

CHAPTER 2 TEXT ELEMENTS

Multimedia Communications by Marie Rutherford

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Please visit the web version of Multimedia Communications (<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/multimediacomm/>) to access the complete book, interactive activities and ancillary resources.

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the importance of document design recognizing the power of words and text selection for multimedia
- Describe legibility and readability of text in multimedia communications
- Explore fundamentals of typographic characters and font styles
- Examine effective visual notetaking techniques for translating ideas and concepts
- Practice and apply
- Key Terms and References

The Role and Importance of Text in Multimedia Communications

Text refers to any written or printed material designed to convey information and meaning to the reader. Text is a primary form of communication and it sets the stage for sharing of ideas, knowledge, and findings. Understanding and engaging with text can enhance an individual's ability to communicate and learn.

Text serves as a guide when used with other media elements such as audio, video, and images. Think of text as the connection between other media elements and the supports the message of the multimedia presentation. Well designed text enhances the overall quality of the multimedia presentation. Studies have

shown the addition of text in a multimedia presentation assists with greater memory retention, as well as making it more accessible.

Using text in multimedia presentations does come with challenges. Ensuring text is readable across several platforms and devices can present various difficulties. Consider also how text can create an information overload perspective when too much information is conveyed in a single presentation. Text alone is not always enough to capture interest and boost engagement it is essential to find ways to integrate text in an interesting way to keep the attention of the audience.

This chapter explores the pivotal role text plays in within document design, and multimedia communications.

Chapter Organization and Preview

- Effective Document Design and Multimedia
- Combining Text with Visual Elements and Media
- Visual Language and Sketch-noting
- Explore, Practice and Apply
- Key Chapter Terms

Attribution & References

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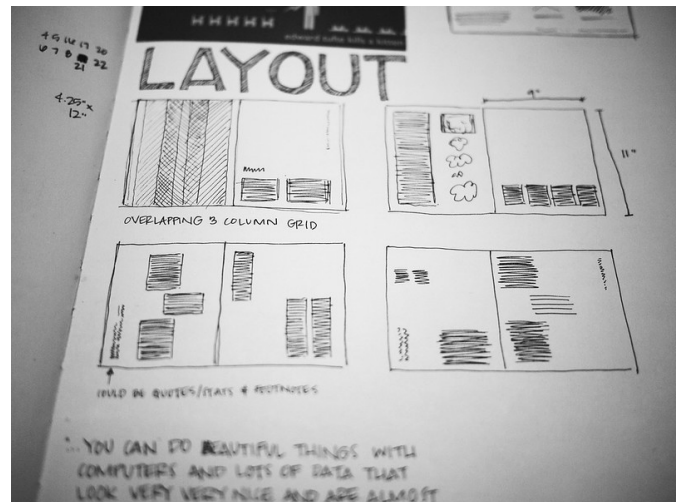
2.1 EFFECTIVE DOCUMENT DESIGN AND MULTIMEDIA

Text in Document Design

The responsibility of a writer to produce reader-friendly documents extends to layout, design, and organizational elements surrounding the words themselves.

If an email or report were simply a wall of undifferentiated text running for several screens or pages, any reader would be daunted by the prospect of having to scale that wall. Fortunately, writers can use document templates that make those design choices for them with established styles so that writing a document becomes a matter of just filling in the blanks; if you work for a company that uses templates for certain documents, of course you will use them also for consistency and your own convenience.

Even without templates, however, you can use several techniques to help guide your readers' eyes across the page or screen to easily find what they're looking for. Rather than being optional nice-to-haves, such techniques are crucially important to how well your document is received.



A sketch of 4 different potential layouts for a document, including columns and graphics. **Source:** Sketchbook by Lauren Manning, CC BY 2.0

Titles

Almost every document that exists as a standalone unit must have a title that accurately represents its contents in a nutshell. It's the first thing a reader looks for to understand what a document is all about and should thus be easily found centered at the top of the first page of any small document, and prominently placed on the cover of larger documents. Though some documents represent exceptions to this rule (e.g., business letters lack titles, and many lack subject lines), any document that brings with it the expectation of a title but omits it is like a grotesquely decapitated body; readers just won't know what to make of it. Even emails and memos

have titles in the form of subject lines. In whatever document you find it, a title's following characteristics make it essential to your reader's understanding of the whole:

