What You Should Know About Desktop Publishing
Do’s and Don’ts of Desktop Publishing

**Do**

*strive for simplicity in your design.*

Graphic design is simply a tool to enhance the communication of your ideas to the reader. Effective design makes it easy for readers to quickly see and understand your message.

*be tempted to over-design your projects by ‘playing’ with the many options your computer offers.*

Graphic gimmickry is not a substitute for well thought-out ideas. If you try to camouflage weak content, readers will catch on quickly. If your content has substance, you don’t want to distract and discourage readers by cluttering the layout with an excess of boxes, patterns, shadow effects, bands and borders.

*think about the content you need to include in each project.*

Base your decisions on production practicality, image projection and, especially, reader reaction. Watch that you don’t try to include too many elements and overwhelm the reader. By planning a balance of text, visual and graphic elements, you’ll be designing for the reader - not just for yourself.

*begin each project with an objective and an audience profile.*

Your objectives should take into account the action you want your readers to take and also the environment in which your project will appear. In considering your audience - keep in mind the age and educational level you intend to reach. Is this piece a necessity that everyone will read regardless of how alluring it is (usually regarding salary, benefits, etc.) or is it a piece hoping to get people to sign up or contribute to something. Even if your message is vitally important to an audience, you may have to build in skim-reading devices to nudge readers.

**Don’t**

*do*
examine the work of professionals to evaluate their design strategies and spur your own creativity.

Train your eye to spot techniques that direct a reader’s attention or organize information effectively. See what draws you in as a reader/consumer and what doesn’t work so well.

use a page size other than a multiple of $8\frac{1}{2}” \times 11”$ without asking your printer about the practicality of your choice.

Sometimes an extra $1/2”$ can cost hundreds of dollars by forcing the printer to a larger sheet size or press size and then trimming the excess.

base your page layouts on a grid.

Grids consist of non-printing horizontal and vertical lines that organize consistent placement of type, artwork and graphic accents such as rules and bars. Grids permit you to maintain page-to-page and project-to-project consistency.

make white space an integral part of your format.

Blocks of white space provide needed contrast. They separate and draw attention to type and visuals and help shape those elements on a layout. White space makes your message more appealing and easier to read. In general, the classier the image intended, the more white space you need. Plan your white space well, though, leaving rivers of white may lead readers to believe you are lacking content or can make columns of text difficult to read.

keep internal white space consistent.

Column dividers, space between paragraphs and lines of text should be consistent throughout a document. Leaving white space at the top or bottom of each page encourages readership. It is all right to leave column length ‘ragged’ at the bottom of pages. It lends to a more friendly looking document.
overcrowd a layout with too much content.
The more elements included in a given area, the less impact each element is likely to have on the reader. By replacing some text or visuals with white space, you emphasize those that remain.

use columns for easier reading.
Narrow columns of text are easy to skim-read because the horizontal eye movement required is minimal. Notice the column widths of newspapers and news magazines. They usually have columns of 40 characters or less per line. Long reading lines tire readers and make it easy to get lost from the end of one line to the start of the next. Using single-column formats that approach an average of 65 characters per line risk losing readers. It can work, however, for documentation/report type documents - just make sure the margins are generous, paragraphs short and subhead breaks frequent.

create style sheets for most projects.
This not only provides style consistency, but facilitates type changes you may wish to make later.

be tempted to use too many fonts in a publication.
For most documents just two from the different type ‘families’ is adequate. Typically a serif font for your body text and a sans serif for headlines & subheads. There are exceptions to every rule - especially as you become more familiar with design and develop a better trained eye. But it’s best to keep things as simple as possible.

select a type size to fit your column width.
The type size you choose should accommodate enough words on each line to permit comfortable reading. When choosing among text type sizes (typically between 9 point and 11 point) check to see how many words you can fit across your column width. An average of seven to ten words or 35 to 50 characters on a line provides fast reading. Leave plenty of leading (space between lines) if possible. It adds to readability more than a bigger type size.
select an italic, bold-weight or reverse typeface for large blocks of text.
The compressed, slanted letterforms of italics, the dark, thicker strokes of bold weights and reverse type are hard on readers’ eyes when used for large blocks of text. They are better used as accents, headlines, or pull quotes where there are fewer words to read.

