?

When the three independent subway systems in New York City merged in 1940, the signs were a confusing hodgepodge of detailed antique mosaics and hand-painted placards. They existed in this state for more than 20 years.

Then in 1966, New York's Transit Authority contracted with design firm Unimark International to redesign the signs and coordinate their placement in the subway system.

The designers carefully analyzed the needs of the people who used the subway to find the best places to put each sign. They proposed a standard look for each sign, using the typeface Helvetica and color-coded disks.

These design elements still help commuters navigate the subway today. Now the Transit Authority's distinctive signs are a recognized symbol of New York City.

Although most designers rarely get to work on something as large as redesigning a city's transit system, the process of designing for the audience that Unimark used in New York should apply to any document.

Adapted from Michael Bierut, "When in Helvetica," *Wall Street Journal*, March 26, 2011, C8.

Designing for Baby Boomers



As baby boomers turn 60, many start to lose the ability to see as clearly as they once did. Tiny buttons on cell phones, small typeface on pill bottles, and even the low lighting in some restaurants all make reading a difficult task. But this baby boomer generation is not bashful when it comes to denouncing issues with poor document design.

As a result, some corporations are trying to help this large population see and function better in our society:

- Romano's Macaroni Grill supplies reading glasses and large-print menus on request.
- Target is modifying its labeling on prescription bottles by putting the most important information—patient name, medication, dosage—in large boldface capital letters.
- Some remote controls and cell phones now have large text and buttons specifically designed for this older audience.
- Some laundry labels on garments use larger print.
- Product packaging is beginning to avoid yellows and blues, colors that are more difficult for older eyes to distinguish.

The 76 million baby boomers account for about half of U.S. consumer spending. Smart companies want their share of that money and are willing to adapt their products.

Adapted from Katie Hafner, "Their Parents' Eyes," *New York Times*, August 4, 2007, B1; and Ellen Byron, "From Diapers to 'Depends': Marketers Discreetly Retool for Aging Boomers," *Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704013604576104394209062996.html>.

Levels of Design LO 6-2

Visual communications expert Charles Kostelnick distinguishes four levels of design. These levels provide an organized way to think about the design choices you can make in your own documents, presentations, and visuals. They're also useful when you analyze the documents you encounter in a professional setting: one of the best ways to get ideas for your own document designs is to analyze the design elements in successful documents.

When you look at communication design, look for Kostelnick's four levels:⁵

- **Intra**—Design choices for individual letters and words. Intra-level design choices include the font and its size you choose; whether you use bold, italics, or color changes to emphasize key words; and the way you use capital letters. The serif font used for body text on this page is an intra-level choice, as is the sans serif font used for headings.
- **Inter**—Design choices for blocks of text. Inter-level design choices include the ways you use headings, white space, indents, lists, and even text boxes. The headings and bulleted lists that organize information on these pages are inter-level choices.
- **Extra**—Design choices for graphics that go with the text. Extra-level design choices include the way you use pictures, photographs, data displays, charts, and graphs, and the ways in which you emphasize information on those graphics. The figures in this chapter are extra-level design choices.
- **Supra**—Design choices for entire documents. Supra-level design choices include paper size, headers and footers, and the index and table of contents, as well as color schemes and layout grids that define the look of all sections of a document. The placement of the page numbers in this book, the two-column layout grid on all of the pages in this chapter, and the navigation text in the header on this page are supra-level choices.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention poster in Figure 6.1 illustrates all levels of design. At the intra-level, this poster uses a sans serif typeface throughout the whole document. Other intra-level elements include the boldface orange sentences and the gray subsentences that are set in a larger typesize than the body text. Inter-level elements involve the centered text throughout the top of the poster and chunking text above and below the image. It also includes the bullet points used to organize material and the text box that sets off this material from the background. The main background image containing a sudsy bar of soap, as well as the image of the father helping his son wash his hands, are part of the extra-level. These images help reinforce the textual message that encourages viewers to wash their hands appropriately. Supra-level elements include the color scheme and the size of the poster, which measures 33" x 42.5" so that all the information can be clearly seen when posted. Another unifying piece of information on a supra-level that can be found on all CDC promotional materials is their blue logo in the bottom left corner. Visually, this information is treated like a page footer and can be found somewhere on every piece of published CDC promotional material.

Figure 6.1

All Four Levels of Design in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Poster



Source: "Stop Germs! Stay Healthy! Wash Your Hands!" Poster, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/wash-your-hands-poster.pdf>.

Guidelines for Document Design LO 6-3

Use the guidelines in Figure 6.2 to create visually attractive documents.

1. Use White Space

White space—the empty space on the page—makes material easier to read by emphasizing the material that it separates from the rest of the text. To create white space,

- Use headings.
- Use a mix of paragraph lengths (most no longer than seven typed lines). It's OK for a paragraph or two to be just one sentence. First and last paragraphs, in particular, should be short.
- Use lists.
 - Use tabs or indents—not spacing—to align items vertically.
 - Use numbered lists when the number or sequence of items is exact.
 - Use bullets (large dots or squares like those in this list) when the number and sequence don't matter.

Figure 6.2**Guidelines for Page Design**

1. Use white space.
2. Use headings.
3. Limit the use of words set in all capital letters.
4. Use no more than two fonts in a single document.
5. Decide whether to justify margins.
6. Put important elements in the top left and lower right quadrants.
7. Use a grid to unify graphic elements.
8. Use highlighting, decorative devices, and color in moderation.

When you use a list, make sure all the items are parallel (see "Parallel Structure" in Chapter 5) and fit into the structure of the sentence that introduces the list.

Increasing white space can easily improve the look of your message. Figure 6.3 shows an original document. Notice how this document is visually uninviting. In Figure 6.4, the same document has improved white space by using lists,

Figure 6.3**A Document with Poor Visual Impact**

MONEY DEDUCTED FROM YOUR WAGES TO PAY CREDITORS

When you buy goods on credit, the store will sometimes ask you to sign a Wage Assignment form allowing it to deduct money from your wages if you do not pay your bill. When you buy on credit, you sign a contract agreeing to pay a certain amount each week or month until you have paid all you owe. The Wage Assignment Form is separate. It must contain the name of your present employer, your social security number, the amount of money loaned, the rate of interest, the date when payments are due, and your signature. The words "Wage Assignment" must be printed at the top of the form and also near the line for your signature. Even if you have signed a Wage Assignment agreement, Roysner will not withhold part of your wages unless all of the following conditions are met: 1. You have to be more than forty days late in payment of what you owe; 2. Roysner has to receive a correct statement of the amount you are in default and a copy of the Wage Assignment form; and 3. You and Roysner must receive a notice from the creditor at least twenty days in advance stating that the creditor plans to make a demand on your wages. This twenty-day notice gives you a chance to correct the problems yourself. If these conditions are all met, Roysner must withhold 15% of each paycheck until your bill is paid and give this money to your creditor.