- **Topic summary:** A title is the most concise summary possible of a topic while still making sense. If you glance at a news website or newspaper, for instance, you can get a reasonably good sense of what's going on in the world just by reading the headlines because they are titles that, in as few words as possible, summarize the narratives told in the articles that follow.
- **Conciseness:** Aim for a length in the 2- to 7-word range—something that can be said repeatedly in one short breath. One-word titles are appropriate only for art (e.g., for books, films, songs, albums, etc.), but most other professional documents use a reasonable number of words to give a sense of the topic, albeit streamlined to the point of having no words that don't absolutely need to be there. In scientific papers, titles can be quite long and carry plenty of detail, though you can expect that their audiences will rarely pronounce the full title.
- **Capitalization:** Capitalize the first word no matter what, as well as all major words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, etc.) thereafter.
- **Structure:** Use a noun, verb, or adjective phrase rather than a complete sentence.
 - **Main title:** If your title comes in two parts with a main title and subtitle, the main title establishes the general context of the topic, perhaps with catchy or clever phrasing, and ends with a colon (:) with a single space after it but none before.
 - **Subtitle:** The subtitle follows the main title with a more specific and detailed summary of the document topic.
 - **Position:** Centre the title at the top of the page and include 1-2 empty lines below it to separate it from the opening text.
 - **Typeface:** Use bold typeface to help draw the eye towards the title, as well as colour if appropriate.

Headings and Subheadings

After the main title of a document, using headings and subheadings as titles for sections and subsections helps guide the reader around a document's breakdown of topics. Especially in reports, headings and subheadings that stand out in bold typeface flush (or close) to the left margin and follow a consistent numbering system, exactly as you see in this textbook, help a busy reader quickly locate any specific content they seek. Even a routine email that covers a topic in so much detail that it could be internally divided—without being so big that its content should just go into a document attachment—would benefit from bolded headings.

If your drafting process follows the guide in this chapter, then you would have already drafted your headings and subheadings (and possibly numbering if necessitated by the size of the document) in your outline. The drafting process of fleshing out that outline may suggest tweaks to those heading and subheading titles. As titles, headings must be properly phrased and capitalized like main titles.

When using a word processor such as Microsoft Word, you can achieve additional functionality by using “true headings.” From the Home menu tool ribbon, heading styles are available as options in the Styles section. If you prefer to design your own styles of headings, you can click on the downward triangle at the bottom right of the style examples field and select “Create a Style.” Doing this allows you to see your entire document at a glance on the left and quickly jump to any section you wish by clicking on the Navigation Pane checkbox in the Show section of the View menu tool ribbon (or Alt + w, k), then clicking on the heading for the section you want. This is especially useful in larger documents like reports. Additionally, using such headings makes your document accessible to audiences with assistive technologies such as screen readers (see the section below on AODA compliance).

Font

A **typeface** is a group or family of graphic characters which often include many type sizes and styles. Type sizes are expressed in points. A point is approximately 1/72 of an inch or 0.0352777778 centimeter.. A **font** is characters of a single size aligning with a specific typeface. Font selection is an important consideration because it determines how the audience will receive a document. Font involves decisions concerning the style of type, size, and even colour. Font styles are bold and italic.

Font Type

Times New Roman

Garamond

Arial

Verdana

Comic Sans

Papyrus

COPPERPLATE

Figure 2.1a Font samples showing the styles of Times New Roman, Garamond, Arial, Verdana, Comic Sans, Papyrus and Copperplate. **Source:** *Communication at Work*, CC BY 4.0

textbook) or Verdana achieve a more clean and modern look, especially on computer screens where serif fonts appear to wither away at the thin part of the stroke and are thus harder to read. In the appropriate format, all the fonts mentioned above make a document look respectable. **Comic Sans**, on the other hand, is appropriate for documents aimed at children, but undermines the credibility of any professional document.

Anticipate that audiences might care about font choices, especially if the font clashes with the content like the example above. To anyone who considers the effects that fonts have on an audience, even going with the Microsoft Word default font of **Calibri** has its dangers because it comes off looking lazy, being the non-choice of those who never consider the importance of font. Even if they look nice, however, the receiver opening the document on the other end may not have that font in their word processor program, requiring that program to substitute it with another font, which may look worse or mangle layouts arranged around that font. The safe bet, then, is always to go with familiar, respectable-looking serif or sans serif fonts like those identified at the top of this subsection.

