

Graphic Design for Communication

Baruch College / BCCGSA

Presented by Mike Mathis / October 21, 2014

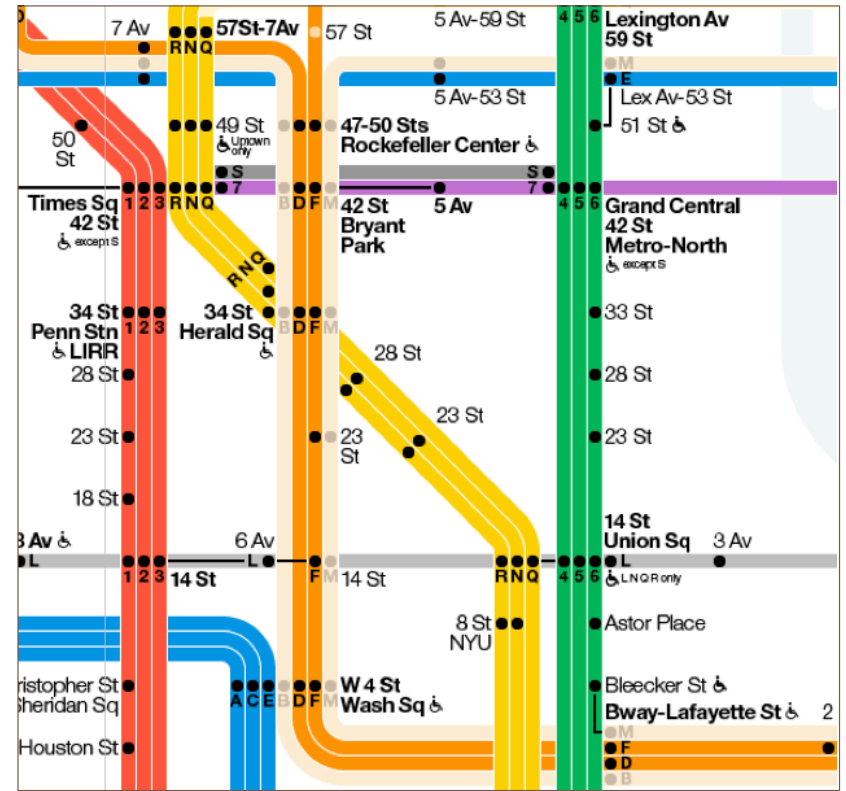
Agenda:

- I. What's the point?
- II. Guiding concepts
- III. Professional tactics
- IV. Real world challenges

I A: What's the point? / Clarity, legibility

Communicating ideas

Effective design makes ideas easier to understand.