If you think you are not late or that you do not owe the amount stated, you can argue against it by filing a legal document called a "defense." Once you file a defense, Roysner will not withhold any money from you. However, be sure you are right before you file a defense. If you are wrong, you have to pay not only what you owe but also all legal costs for both yourself and the creditor. If you are right, the creditor has to pay all these costs.

Full capital letters
make title hard
to read

Long
para-
graph
is
visually
uninviting

Important
information
is hard to find

Figure 6.4

A Document Revised to Improve Visual Impact

Money Deducted from Your Wages to Pay Creditors

First letter
of each main
word capitalized—
Title split onto
two lines

When you buy goods on credit, the store will sometimes ask you to sign a Wage Assignment form allowing it to deduct money from your wages if you do not pay your bill.

Have You Signed a Wage Assignment Form?

Headings divide
document into
chunks

When you buy on credit, you sign a contract agreeing to pay a certain amount each week or month until you have paid all you owe. The Wage Assignment Form is separate. It must contain

- The name of your present employer,
- Your social security number,
- The amount of money loaned,
- The rate of interest,
- The date when payments are due, and
- Your signature.

List with
bullets where
order of
items
doesn't
matter

Single-space list
when items are
short.

The words "Wage Assignment" must be printed at the top of the form and also near the line for your signature.

Headings must be
parallel. Here all
are questions

When Would Money Be Deducted from Your Wages to Pay a Creditor?

Even if you have signed a Wage Assignment agreement, Roysner will not withhold part of your wages unless all of the following conditions are met:

1. You have to be more than 40 days late in payment of what you owe;
2. Roysner has to receive a correct statement of the amount you are in default and a copy of the Wage Assignment form; and
3. You and Roysner must receive a notice from the creditor at least 20 days in advance stating that the creditor plans to make a demand on your wage. This 20-day notice gives you a chance to correct the problem yourself.

White space
between
items
emphasizes
them

Numbered
list where
number or
order of
items matter

Double-space between items in list when
most items are two lines or longer.

If these conditions are all met, Roysner must withhold fifteen percent (15%) of each pay-check until your bill is paid and give this money to your creditor.

What Should You Do If You Think the Wage Assignment Is Incorrect?

If you think you are not late or that you do not owe the amount stated, you can argue against it by filing a legal document called a "defense." Once you file a defense, Roysner will not withhold any money from you. However, be sure you are right before you file a defense. If you are wrong, you have to pay not only what you owe but also all legal costs for both yourself and the creditor. If you are right, the creditor has to pay all these costs.

Design and Driver Safety



The New York City Department of Transportation decided to revise 250,000 street signs throughout the city. The old signs used all capital letters. The new signs will use a font called Clearview and feature both capital and lowercase letters.

The newly designed street signs are expected to improve safety, according to the Federal Highway Administration. Drivers will be able to decipher words more easily because of their shapes and, in turn, pay more attention to the road.

The price to replace all of the signs is anticipated to be \$27.5 million. The project will be completed by 2018.

Adapted from "New York to Replace 250,000 Street Signs," United Press International, article published October 1, 2010, http://www.upi.com/Odd_News/2010/10/01/New-York-to-replace-250000-street-signs/UPI-10711285863676/.

headings, and shorter paragraphs. Audiences scan documents for information, so anything you can do visually to help ease their reading will reflect positively on you as the communicator. Keep in mind that these devices take space. When saving space is essential, it's better to cut the text and incorporate white space and headings.

Some researchers strongly argue that white space should never be your enemy.⁶ A clear mark of an amateur document designer is one who tries to fill an entire page with visuals and text leaving the audience no room to breathe.

2. Use Headings

Headings are words, short phrases, or short sentences that group points and divide your document into sections. Headings enable your reader to see at a glance how the document is organized, to turn quickly to sections of special interest, and to compare and contrast points more easily. Headings also break up the page, making it look less formidable and more interesting.

Psychological research has shown that our short-term memories can hold only seven plus or minus two bits of information.⁷ Only after those bits are processed and put into long-term memory can we assimilate new information. Large amounts of information will be easier to process if they are grouped into three to seven chunks rather than presented as individual items.

To use headings effectively,

- Make headings specific.
- Make each heading cover all the material until the next heading.
- Keep headings at any one level parallel.

Research continues to show that headings help readers. In a study that examined forensic child abuse reports from Canadian children's hospitals, researchers discovered that headings play an important role. Headings and subheadings helped improve the accessibility of information about the severity of the child's injuries between the physicians who authored the reports and the social workers, lawyers, and police officers who later used them.⁸

3. Limit the Use of Words Set in All Capital Letters

We recognize words partly by their shapes.⁹ (See Figure 6.5.) In capitals, all words are rectangular; letters lose the descenders and ascenders that make reading faster and more accurate.¹⁰ In addition, many people interpret text in full capitals as "shouting," especially when that text appears in online documents. In those cases, full capitals might elicit a negative response from your audience. Use full capitals sparingly, if at all.

4. Use No More than Two Fonts in a Single Document

Fonts are unified styles of type. Popular fonts are Times Roman, Calibri, Palatino, Helvetica, or Arial, and each comes in various sizes and usually in

Figure 6.5

Full Capitals Hide the Shape of a Word

Full capitals hide the shape of a word and slow reading 19%.

FULL CAPITALS HIDE THE SHAPE OF A WORD AND SLOW READING 19%.

Figure 6.6

Examples of Different Fonts

This sentence is set in 12-point Times Roman.

This sentence is set in 12-point Arial.

This sentence is set in 12-point New Courier.

This sentence is set in 12-point Lucinda Calligraphy.

This sentence is set in 12-point Broadway.

This sentence is set in 12-point Technical.

bold and italic. In **fixed** fonts every letter takes the same space; an *i* takes the same space as a *w*. Courier and Prestige Elite are fixed fonts. Most fonts are **proportional** and allow wider letters to take more space than narrower letters. Times Roman, Palatino, Helvetica, and Arial are proportional fonts. Most business documents use no more than two fonts.

Serif fonts have little extensions, called **serifs**, from the main strokes. (In Figure 6.6, look at the feet on the *r*'s in New Courier and the flick on the top of the *d* in Lucinda.) New Courier, Elite, Times Roman, Palatino, and Lucinda Calligraphy are serif fonts. Helvetica, Arial, Geneva, and Technical are **sans serif** fonts since they lack serifs (*sans* is French for *without*). Sans serif fonts are good for titles and tables.

You should choose the fonts you use carefully, because they shape reader response just as font size does. Research suggests that people respond positively to fonts that fit the genre and purpose of the document.¹¹ For example, a font like Broadway (see Figure 6.6) is appropriate for a headline in a newsletter, but not for the body text of an e-mail.

Twelve-point type is usually ideal for letters, memos, e-mails, and reports. Smaller type is harder to read, especially for older readers. You can create emphasis and levels of headings by using bold, italics, and different sizes. Bold is easier to read than italics, so use bolding if you need only one method to emphasize text. In a complex document, use bigger type for main headings and slightly smaller type for subheadings and text.

If your material will not fit in the available pages, cut it. Putting some sections in tiny type saves space but creates a negative response—a negative response that may extend to the organization that produced the document.