Writers considering typeface must choose between two major style categories depending on how they would like to accommodate their reader. **Serif fonts** like Times New Roman and Garamond have little perpendicular crossline “feet” or “hands” at the ends of letter strokes, as well as variable thickness in the strokes themselves depending on their horizontal/vertical or curving position, which altogether help readers distinguish between similar letters or combinations of letters, such as *m* and

m, which almost look like the same letter in a non-serif font. Serif fonts are ideal for printed documents, especially those with smallish font sizes such as newspapers. Without serifs, **sans-serif fonts** like Arial (the one used in this

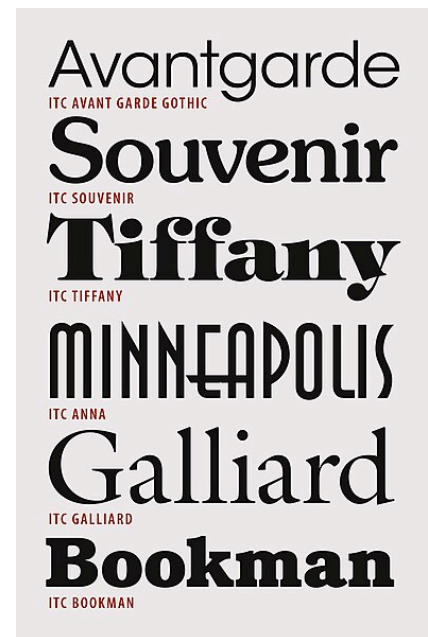


Figure 2.1b Font samples showing ITC Avantgarde, Souvenir, Tiffany, Minneapolis, Galliard and Bookman. **Source:** Image by Zietz, CC BY 4.0

Consider

Review Figure 2.1a and Figure 2.1b, which show some sample fonts.

1. Which fonts do you find easiest to read?
2. Can you identify whether or not the fonts are serif or sans-serif?
3. Are there any fonts in these images that you would avoid using, if you were creating a professional document?

Font Size

Size is another important consideration because readers depend on text being an ideal “Goldilocks” size for readability and are frustrated by font sizes that are bigger or smaller than that. In a standard written document, for instance, a 12-point Arial or Times New Roman is the Goldilocks size. If the MS Word default size when you open a blank document is 11-point, it’s worth increasing it for the sake of those who have slight visual impairment. Increasing the size much past 12-point has a similar effect as using the Comic Sans font type: it makes your document appear to be targeting an audience of children. Of course, situations where you want to increase the font size abound, such as for titles on title pages so that the eye is drawn immediately to them, and any time readers are required to read at a distance, such as posters on a notice board or presentation slides. The ideal font size for bullet points in a PowerPoint is in the 30- to 35-point range, whereas a 12-point font will appear microscopic on a projector screen, if not invisible, from across the room. **Kerning** is the process of adjusting the spacing between characters in a proportional font. **Leading** refers to the vertical space between lines of text.

Occasions for going smaller with your font size include footnotes in a report or source credits under images in a document or PowerPoint presentation. Decreasing font size to 8-point merely to get all your text to fit into a one-page résumé, however, would undermine the document’s purpose because, by frustrating the hiring manager trying to read it, it runs the risk of prompting them to just dump it in the shredder and move on to the next (hopefully reader-friendly) résumé. In such cases, choosing the right font size becomes a major life decision. Whatever the situation, strike a balance between meeting the needs of the reader to see the text and design considerations.

Font Colour

A choice of colour may also enter into document design considerations, in which case, again, the needs of the reader must be accommodated. Used appropriately, a touch of colour can draw the eye to important text. Colouring your name red at the top of your résumé is effective if few or no other elements in the document are so coloured because your name is essentially the title of your document. Likewise, colouring the title of other documents is effective if there are no expectations of doing otherwise (some style guidelines forbid colour).

Any use of colour for text must be high-contrast enough to be readable. The gold standard for high-contrast readability is black text on a white background. Grey-on-white, on the other hand, sacrifices readability for stylishness depending on how light the shade of grey is. A light-yellow text on a white background is nearly impossible to read. In all cases, the readability of the text should be considered not just for those with perfect vision, but especially for those who find themselves anywhere on the spectrum of visual impairment. For this reason, colour should always be used to enhance a document that is already perfectly organized without it; never use colour-coding alone as an organizing principle in a document read by anyone other than you because you can never be sure if some readers will be colour blind or have other visual impairments that render that colour coding useless as a cause for confusion.

Boldface, Italics, and Underlining

Boldface, *italics*, and underlining serve various purposes in focusing audience attention on certain words. Boldface type is especially helpful in directing audience eyes towards titles, headings, and keywords as you can see at the beginning of this paragraph and throughout this textbook. Highlighting in this way is especially helpful to anyone who is visually impaired in any degree. Of course, overusing boldface undermines its impact, so it should be used sparingly and strategically. Likewise, italics and underlining have very specific purposes.

Cases

Different methods of capitalizing text can also have an effect on document design.

Sentence case

A mixed-case style in which the first word of the sentence is capitalised, as well as proper nouns and other words as required by a more specific rule. This is generally equivalent to the baseline universal standard of formal English orthography. Example: “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog”.