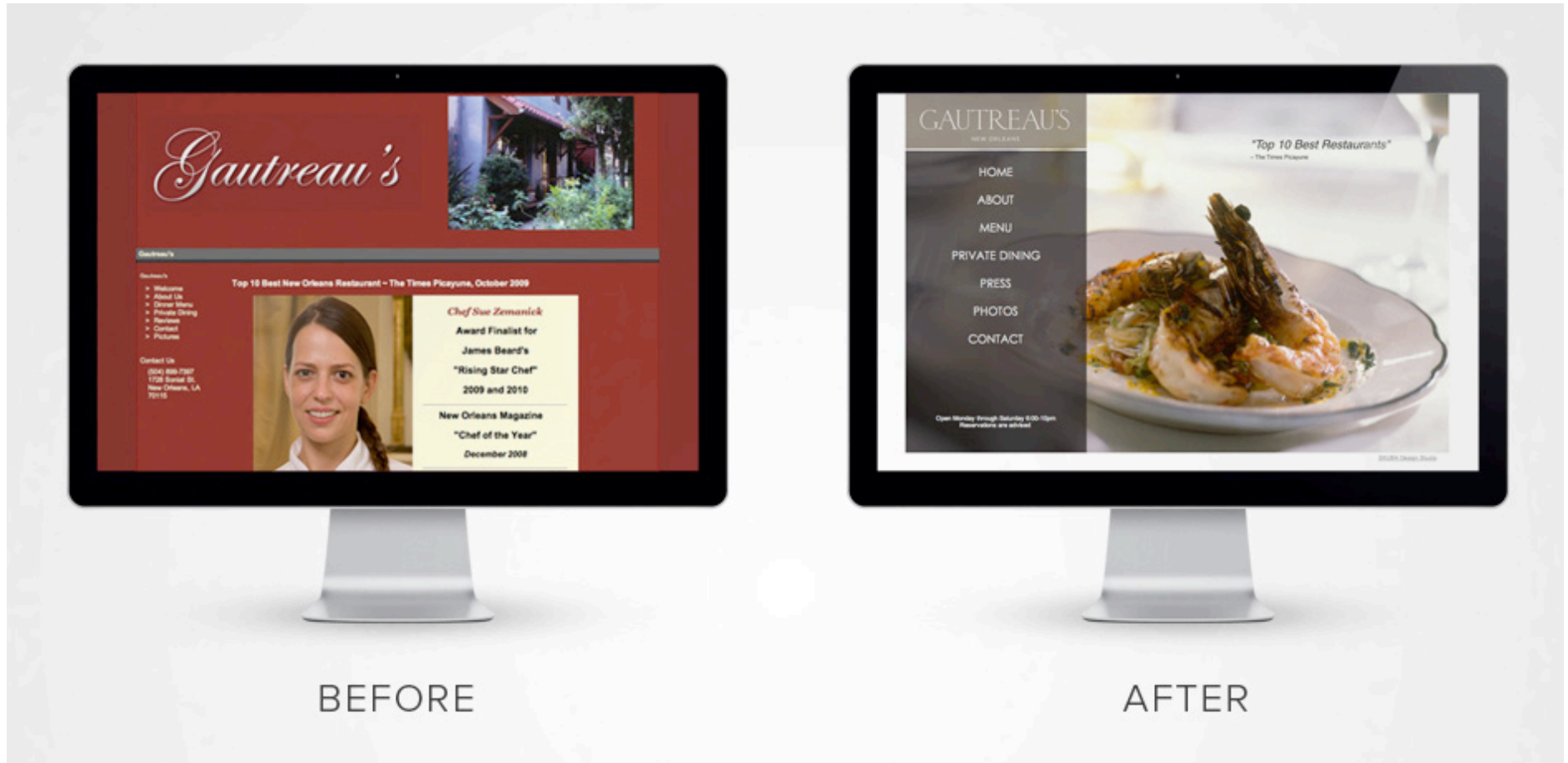


Current NYC subway maps: standard PDF and Weekender version.

Images: <http://web.mta.info/nyct/maps/subwaymap.pdf>; web.mta.info/weekender

Looking like a pro

Effective design can help you look more established.



Restaurant homepage before and after. Source: skubadesign.com

Setting yourself apart

Effective design makes it easier to recognize your organization at first glance.



Tip: Be sure to look at what your competition is doing before you embark on any design project.

Connecting in a deeper way

Very effective design establishes an emotional bond with you and your audience. (This is often more difficult than it seems.)