5. Decide Whether to Justify Margins

Word-processing programs allow you to use **full justification** so that type lines up evenly on both the right and left margins. This paragraph you are reading justifies both margins. Margins justified only on the left, sometimes called **ragged right margins**, have lines ending in different places. In this chapter, sidebar columns use ragged right margins.

Use full justification when you

- Can use proportional fonts.
- Want a more formal look.
- Want to use as few pages as possible.

Cultural Differences in Document Design



Cultural differences in document design are based on reading practices and experiences with other documents. Language is one source of these differences. For example, English and other European languages are written in horizontal lines moving from left to right down the page. Hebrew and Arabic languages are read from right to left. This affects where readers of these languages look first when they see a page of text.

People in the United States focus first on the left side of a website. Middle Eastern people focus first on the right side, so websites in Arabic and Hebrew orient text, links, and graphics from right to left.

Translations also affect the layout of a document. To convey the same message, Spanish and French take up more room than English does. Writing concise text for brochures, packages, and web pages is more challenging in the wordier languages.

The problem is even more complex in designing bilingual or multilingual documents. For example, a company selling in Canada must use both English and French on its packages, and the French type must be printed at least as large as the English. On some products, such as a bottle of medicine or perfume, this requirement leaves little room for fancy graphics.

Adapted from Albert N. Badre, "The Effects of Cross Cultural Interface Design Orientation on World Wide Web User Performance," accessed May 8, 2013, <http://ftp.cc.gatech.edu/pub/gvu/tr/2001/01-03.html>; and Pan Demetrakakes, "Multilingual Labeling Broadens Product Appeal," *Iverson*, accessed May 8, 2013, <http://www.iversonlang.com/resources/pdf/Multilingual.pdf>.

<http://infomap.com/en/the-method-en/before-a-after-examples>

Information Mapping uses grids and tables to present complex information in an easy-to-find format. Review some of the "before" and "after" examples on the Information Mapping website, and notice how the "after" documents make strong use of tables, lists, and white space to draw your attention to important points.



<http://www.degraeve.com/color-palette> and <http://www.colorhunter.com/>

Do you have a hard time generating aesthetically pleasing color schemes? Have you ever wanted to create a color scheme that matches a prominent photo in your document?

The Color Palette Generator and Color Hunter websites allow you to upload a photo with a .jpg extension from any URL address. After you complete this step, the websites create a color palette that matches the primary colors found within the photo.



Use ragged right margins when you

- Cannot use a proportional font.
- Want an informal look.
- Use very short line lengths.

6. Put Important Elements in the Top Left and Lower Right Quadrants

Readers of English are accustomed to reading pages of text from left to right, developing this habit over a lifetime. Effective document designers tap into our habit. They know that we start in the upper left-hand corner of the page, read to the right, move down, and then to the right again. Actually, the eye moves in a Z pattern.¹² (See Figure 6.7.) Therefore, the four quadrants of the page carry different visual weights. The top left quadrant, where the eye starts, is the most important; the bottom right quadrant, where the eye ends, is next most important.

7. Use a Grid to Unify Graphic Elements

Many document designers use a **grid system** to design pages. In its simplest form, a grid imposes two or three imaginary columns on the page. In more complex grids, these columns can be further subdivided. Then all the graphic elements—text indentations, headings, visuals, and so on—are lined up within the columns. The resulting symmetry creates a more pleasing page and unifies long documents.

Figure 6.8 uses grids to organize a page with visuals and a newsletter page.

8. Use Highlighting, Decorative Devices, and Color in Moderation

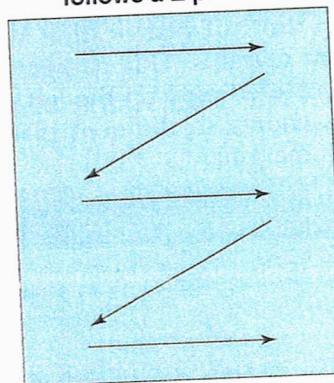
Many word-processing programs have arrows, pointing fingers, and a host of other **dingbats** that you can insert. Clip art packages and presentation software allow you to insert more and larger images into your text. Used in moderation, highlighting and decorative devices make pages more interesting. However, don't overdo them. A page or screen that uses every possible decorating device just looks busy and hard to read.

Color works well to highlight points. Use color for overviews and main headings, not for small points. Red is appropriate for warnings in North

Figure 6.7

Put Important Elements in the Top Left and Bottom Right Quadrants

Eye movement on the page follows a Z pattern



Blue quadrants are most important area of the page

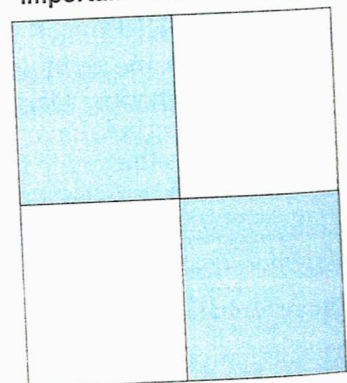
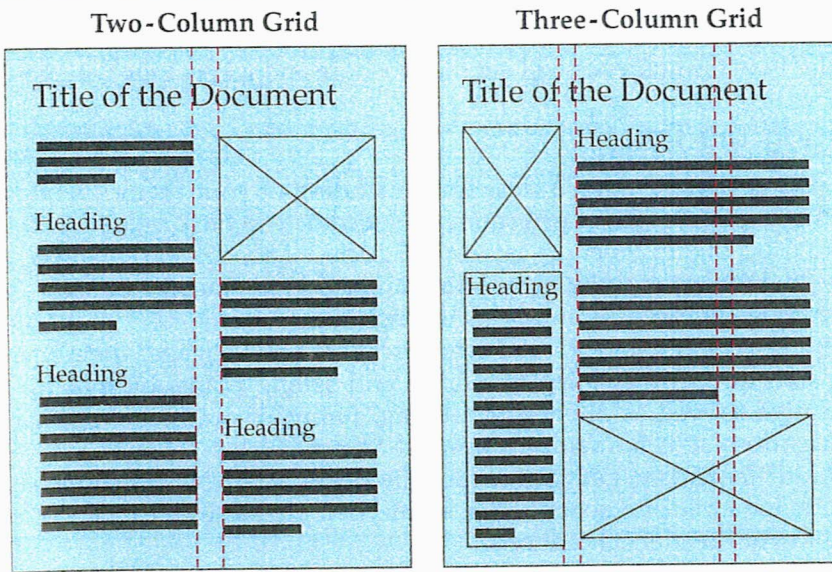


Figure 6.8

Examples of Grids to Design Pages



America. Since the connotations of colors vary among cultures, check with experts before you use color for international or multicultural audiences. (For more information on color, see the discussion in Chapter 16 as well as the web links in this chapter.)

Using Software Programs for Creating Document Designs

Many software programs enable you to create the documents described in the next few sections of this chapter. For example, for creating print documents, you could use Pages, Word, Publisher, InDesign, or Illustrator, or open source programs such as Writer or Google Docs. For building websites, you might use programs like Dreamweaver, WebEasy, or Website Creator, or open source programs such as Drupal or WordPress.