use justified text columns if your lines of type create obvious gaps between words.
Justified text works best when there are enough words on each line to permit comfortable word spacing. Ragged right is almost always a better choice. Of course sometimes justified is justified.

use hyphens - but not too many.
If you avoid hyphenating all together, you’re likely to get very erratic line endings that disrupt comfortable reading. A series of three or more hyphenated line endings splits too many words noticeably and distracts readers. Keep an eye on your right margin and attempt to achieve a ‘shallow rag’.

select a headline type and size that offers an obvious contrast with body copy.
An effective headline stands out clearly from adjacent copy.

use all-caps as a rule.
Readers are more comfortable reading content composed of both upper and lower case letters. You can accent text by selecting a boldfaced type and making it large enough to contrast well with body type.

be consistent in using flush left, centered or flush right headlines.
Inconsistency leads to visual clutter and a random, disorderly look.
use kerning to adjust headline letter spacing for a more pleasing appearance.
Letter spacing acceptable at smaller sizes may become unsightly and exaggerated at a large size. Close or widen those gaps with kerning.

close that leading in your headlines.
Too much space between headlines gives a feeling of disconnectedness, pulling them together makes them feel more like a unit. But give your headlines plenty of space above and below to separate from body text.

use subheads to break long expanses of body copy.
Subheads add visual interest and provide clues that reinforce important information, show progression of content development and help readers quickly locate desired information. Use a font for your subheads that is either from the headline or body text family. You can achieve contrast by changing the size, weight, use of italics, etc.

include pull-quotes in a project to heighten reader interest and break solid text areas.
Pull-quotes are valuable display type opportunities to highlight an actual quote or an important phrase from the text. They add visual interest to a layout - and are sometimes used to balance the page. Make sure you provide a line or two of white space below and above the pull-quote. Select a typeface that is part of a family already in use - but contrasts nicely with body and/or headline fonts. Don’t make pull-quotes too wordy.

use too many photos or graphics.
Include only photos or graphics that contribute to the message you are relating, and are of high quality. A poor quality photo or graphic will detract from your document and may actually give a message of sloppiness, unprofessionalism or lack of caring. A single, large, story-telling photograph or graphic is more effective than a sea of small, uninspiring ones.
**do**

*resize or crop your photo or graphic correctly.*

Unproportional resizing is unacceptable by any standards. Hold down the shift key at all times to resize your graphic or photo. Crop out anything that distracts you from the message you are trying to get across.

**use boxes and simple borders to organize special content for the reader.**

Boxes and borders can separate supplementary information from the main content very effectively. The important thing to remember is to contain certain information for a reason - not arbitrarily. Random boxing or bordering will confuse the reader and may clutter the document. Don’t overuse borders and boxes - they can look cluttered, choppy and amateurish.
One space between sentences

Use only one space after periods, colons, exclamation points, question marks, quotation marks – any punctuation that separates two sentences.

On a typewriter, all the characters are monospaced. That is, they all take up the same amount of space – the letter i takes up as much space as the letter m. Because they are monospaced, there needs to be two spaces after periods to separate one sentence from the next.

On a computer the characters are proportional; that is, they each take up a proportional amount of space – the letter i takes up about one-fifth the space of the letter m. So there is no longer that visual need to separate the sentences.
File Formats

**TIFF** *(Tagged-Image File Format)*
Works best for high-quality photo scanning and graphics for print reproduction. This is not a good format for emailing.

**EPS** *(Encapsulated PostScript)*
EPS files are always larger than TIFF files because they save a preview of what the file looks like as well as the info needed to print. Works best with graphics.

**BMP** *(Bitmap)*
BMP files are too large for web use and have typically been replaced with other formats that work better with high-quality graphics. Only use with black and white work.

**GIF** *(Graphics Interchange Format)*
(Pronounced like the peanut butter - Jif) This format is used for text and graphics to be used on the web. A fine choice for simple graphics such as charts. For more complicated graphics you should use JPEG or TIFF.

**JPEG** *(Joint Photographic Experts Group)*
(Pronounced Jay-Peg) A good file format for multimedia, produces a compromise between image size and quality. This is probably the best format for emailing graphics. This format loses quality when images are resized and resaved.

**PDF** *(Portable Document Format)*
Because documents in pdf format can easily be seen and printed by users on a variety of computer and platform types, they are very common on the World Wide Web. To view files of this type, download the Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free from Adobe’s Web site.