Guy with a new Apple product
Image: Getty Images

II. Guiding concepts

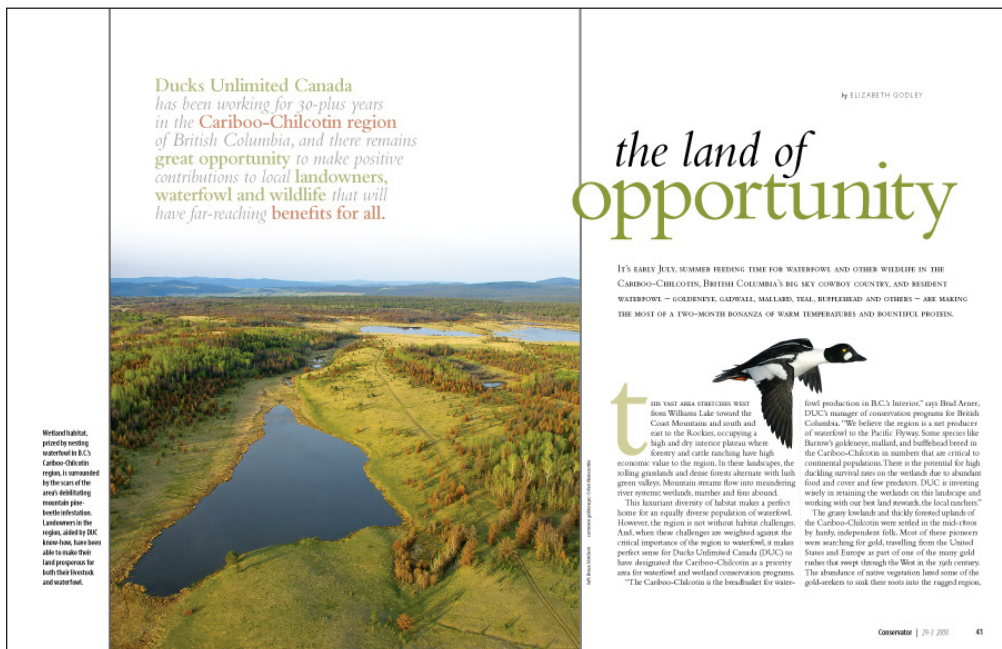
- A. Hierarchy
- B. Consistency
- C. Attractiveness

These ideas should be kept in mind
whenever design decisions are being made.

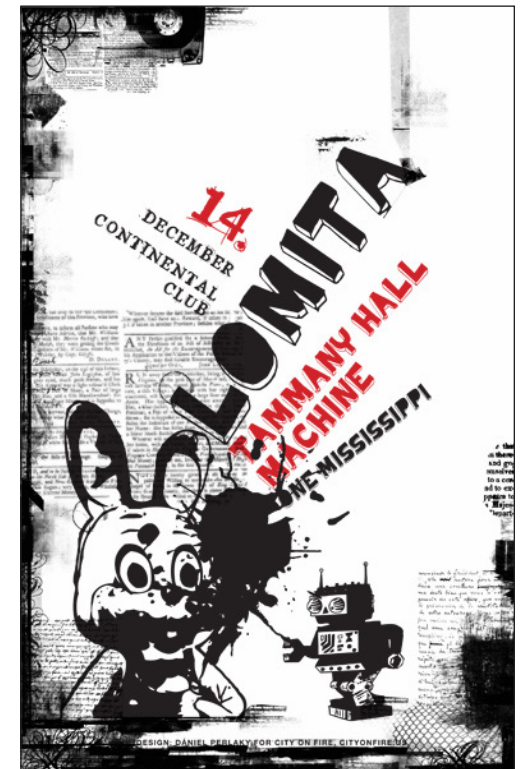
Hierarchy

Your audience will understand things better when there is a clear hierarchy. Before designing your page, make a list of what is most important. What do you want your audience to notice first?