These software programs are just a sampling; many more programs are available. Each will vary in functionality and price. And each will come with advantages and disadvantages based on your design needs. However, even the simplest programs will give you enough design control to put into practice the guidelines discussed in the previous section.

Proficiency in one or more of the software programs mentioned above can make your employer view you more favorably. Gaining software proficiencies can also give you an advantage over other job seekers if you list them on your résumé when you're on the job market.

Designing Brochures LO 6-4

Designing a good brochure incorporates all elements of document design. To create an effective brochure, you must analyze your rhetorical situation, draft the text, select appropriate visuals, create the design, and print.

Analyzing Your Rhetorical Situation

In all forms of business communication, you should begin by considering your audience and purpose. A brochure designed to promote awareness of your

Standardizing Color



Pantone is in the business of helping organizations identify, match, and communicate colors. They help graphic firms and printers with ink colors (2,868 different colors) and manufacturers with plastic colors. They provide 2,100 colors, in cotton or paper format, for designers in fashion, home furnishings, and interior design industries.

Pantone View Colors, a "biannual trend forecasting tool that offers seasonal color direction and inspiration 24 months in advance," is used by apparel, cosmetics, and home furnishing industries to ensure they offer products in the most current colors.

The Pantone Color Institute conducts color research, including the study of how color influences thoughts, emotions, and physical reactions.

Pantone, "Corporate Overview," accessed August 13, 2013, <http://www.pantone.com/pages/pantone.aspx?pg=19306>.

The Power of Color on Nutrition



Color is such a powerful design tool that it may impact choices the next time you're standing in line at the grocery store.

A research experiment discovered that people were more likely to perceive a green nutrition label on a candy bar as healthier than a red label despite the fact that each conveyed the same information. The experiment was run a second time, but this time replacing the red label with a white label. The researcher discovered that people who identified healthy eating as an important factor in their lives were more likely to choose the green label over the white label.

The findings suggest a strong connection between the color green and people's perceptions of healthy. In what way do these findings raise ethical concerns about the colors for nutritional labels?

Adapted from Jonathon P. Schuldt, "Does Green Mean Healthy? Nutrition Label Color Affects Perceptions of Healthfulness," *Health Communication* (2013): 1-8; doi: 10.1080/10410236.2012.725270.

company will have a different look than a brochure telling people how to do something and persuading them to do it. Try to identify a **central selling point**, an overarching benefit the audience will get. Identify any objections the audience may have and brainstorm ways to deal with these in your brochure. Finally, consider how the audience will get the brochure and where they will use it.

Drafting the Text

Once you have developed a clear understanding of your rhetorical situation, draft the text to see how much room you need. If you have a lot of text, you'll need to use a bigger brochure layout or a series of brochures. However, make sure to tighten your writing by following the guidelines in Chapter 5. Use you-attitude and positive emphasis throughout.

People are more likely to read brochures if the text engages their attention. So be sure to use interesting headlines and selling points by making them informative as well as attention-grabbing, funny, or out of the ordinary. Or you might use sidebars with testimonial quotes, examples, or vignettes. You could add elements to get your readers involved with your brochure, such as a coupon for a free or discount offer, a quiz, or a puzzle. Interesting stories can also hold your readers' attention.

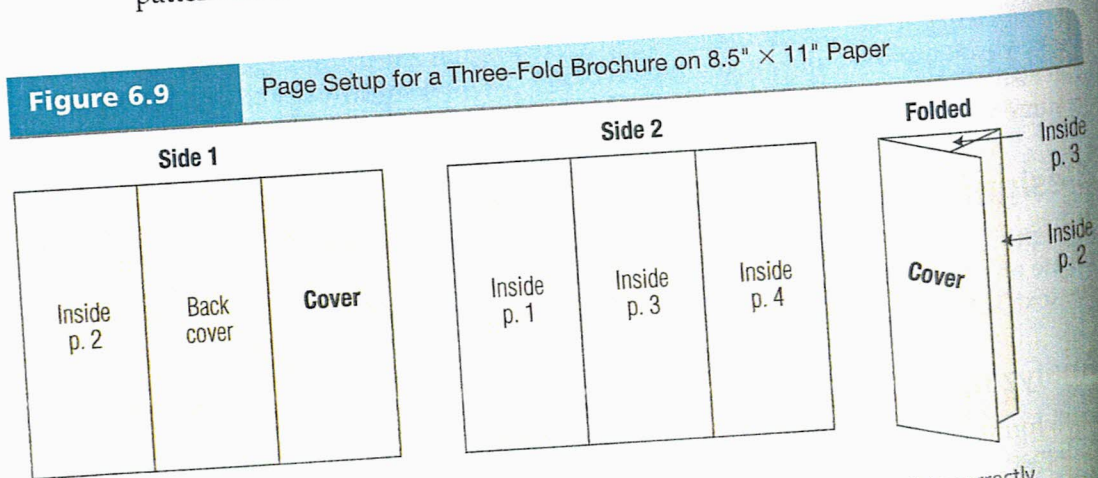
Selecting Appropriate Visuals

After the text is drafted, choose appropriate visuals to accompany it. Use a visual that tells a story. Remember that the visual has to work for the audience. A photo of a campus landmark may not mean much to an audience thinking about attending a summer program on campus. For additional information about incorporating visuals, including ethics, see Chapter 16.

Creating the Design

Before inserting textual and visual elements into your brochure, you might use thumbnail sketches to test layouts. You will need to choose the image you want to project for yourself or your organization. (Clean and clear? Postmodern and hip?) Make every choice—color, font, layout, paper—a conscious one. The three-fold brochure shown in Figure 6.9 is the most common layout, but many other arrangements are possible.

Put your central selling point on the cover. Then, use a grid to align the elements within the panels. Make sure the Z pattern emphasizes important points for each spread the reader encounters. In a three-fold brochure, the Z pattern needs to work for the cover alone, for inside pages 1 and 2 (as the



When creating a three-fold brochure, mimic this page setup so your final document prints correctly.

reader begins to unfold the brochure), and for inside pages 1, 3, and 4 (when the brochure is fully opened).

Follow these additional design principles when creating your brochure:

- Use proportional fonts.
- Use two fonts—one for headings and one for body text—to create visual variety.
- Avoid italic type and underlining, which can make text hard to read.
- Use color effectively (by using the color scheme designers mentioned in the sidebar on page 168).
- Repeat design elements (headings, small photos) across panels to create a unified look.
- Create contrast (between text and visuals, between a larger font for headings and a smaller one for text).
- Include enough white space—use lists and headings or short paragraphs with extra space between them. Ragged right margins generally work better with short line lengths.

Printing the Brochure

Printing can be accomplished on your personal ink-jet printer. For better laser-quality results, however, you might go to FedEx Office, Staples, OfficeMax, or Copyworks. If your organization demands an even higher professional look or you have thousands of copies to print, take your brochure to a commercial printer.