Title Case (capital case, headline style)

A mixed-case style with all words capitalised, except for certain subsets (particularly articles and short prepositions and conjunctions) defined by rules that are not universally standardised. **Example:** “The Quick Brown Fox Jumps over the Lazy Dog”

Upper case (ALL CAPS)

A unicast style with capital letters only. This can be used in headings and special situations, such as for typographical emphasis in text made on a typewriter. With the advent of the Internet, the all-caps style is more often used for emphasis; however, it is considered poor netiquette by some to type in all capitals, and said to be tantamount to shouting (Hambridge, 1995). ALL CAPS headlines can also be problematic for accessibility. **Example:** “THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG”.

Camel case

Spaces and punctuation are removed and the first letter of each word is capitalised. If this includes the first letter of the first word (CamelCase, “PowerPoint”, “TheQuick...”, etc.), the case is sometimes called upper camel case (or, illustratively, **CamelCase**), Pascal case in reference to the Pascal programming language (Abrams, 2004) or bumpy case. **Example:** “theQuickBrownFoxJumpsOverTheLazyDog” or “TheQuickBrownFoxJumpsOverTheLazyDog”.

Line Spacing

Single-spaced lines are common to most documents because they accommodate the reader’s need to dart quickly to the next line to continue reading a sentence. The gap between 1.0-spaced lines is just enough to clearly separate one line from another so the hanging elements at the bottom of letters like *j* and *g* don’t interfere with the tops of uppercase letters on the line below. Some documents such as academic manuscripts are double-spaced to give readers, who are usually the instructors or teaching assistants grading them, enough space to write comments and editorial marks between the lines. Because doubling the line spacing also doubles the number of pages in a print version, avoid double-spacing documents for audiences who don’t explicitly require it.

Justification of Text

Justification should ideally be left as the default left-aligned or “Left-justified / ragged right.” This means

that all lines are flush to the left margin and the lines end wherever the last full word fits before the right margin sends (or “wraps”) the next word down to the next line, making each line vary in length so the right margin looks “ragged,” as you can see throughout this textbook. This is usually preferable to “justifying” both the left *and* right edges of the text so that they align perfectly along both the left and right margins. While this may look clean like newspapers often do with their orderly columns, it does so by adding extra space between the words within each line; since every line varies in length without justification, every line with it will vary in the amount of space added between words. Some lines that would be short without justification look awkward with it because the space between some words is greater than the span of small words.

Lists

Another technique that helps the reader skim and easily find sought-after content is numbered or bulleted lists for a series of discreet but related items. Whether you use numbered or bulleted lists depends on your organizing principle.

Use Numbered Lists for:

- An unprioritized collection of related points
- Sentences under a heading in an email or note-form points on a presentation slide (e.g., PowerPoint) for easier readability

Use Bulleted Lists for:

- A step-by-step **procedure** such as a set of instructions
- A description of a **chronological sequence**—a series of events unfolding in time
- **Rankings** that arrange items in priority order

Whichever list type you use, ensure each has the following:

- A **sentence or phrase** introducing and explaining the list and ending with a colon before delivering the list immediately below it as you can see in the sentence that introduces this list
- **Capitalization** of the first letter in each point
- **Periods** ending each point only if it is a complete sentence on its own, whether it be in the declarative, imperative, or any other mood; a list of nouns or noun phrases, on the other hand, doesn’t end in periods
- **Parallelism** in the sense that each point in a list follows the same grammatical pattern, such as only full sentences, only noun phrases, or only verb phrases. The need for parallelism extends also to lists within a

sentence.

Visual Aids

The cliché that a picture is worth a thousand words holds true because images are excellent aids to understanding when placed near the messages they illustrate. Just as the visual elements in this textbook support and reinforce the content, so photos, graphics, charts, and graphs provide readers something that can be understood and remembered at a glance—as long as those visuals are used appropriately. Of course, the main criterion for usability is if the image helps the reader understand the text better. If the image is complementary, it can only help. If it is unnecessary, confusing, or contradicts the text, however, the image isn't worth the time and effort it takes to add it to your document.

Consider

When considering using an image, ask yourself:

- **Aesthetic considerations:**
 - Does the image look good?
 - Are the colours complementary?
- **Technical considerations:**
 - Is the image resolution of sufficiently high quality?
 - Or is it too pixelated to use?
- **Legal considerations:**
 - Does the image's copyright licence permit or forbid use by others?
 - Am I using the image for educational or commercial purposes?
- **Design considerations:**
 - Is it big enough to see?

- Is it placed appropriately?