Ways to create hierarchy: Size, Position, Weight, Empty space, Color, Images



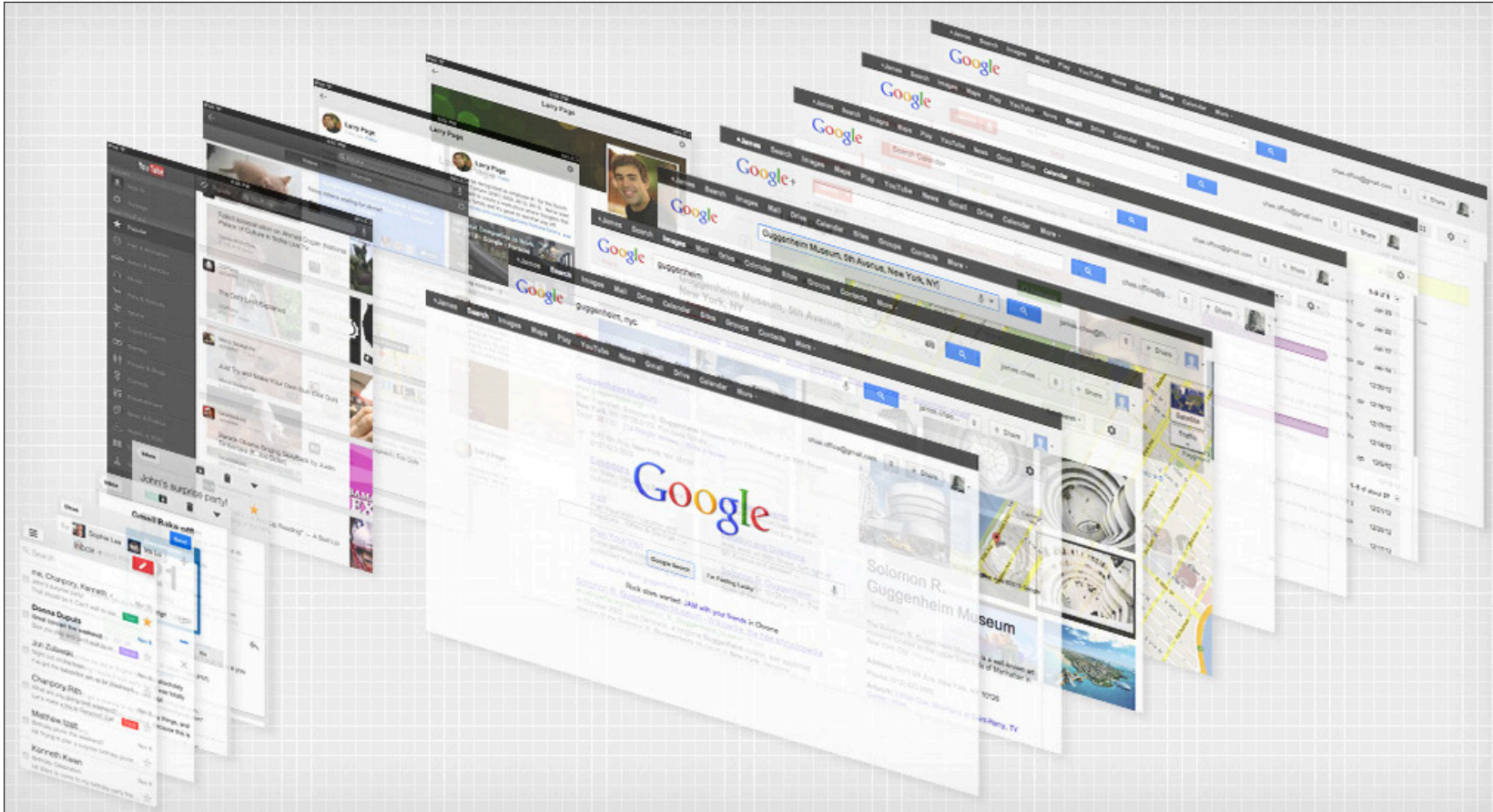
Above: From most visually important to least: 1. Photo; 2. Headline; 3. Subheadlines; 4. Body Copy/Illustration; 6. Caption. Image: Flickr



Right: From visually most important to least: 1. Illustrations (Rabbit and robot); 2. Band names (Lomita, Tammany Hall Machine and One Mississippi); 3. Date; 4. Club name. Image: Flickr

Consistency

Your message will be stronger when your designs are consistent with each other, and within themselves.



Consistency across Google, which unified its vision around 2011.

Image: <http://www.theverge.com/2013/1/24/3904134/google-redesign-how-larry-page-engineered-beautiful-revolution>