If you opt for four-color printing, use glossy paper to add a professional tone to your design. Four-color printing will look best; however, it will also cost you or your organization the most money. To get the effect of color with the least expense, use black print on colored paper.

Designing Infographics **LO 6-5**

Infographics, as the combined words imply, are information graphics. They inform and educate an audience about a specific topic using a mixture of statistics, text, color, and visuals (see Figure 6.10). They often present the complex findings from both qualitative and quantitative research studies in an easily digestible format. Infographics thrive in the digital age because they are so easy to share, forward, post, and tweet.

While infographics were formerly found mainly in newspapers and news-magazines, professional organizations are now quickly adopting them. Some businesses, such as Wells Fargo, BP, Sony, and JPMorgan Chase & Co., use them in their annual reports to communicate with shareholders. Other organizations use infographics on their websites and on social media pages to connect with customers and promote their business. Infographics exist on nearly any business-related topic you can image, whether about business cards, CEOs, proposals, or globalization to name a few. (See Figure 6.10 for an infographic on salary science.) Some job hunters are even creating infographic résumés to promote their accomplishments and to get noticed by potential employers.¹³

Like creating a brochure, designing infographics incorporates all elements of document design. To create an effective infographic, you must analyze your rhetorical situation, research your topic, find visuals, draft the text, and put it all together.

Analyzing Your Rhetorical Situation

You should begin by considering your audience, context, and purposes of the infographic. Who do you want to look at your infographic? Where do you envision they will come in contact with it? What message do you want to get

<http://colorscheme designer.com>



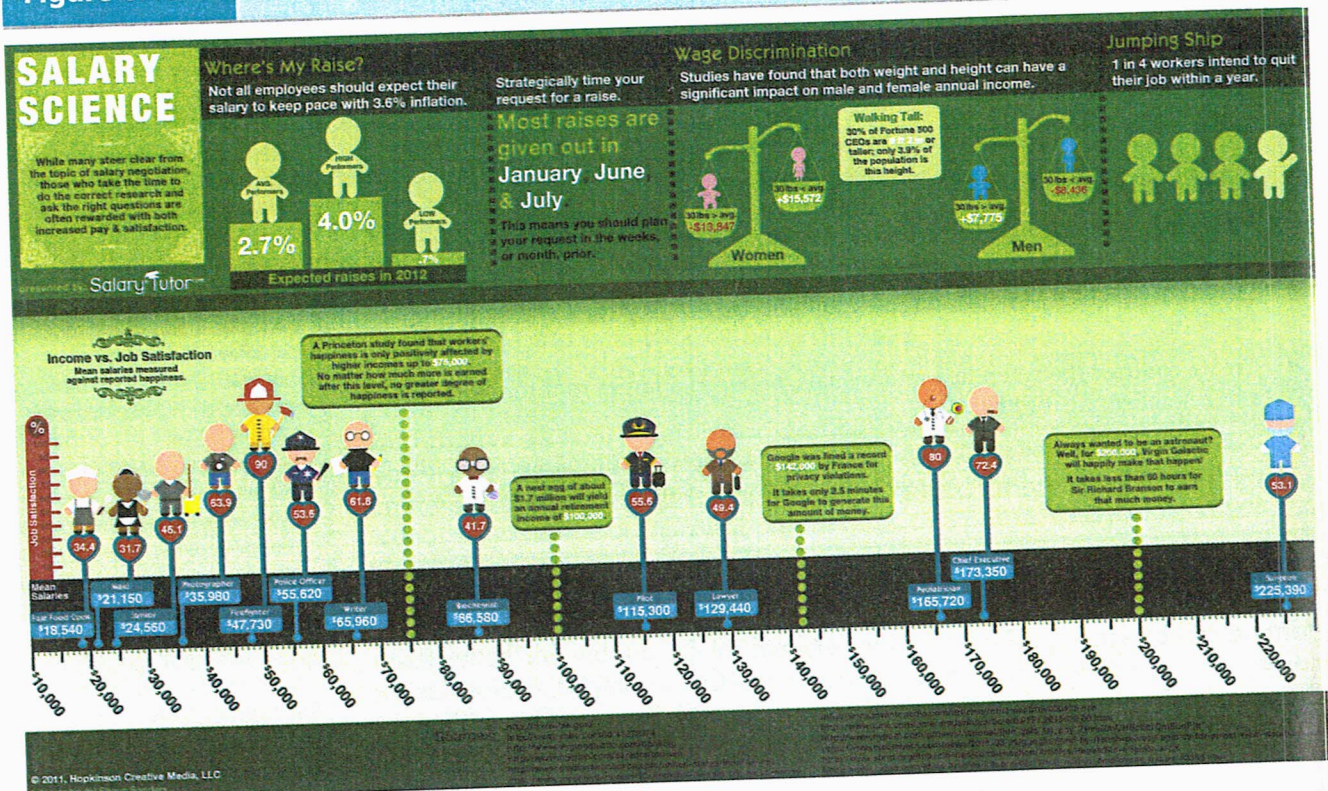
Have you ever wondered how color documents might look to a person with color deficiencies? Well, now you can see!

This website provides the ability to create a color scheme you might incorporate into your professional documents. It also has a drop-down menu that allows you to see how your color creations will be perceived by people with color deficiencies.

Since nearly 14.5% of the population has some sort of color deficiency, you should consider how the colors you choose in your designs may affect your audience.

Figure 6.10

An Example of an Infographic



Source: <http://salarytutor.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/salary-negotiation-infographic.png>. Reprinted with permission.

<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/index.cfm>,
<http://www.unclesamsphotos.com>, and
http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Free_image_resources

These websites offer many royalty-free visuals that you can incorporate into your designs without violating copyright laws. You can also search other popular sites such as Flickr and search for photos that have a creative commons license.

across? To have cohesion in your final design, you need to be sure you clearly understand what you're trying to communicate and why before starting the design process.

Researching Your Topic

After you determine a topic, you need to research it. The best infographics are grounded in solid research. Similar to any other kind of research, information on infographics should come from reliable sources and accurate data. Keep a running works cited list during this research phase that you can later place on the bottom of your infographic to gain credibility as the creator.

During the research phase, you also need to find an informative story within the qualitative and/or quantitative data. For example, if the topic of your infographic is negative news messages, what story are you going to tell on that infographic? What research says about buffers, apologies, or alternatives or something entirely different?

As you research, you will probably want to narrow your topic. If you try to communicate too much about your selected topic, your audience will quickly become overwhelmed or, worse, confused and stop looking at your design.

Finding Visuals

Find visuals that help educate the audience about your topic. Since infographics are a visual genre, the images you use should help communicate your message. You'll have to make choices about the type of information you're going to display. (For additional information on using visuals, see Chapter 16). As you do for textual material, be sure to cite all visuals that you are borrowing. Many royalty-free images are available online (see sidebar on this page).

If you have difficulty finding appropriate visuals for your topic, you may consider designing your own. Many infographics use line drawings or other graphic elements to communicate information.

Drafting the Text

Unlike brochures or web pages, which mainly use text to communicate information, infographics rely on visuals and design elements to do a lot of the work. As such, text often serves a supporting role. The text you do use should be clear and concise, and of course well written. Any small errors in spelling or grammar quickly become magnified on an infographic.

You should also develop a catchy title that immediately grabs the audience's attention and creates excitement about viewing your infographic. Use other body text to offer supporting details for the message that visuals are supposed to communicate.

Putting It All Together

Before combining visuals and text into your infographic, you might do a few sketches to test layout ideas. The size of your infographic will depend on where and how the audience will view your final product. Many infographics are found on the web, so the size dimensions can be determined by the amount of information you have to convey. However, if you plan to print the infographic, you will have to create a design that conforms to standard sizes of paper.

After your sketches are complete, combine the visuals and textual elements in a software program of your choice. Incorporate different shapes, lines, typeface sizes, and colors to direct the viewer's sight through the infographic. The infographic should have a clear hierarchy of presented information; the audience should never be confused about where to look next.

You will need to determine the tone you want your infographic to project for yourself or your organization. Make every choice on the infographic—color, font, visuals, text size—a conscious one. Your choices should always resonate with the intended audience and purpose of your infographic. And be sure that once you get everything on the infographic, you make a strong, clear point; the audience should never wonder why you are presenting a certain piece of information or how it connects.

Be a cautious, ethical designer of infographics. Since visuals generally gain more importance and emotional impact than their textual counterparts,¹⁴ designers of infographics can easily mislead their audience. Avoid presenting unethical information or distorting data to make a stronger point and attract attention. The information infographics offer needs to be trustworthy and should help an audience build trust in you as the creator.

Follow these additional guidelines when designing your infographic:

- Use a cohesive color scheme. (See the color scheme design websites mentioned in the sidebar on page 168.)
- Limit your design to two fonts to create visual variety but also cohesiveness.
- Avoid italic type and underlining, which can make text hard to read.
- Repeat design elements (headings, shapes, etc.) to create a unified look.
- Include enough white space so that the audience doesn't feel overwhelmed with your design.
- Incorporate citations for all researched text and visuals along the bottom. Use in-text citations to show the audience what material came from which source.



<http://www.coolinfographics.com>, <http://www.good.is/infographics>, <http://www.visual.ly>, and <http://www.dailyinfographic.com>

Check out Cool Infographics, Good Infographics, Visual.ly, or Daily Infographic for examples of infographics. These websites offer repositories of thousands of infographics, some with commentary on what makes the included infographics effective.

<http://www.oswd.org>

Open Source Web Design has thousands of clean, professional design templates for web pages available for download. Most of these templates are free; the authors ask only that you keep their contact information on the pages you create using the template.



<http://www.usableweb.com/>

Usable Web offers a collection of links about information architecture, human factors, user interface issues, and usable design specific to the World Wide Web. Log on to find tips on how to improve the overall design and look of your website and its features.



Designing Web Pages LO 6-6

Like effective brochures and infographics, web pages also incorporate principles of rhetorical analysis and document design. To create effective web pages, you must attract and maintain the audience's attention, create a usable home page, provide easy navigation, follow conventions, and increase accessibility.

Attracting and Maintaining Attention

The amount of time you have to attract and keep an audience's attention on your website is minimal. Researchers tracked how long users took to read or scan web pages; 52% of the visits were shorter than 10 seconds. In fact, 25% were less than four seconds. Only 10% were longer than two minutes. Therefore, any design flaws could cause audiences to leave your website immediately.¹⁵

For websites viewed on mobile phones, the experience also needs to be simple. Steve Yankovich, vice president for eBay mobile, states, "We've found that people will give us 30–60 seconds to connect them with the things they need and love."¹⁶

Jakob Nielsen, a web guru and usability consultant, provides research showing that web audiences use an F-shaped pattern when viewing web pages. First, they quickly read across the top of the page. Then they move down the page some and read across again, but for a shorter distance. Finally, they scan down the left side. All this happens quickly. The F-shaped pattern means that your most important information must be at the top of the page. In addition, make sure that headings, paragraphs, and items in lists start with words important to your reader.¹⁷

Creating a Usable Home Page

Your home page is crucial. Not only must it open quickly, but visitors also must be able to find what they want quickly. Studies show that users grow impatient after waiting 10 seconds for a page to load, and most will leave the site immediately.¹⁸ In addition, first-time visitors tend not to scroll down beyond the first screen of text.

To keep visitors around long enough to find (or buy) what they want, make using the first screen extremely easy.

- Provide an introductory statement or graphic orienting the surfing reader to the organization sponsoring the page.
- Make completing a task as easy as possible.
- Offer an overview of the content of your page, with links to take readers to the parts that interest them.
- Provide navigation bars vertically on the left of the screen or horizontally on the top and bottom. A site index and an internal search engine are valuable tools.
- Make it clear what readers will get if they click on a link.

Ineffective phrasing: Employment. **Openings and skill levels are determined by each office.**
 Better phrasing: Employment. **Openings listed by skill level and by location.**

Providing Easy Navigation

While websites have increased the value they have to offer, the biggest problem now is navigation, especially as sites grow and become more complex. A web page's navigation should be intuitive to the audience and make accessing information easy. If the audience has to work too hard to figure out how to use your web page, chances are they will leave the site.

Following Conventions

Jakob Nielsen urges his readers to follow conventions of web pages and get back to design basics. He reminds designers that users want quality basics. Here are some of the top web design mistakes he lists:

- Bad search engines.
- Links that don't change color when visited.
- Large text blocks.
- Fixed font size.
- Content that doesn't answer users' questions.

He also cautions against violating design conventions. Users will expect your website to act like the other sites they visit. If it doesn't, the site will be harder to use and visitors will leave. Nielsen warns that some conventions, such as banner ads, have outlived their usefulness. Banner blindness is so prevalent that anything that looks like a banner will be ignored, as one nonprofit health site discovered. The site had a box at the top of the home page telling users what to do if they thought they were having a heart attack, but research showed that users were ignoring the box because they thought it was an ad.¹⁹

As you design web pages, use the following guidelines:

- Use a white or light background for easy scanning.
- Keep graphics small. Specify the width and height so that the text can load while the graphics come in.
- Provide visual variety in your text. Use indentations, bulleted or numbered lists, and headings. Start lists with impact words—remember the F pattern.
- Unify multiple pages with a small banner, graphic, or label so surfers know who sponsors each page.
- Use alternative text ("ALT tag") for visually impaired viewers.
- On each page, provide a link to the home page.
- Keep animation to a minimum, and allow viewers to control its use. If you have an animated site introduction page, include an easy-to-spot "Skip Intro" button.
- If your web pages include music or sound effects, put an Off button where the user can see it immediately. Computer users may be at work, in a library, or at another location where your brand's theme song would be disruptive—or embarrassing.

Appropriately enough, the web has many additional resources about web page design guidelines; on technical pages regarding HTML, XML, CSS, and Java; and on web page design programs such as WordPress, Dreamweaver, and Drupal.