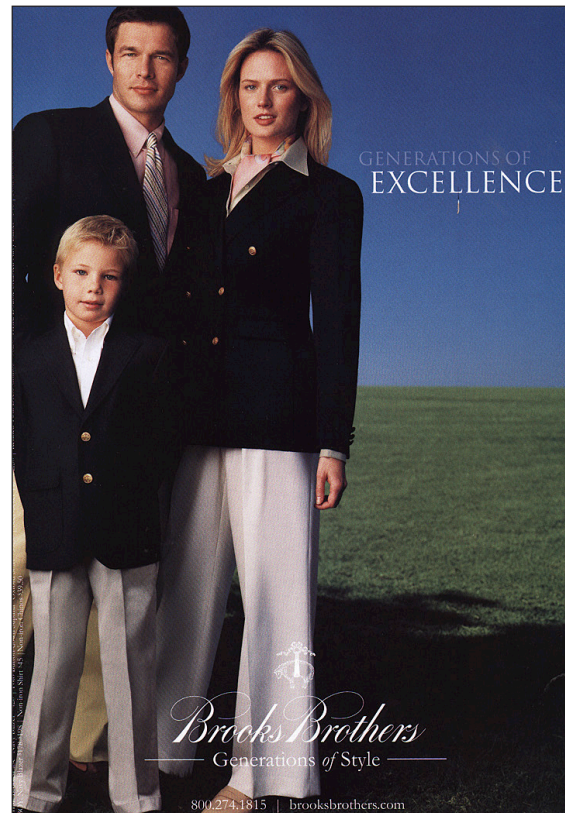
Attractiveness

Graphic design should be attractive to your audience, not (necessarily) attractive to you.

How can you design something that will be attractive to your audience?

Learn as much as you can about them, so you can make an educated guess about what they will like.

Sometimes, you may be able to test your design afterwards.



Two very different apparel brands for different types of customers. Graphic design decisions have been made to amplify each of the brand's position relative to their intended audience.

III. Professional tactics

A. Typography

B. Color

C. Layout

D. Images

These tactics are used by designers to effectively create hierarchy, consistency and attractiveness.

Typography

Understanding typography is key to effective graphic design.

Typefaces:

Serif typefaces are easier to read on the printed page, especially when there is a large amount of text.

Sans-serif fonts can look more modern, and are often easier to read on screen.

DISPLAY FONTS ARE MORE VARIED AND
EXCITING, BUT CAN BE UNPROFESSIONAL AND
HARD TO READ.

Spacing and Alignment

Attention to the space around the words is equally important. Graphic designers pay attention to line spacing (leading), letter spacing (kerning), and word spacing (tracking).

Paragraph alignment is also an issue; paragraphs aligned to the left but “ragged” on the right are considered easiest to read.

This is a sentence where the line spacing, or leading, is relatively tight.

This is a sentence with relatively wide letter spacing, or kerning.

Aligning your text to the left is considered easiest to read for body copy.

While it's sometimes the perfect choice, centering is not the best technique for larger amounts of text.

Be sure to have a very good reason if you decide to align your text to the right. It is rarely appropriate.

Color

The choices you make about color can effect hierarchy, differentiation and the mood of your audience in powerful ways. Cultures can interpret colors differently, but some general interpretations hold fairly well across audience segments.



Red: The king of colors, commands attention, but is easily overused

Blue: Soothing, loyal, rational and cool

Yellow: Can be a color to induce alertness

White: Clean, new, nothing to hide

Black: Rich, complex

Green: There are lots of different greens; can often communicate nature, life

Images: Flickr

Arranging the page

Layout is the process of putting together the building blocks of your design.

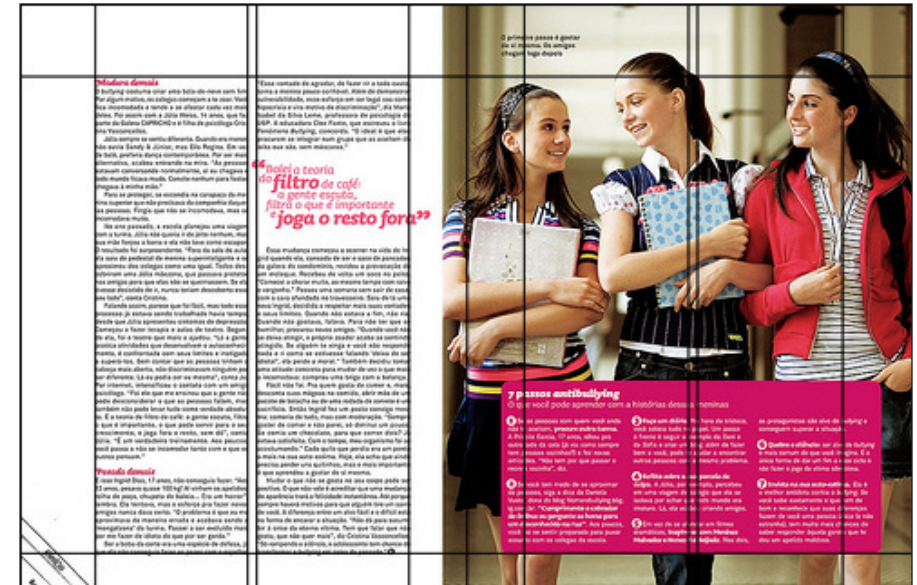
Grids

Using invisible guide markers helps the designer maintain consistent margins and gutters between elements. Selectively “breaking out” of the grid can help emphasize key ideas.