Making Your Web Page Accessible



Users with hearing impairments need captions for audio material on the web.

Blind users need words, not images. Words can be voiced by a screen reader or translated into Braille text. To make your web page accessible for people with vision impairments,

- Put a link to a text-only version of the site in the upper left-hand corner.
- Put navigation links, a site map, and search box at the top of the screen, preferably in the upper left-hand corner.
- Arrange navigation links alphabetically so that blind users can use a screen reader to jump to the links they want.
- Provide alternative text (an "Alt tag") for all images, applets, and submit buttons.
- Provide a static alternative to flash or animation.
- In hypertext links, use text that makes sense when read alone. A person listening to the audio will not understand "Click here." "Click to order a copy" or "Click for details" offers a better clue.

The Web Accessibility Initiative (www.w3.org) points out that accessible websites are easier for a variety of people to use—not just those with obvious impairments.

<http://www.usability.gov>



Usability.gov offers a repository of best practices for creating user-centered and accessible websites. Log on to find strategy tips, templates, and researched guidelines on how to improve your website design.

Increasing Accessibility

As you design a website, you also should try to make it accessible to people with disabilities. The law is beginning to consider a website a public space and therefore subject to the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. Target settled a class action suit with the National Federation of the Blind by agreeing to pay \$6 million in damages and to make its site more accessible. More legal proceedings got Apple to agree to make iTunes more accessible. One of the most sought-after features in these legal actions is text attached to links and graphics that can be accessed by screen-reading software.²⁰ For more ways to make your web page accessible, see the sidebar “Making Your Web Page Accessible” on page 175.

One additional concern in terms of accessibility is the location where people view your web pages. With the proliferation of smartphones and tablets, you need to optimize your website for these alternative viewing platforms.

Testing the Design for Usability LO 6-7

Usability testing, or assessing your documents with real audiences, is an important step in document design. A document that looks pretty may or may not work for the audience. To know whether your design is functional, test it with your audience.

After collecting feedback from both customers and employees, Delta Air Lines reimagined the design of its boarding passes. The new look, as shown in Figure 6.11, features a clear hierarchy of information, less clutter, more white space, only one bar code, and a new sans serif typeface. These choices make the new design user-friendly for both Delta employees and passengers.²¹

According to Jakob Nielsen, testing a draft with five users will reveal 85% of the problems with the document.²² If time and money permit additional testing, revise the document and test the new version with another five users. Test the document with the people who are most likely to have trouble with it: very old or young readers, people with little education, people who read English as a second language.

Three kinds of tests yield particularly useful information:

- Watch someone as he or she uses the document to do a task. Where does the user pause, reread, or seem confused? How long does it take? Does the document enable the user to complete the task accurately?
- Ask the user to “think aloud” while completing the task, interrupt the user at key points to ask what he or she is thinking, or ask the user to describe the thought process after completing the document and the task. Learning the user’s thought processes is important, since a user may get the right answer for the wrong reasons. In such a case, the design still needs work.
- Ask users to put a plus sign in the margins by any part of the document they like or agree with and a minus sign by any part of the document that seems confusing or wrong. Then use interviews or focus groups to find out the reasons for the plus and minus judgments.

Jakob Nielsen also urges usability testing for web design. In fact, he recommends testing at various stages of the design process—good advice for complex paper documents as well. He also warns that the best usability testing involves *watching* people use the communication. Listening to what they think they do can be misleading.²³ (Would you have told a researcher that you look at a web page using an F pattern?)

Figure 6.11

Before (top) and After (bottom) Redesign of Delta's Boarding Pass



TESTACCT/QA
XXXXXXX
DL2397768025
H2GB

BOARDING PASS
SKY PRIORITY
1 006 2144698802 0
GKAWEZ

BOARDING PASS
SKY PRIORITY

TESTACCT/QA
XXXXXXX
DL2397768025

FLIGHT DATE CLASS ORIGIN DEPARTS
DL10 02FEB H ATLANTA 1035P
OPERATED BY COACH
DELTA AIR LINES INC DESTINATION BRD TIME
LONDON-HEATHROW 940P
DEPARTURE GATE - **SUBJECT TO CHANGE**
SOUTH TERMINAL

SEAT
20E

SKY

FLIGHT DATE
DL10 02FEB

ORIGIN
ATLANTA

DESTINATION
LONDON-HEATHROW
OPERATED BY DELTA AIR LINES INC
DELTA SKY CLUB ONE-DAY PASS

SEAT
20E

SKY

BCH ATL001
XXXXXXXXXX

INTL - VERIFY PASSPORT

WHEELCHAIR REQUESTED / SPECIAL MEAL REQUESTED

MARKETING DECODER | Airline boarding pass

FRI, MAR 30, 2012



Diamond Testacct
GT9549 / SKY PRIORITY

SkyMiles #xxxxx9718
DIAMOND/ELITEPLUS/SKY CLUB

BOARDING DOCUMENT

JFK ▶ LAX

NYC-KENNEDY (JFK) ▶
4 Los Angeles (LAX)
FLIGHT DL120

BOARDING
8:20am

GATE*
-

ZONE
Sky

SEAT
24C

Depart Fri, 9:00am
Economy (H) Arrive Fri, 12:20pm

*Gates may change. Check airport monitors.

Fly paperless: www.delta.com/app

Ticket#: 006 2144236059

1. Airport codes are in large lettering because consumers find the codes 'fun' and 'insiderly.'
2. Passenger names are shown with first name followed by last name in larger lettering.
3. Instead of two bar codes, there is just one.
4. Destination cities are shown in a larger font than departure cities because 'people know what airport they are currently in.'
4. Type is a 'Whitney' font created for Delta.
5. Design avoids large images, which require ink blocks that jam some airport printers.

Summary by Learning Objectives

LO 6-1 Why document design is important and how to incorporate it into the writing process.

- Good document design can save time and money, and prevent legal problems.
- Effective design groups ideas visually, making the structure of a document more inviting and obvious so the document is easier to read.
- The best documents are created when you think about design at each stage of the writing process.
- As you plan, think about the needs of your audience.
- As you write, incorporate lists, headings, and visuals.
- Get feedback from people who will be using your document.
- As you revise, check your draft against the guidelines in this chapter.
- Effective design relies heavily on conventions, which vary by audience.

LO 6-2 The four levels of document design, and how they can help you critique documents.

The four levels of design—intra, inter, extra, and supra—help you organize and analyze design choices.

LO 6-3 Guidelines for document design.

These guidelines help writers create visually attractive documents:

1. Use white space.
2. Use headings.
3. Limit the use of words set in all capital letters.
4. Use no more than two fonts in a single document.
5. Decide whether to justify margins.
6. Put important elements in the top left and lower right quadrants.
7. Use a grid to unify visuals and other graphic elements.
8. Use highlighting, decorative devices, and color in moderation.

LO 6-4 How to design brochures.

To create an effective brochure, you must analyze your rhetorical situation, draft the text, select appropriate visuals, create the design, and print.

LO 6-5 How to design infographics.