Empty space

It is important to leave areas of blank space. These blank areas help keep the page from being cluttered.

However, make sure your empty space is strategic, otherwise it may seem as though you have nothing to say.



Images: Flickr

Using Pictures

When used properly, photos, graphics, illustrations and type-based elements can help communicate your message and identity.

1. Use an image as a powerful “starting point” when it comes to your hierarchy.
2. Use photos or illustrations to instantly convey emotion.
3. Illustrations and graphics can simplify complex information.
4. Typography can work best when integrated with imagery.

On the other hand, images can often distract or conflict with your message. Use them decisively and carefully. Take your time in choosing them.



Headline type and imagery are integrated in a creative way. Images: Visa

IV: Real world challenges

- A. Workflow
- B. Politics
- C. Raw Materials

Workflow Practices

The design brief

Who is your audience? What is the project goal? Who are the stakeholders? What is the copy and content? Be sure all these questions are answered before you begin to design, or you might waste a lot of time later on.

Sketching and Wireframing

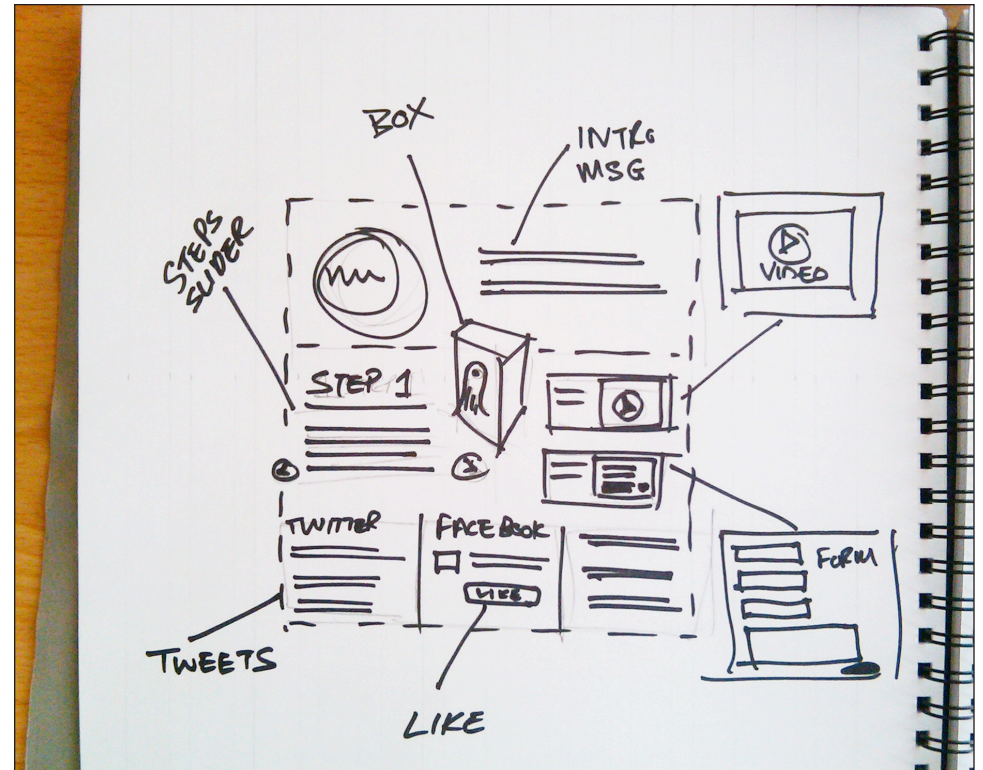
Start with a quick hand-drawn sketch and graduate to more complex versions.