To create effective infographics, you must analyze your rhetorical situation, research your topic, find visuals, draft the text, and put it all together.

LO 6-6 How to design web pages.

To create effective web pages, you must attract and maintain the audience's attention, create a usable home page, provide easy navigation, follow conventions, and increase accessibility.

LO 6-7 How to do basic usability testing on your documents.

Usability testing is assessing your documents with real audiences. To conduct a usability test, observe people reading the document or using it to complete a task.

Continuing Case

The All-Weather Case, set in an HR department in a manufacturing company, extends through all 19 chapters and is available at www.mhhe.com/locker11e. The portion for this chapter asks students to improve the document design of a policy statement.

Exercises and Cases

6.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. Why is document design important in business communication? (LO 6-1)
2. How can document design be part of your writing process? (LO 6-1)
3. What are the four levels of document design? (LO 6-2)
4. What are some guidelines for document design? (LO 6-3)
5. What are some basic guidelines for designing brochures? (LO 6-4)
6. What are some basic guidelines for designing infographics? (LO 6-5)
7. What are some basic guidelines for designing web pages? (LO 6-6)
8. How can you perform basic usability testing on your documents? (LO 6-7)

Use the guidelines in this chapter to evaluate each of the following page designs. What are their strong points? What could be improved?

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Counting Calories and Watching Cholesterol

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Exercising and Eating Healthy in a Busy Lifestyle

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Company Briefs

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Managing Your Sleep

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Counting Calories and Watching Cholesterol

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Exercising and Eating Healthy in a Busy Lifestyle

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The group will run many lively games

Managing Your Sleep

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- Discuss the design elements you see on these sample pages with a small group of classmates.
- Write an e-mail to your instructor evaluating the design elements on each of the sample pages. Be sure to address the four levels of design, as well as the guidelines for document design discussed in this chapter.

- c. In an oral presentation to the class, explain the process you'd use to redesign one of the sample pages. What design elements would make the page stronger or weaker? What design elements would you change and how? Given the title of the document, what audience characteristics might your design take into account?

- What visual design elements attract you to these particular infographics?
- What visual design elements, if any, detract from the main messages of the infographics?
- To what extent do the infographics contain misleading information or data distortion?
- To what extent are the visual design choices effective or ineffective? In what specific ways do the creators blend images and text?
- To what extent overall are your three chosen infographics effective or ineffective given the audiences and purpose you have identified?²⁴

6.7 Evaluating Websites

Compare three web pages in the same category (for example, shelters for the homeless, organizations, car companies, university departments, food banks). Which page(s) are most effective? Why? What weaknesses do the pages have?

As your instructor directs,

- a. Discuss the pages with a small group of classmates.

6.8 Comparing Websites' Rankings

Alexa.com is a website that tracks the performance and popularity of other websites. In addition to ranking websites, the site allows users to input several websites and compare their rank and number of page views on a colored graph. The comparisons can range between seven days and a year. Visit the site to see which websites currently have the honor of being the top-rated. Where does your organization's or

As your instructor directs,

- a. Discuss the infographics and findings with a small group of classmates.
- b. Write an e-mail to your instructor evaluating the three infographics. Include URLs of the infographics mentioned in your e-mail.
- c. In an oral presentation to the class, explain what makes your three favorite infographics effective.
- d. Post your evaluation in a discussion forum to the class. Include the URLs of the infographics so classmates can view them.

- b. Write an e-mail to your instructor evaluating the pages. Include URLs of the pages in your e-mail.
- c. In an oral presentation to the class, explain what makes one page good and another one weak.
- d. Post your evaluation in a discussion forum to the class. Include the URLs so classmates can click to the pages you discuss.

6.9 Comparing Shopping Websites

Many shoppers around the world do much of their shopping online. In a pair or small groups, find three online shopping sites that sell similar types of merchandise. Consider the following questions:

- Who are the target audiences of the websites?
- What are some of the design features the websites offer customers?
- How easily navigable are the home pages?
- Are the websites organized with an F-shaped pattern?
- How user-friendly are the websites?
- How well do the websites' search engines function?

school's website rank? How can a tool like this be useful for businesses? What limitations does this tool have?

As your instructor directs,

- a. Share your findings with a small group of classmates.
- b. Write an e-mail to your instructor containing your findings.

- How accessible are the websites for people with disabilities?
- Of the three websites, which is the best in terms of usability?

As your instructor directs,

- a. Discuss the websites with your partner or small group.
- b. Share your findings in an informal presentation for the rest of the class.
- c. Write an e-mail to your instructor containing your findings.

6.10 Creating a Brochure

Create a brochure for a campus, nonprofit, government, or business organization. As you work,

- Analyze your intended audience. What are their needs? What factors are most likely to persuade them to read your brochure?

- Choose a story: What's the important information? What idea do you want your audience to take away?
- Make page design choices that create a usable document and generate a positive response from your audience.

- Make visual design choices that enhance and expand on your text without being simply decorative.

As your instructor directs,

- a. Write an e-mail to your instructor explaining your choices for content and design.

- b. In an oral presentation to the class, display your brochure and explain your content and design choices.

6.11 Creating an Infographic

Create an infographic for a campus, nonprofit, government, or business organization. As you work,

- Analyze your intended audience. What are their needs? What factors are most likely to persuade them to view your infographic?
- Choose a story. What's the important information? What idea or information do you want your audience to take away?
- Make design choices that create a usable document and generate a positive response from your audience.
- Make visual design choices that enhance and expand on your text without being simply decorative.

As your instructor directs,

- a. Write an e-mail to your instructor explaining your choices for the content and design of your infographic.
- b. In an oral presentation to the class, display your infographic and explain your content and design choices.

6.12 Creating a Web Page

Create a web page for a campus, nonprofit, government, or business organization that does not yet have one. As you work,

- Analyze your intended audience. What are their needs? What factors are most likely to persuade them to use this site?
- Choose a story. What's the important information? What action do you want them to take while they're browsing this site?
- Make page design choices that create a usable site and generate a positive response from your audience.
- Make visual design choices that enhance and expand on your text without being distracting.

As your instructor directs,

- a. Write an e-mail to your instructor explaining your choices for content and design.
- b. In an oral presentation to the class, display your site and explain your page and visual design choices. Provide the URL, or display images of the site as presentation visuals, so that classmates can evaluate your design as you present it.

6.13 Testing a Document

Ask someone to follow a set of instructions or to fill out a form. (Consider consumer instructions, forms for financial aid, and so forth.) As an alternative, you also might test a document you've created for a course.

- Time the person. How long does it take? Is the person able to complete the task?
- Observe the person. Where does he or she pause, reread, seem confused?
- Interview the person. What parts of the document were confusing?

As your instructor directs,

- a. Discuss the changes needed with a small group of classmates.
- b. Write an e-mail to your instructor evaluating the document and explaining the changes that are needed. Include the document as an attachment to your e-mail.
- c. Write to the organization that produced the document recommending necessary improvements.
- d. In an oral presentation to the class, evaluate the document and explain what changes are needed.