Design

It's finally time to open your design tools and finalize layouts, fonts, colors and images. Expect multiple revisions.

User Testing

Show your design to other people and hear what they say before it goes into final production and gets seen by the public.



Rough thumbnail sketches can be shown to stakeholders and help establish a design direction quickly.
Image: nomad-one.com

Common Situations

Design by committee

In this situation, there are many good opinions, but they may conflict with each other or the original intent of the design. To avoid a muddled design, take an active role in gathering the necessary information at the beginning of the process, and stick with the plan.

“Make the logo bigger” syndrome

People can sometimes lose sight of a project’s goal or established hierarchy. Focusing too much on one element can throw other elements off balance. For example, a photo can’t feel big unless the logo is relatively small.

Fear of blank space

There is a general tendency for people to want to fill up blank space. Blank areas of your design should be thought through, and you should be ready to explain them. On the other hand, if the design is getting too “crowded” due to unplanned content, reduce content or increase the available space.

Digital Graphic Design Sources

Typography

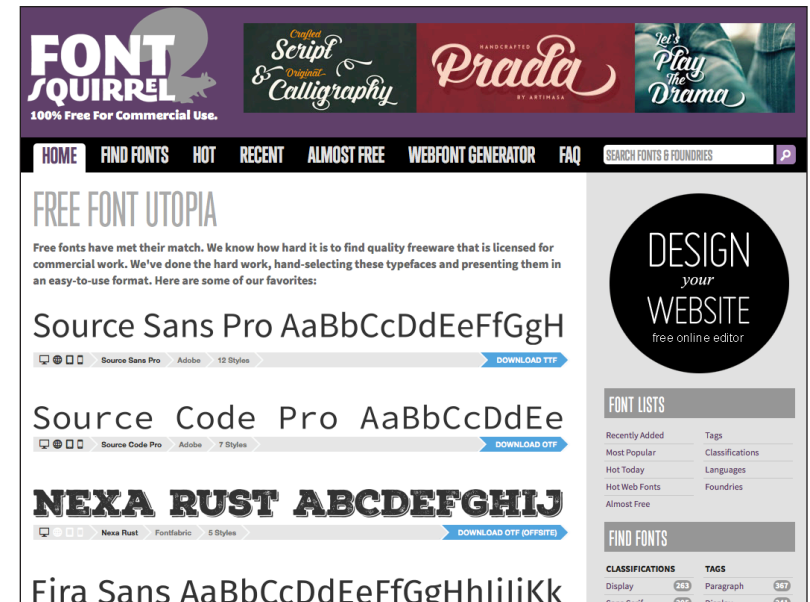
Chances are, you already have many of the fonts you'll need on your own computer:

Baskerville, Franklin Gothic, Garamond,
Georgia, Helvetica, Lucida, Tahoma

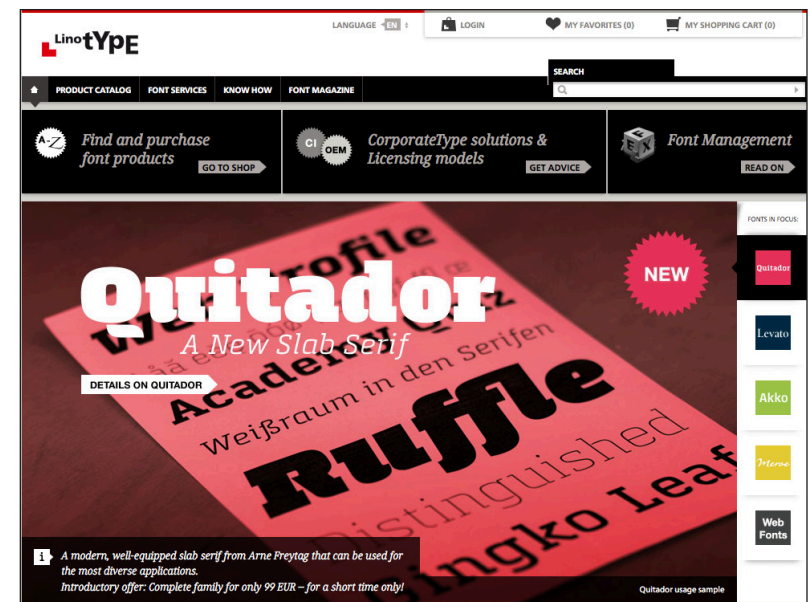
fontsquirrel.com: One of the best free font sites out there, and a good resource for small projects.

fonts.com, linotype.com: Web sites like these offer the real thing. You will need a font budget, but you get what you pay for.

mathisworks.com/specialCharacters.htm:
Keyboard shortcuts for special characters



fontsquirrel.com



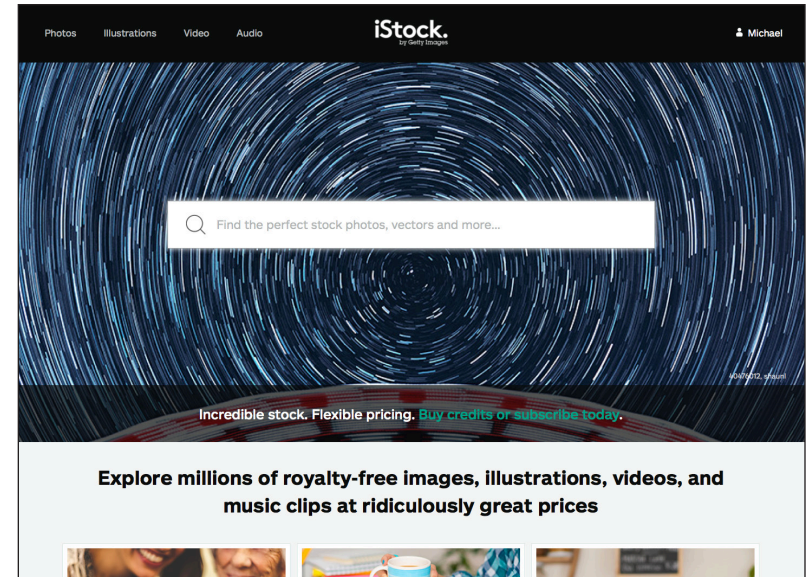
linotype.com

Art and Multimedia Elements

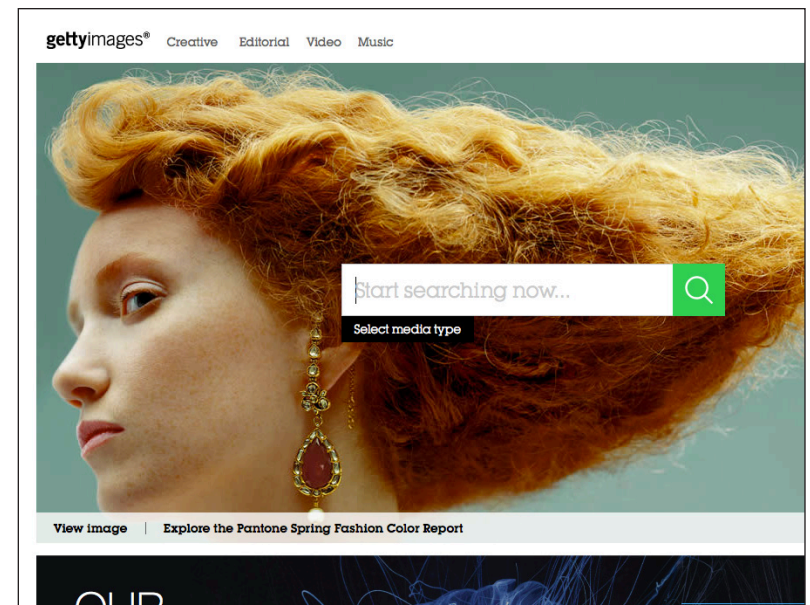
istock.com: “Microstock” websites offer decent quality professional photos, illustrations and video clips for relatively low cost.

gettyimages.com: The oldest and largest image site out there. High quality photos, illustrations and video clips. Rights-managed images need to be licensed for specific uses and cost more, but are more exclusive and are generally the highest quality you can get.

Of course, you can always hire a photographer or illustrator.



istock.com



gettyimages.com

Thank you.