The ideal size depends on the resolution, detail of the content, relative importance, and the use to which the document will be put. The following guidelines help ensure that the images you use will meet aesthetic, design, technical, and legal expectations:

- **Aesthetic guidelines:**

- Choose images that look like they were produced by professional photographers, illustrators, or graphic designers—the sort you would see in a magazine or professional industry website.
- Professionals usually produce images with a limited palette of colours that work well together.
- Use images that are in focus and well-framed with the central image clearly visible rather than too far in the background or so close that important aspects are cropped out.

- **Design guidelines:**

- An image or graphic that is crucial to the reader’s understanding and is highly detailed really deserves to stretch across the text block from margin to margin.
- An image that is more ornamental and relatively simple can be inset within the text either on the left or right margin, or centered on the page without text on either side.
- Important images, especially those labelled as figures, must be placed as near as possible to the text they support and even referred to in the text (“See Figure 2 for an illustration of . . .”)
- Ensure that the text and corresponding image aren’t separated by a page break if the text is close to the top or bottom of the page. The reader’s eye must be able to move between the image and corresponding text in the same field of view to seal their understanding.

- **Technical guidelines:**

- Screen resolution must be at least 72dpi (dots per inch), the internet standard; anything less than 72 may appear pixelated even on the screen, especially if maximized in size across the page.
- Images in documents that will be printed should be 300dpi to avoid appearing pixelated on paper.
- Preferred image file types include JPEG (.jpg) and PNG (.png). The latter includes the possibility of contouring so that the image doesn’t necessarily have to be a square or rectangle. You can make a PNG image file of your handwritten and scanned signature, for instance, by erasing the white background around the pen strokes in Photoshop and saving the image as a PNG. That way, you can drag and drop your signature onto a signature line in an electronic document and it won’t block out the line underneath if your signature typically sprawls out over lines.

- **Legal guidelines:**

- To stay on the right side of copyright legislation, searching online for images that are free to use is

easy by including licensing status in an advanced Google Image search. From the Google Images search screen:

1. Click on the Settings spring-up menu at the bottom right.
2. Select Advanced Search.
3. Scroll down and click on the “usage rights” dropdown menu at the bottom.
4. Select “free to use or share” or whatever licensing status suits your purposes.

Adding images to your document

With modern word processors, placing an image is as easy as dragging and dropping the image file from a folder into a document (or copying and pasting). Sometimes you will need to be a little craftier with capturing images, however.

Once your image is in your document, use the layout options to place it where appropriate. Clicking on it may produce a layout icon near the top right that you can click on to open the dropdown menu (alternatively, you can right-click on the image and select the Wrap Text option from the dropdown menu). The default setting left-justifies the image and displaces the text around where you put it, but other layout options allow you to place it elsewhere on the page so that your text wraps around it (“Square,” “Tight,” or “Through”) or so that text doesn’t move around it at all (“Behind” or “In front of text”), which gives you the freedom to move the image anywhere.

Interactive Elements

Another aid to understanding that can benefit readers of an online or electronic document is a weblink that provides them with the option of accessing other online media. Hyperlinking is easy in modern word processors and online applications such as websites and email simply by highlighting text or clicking on an image and activating the hyperlinking feature.

Users prefer links that open new tabs in their browser rather than take them away entirely, so seek out that option when hyperlinking. By doing this for an image of a YouTube video screenshot, for instance, you enable readers of a document (including a PowerPoint presentation) to link directly to that video in YouTube rather than embed a large video file in your document. You can additionally link to other areas within a document, as the document version of this textbook does with links to various sections like the one in the previous sentence.

Balancing Text and Whitespace

Another consideration that helps a reader find their way around a page is the balance of text and whitespace, which is simply a gap unoccupied by text or graphic elements. The enemy of readability is a wall of text that squeezes out any whitespace, whereas a well-designed document uses whitespace to usher the reader's eyes towards units of text. Whitespace margins frame the text in a document, for instance, as well as give readers something to hold on to so that they don't cover up any text with their thumbs. Margins should be 3cm or 1" (2.54cm), which are the default margin sizes in most word processors' (e.g., Microsoft Word's) blank 8.5"x11" document. Margins also focus attention on the text itself, which makes any crowding of the margins an offense to good design. An attempt to cram more information into a one-page résumé by edging further and further into the margins, for instance, follows the law of diminishing returns: the hiring manager might take your sacrifice of the document's readability as a sign of selfishness—that you place your own needs above that of your audience, which suggests you would do the same to the customers and management if it suited you.

Making Accessible, AODA-compliant Documents

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11#top>) sets out guidelines for how workplaces can help people with disabilities, including accommodations that extend to document design. Many of the recommendations covered in the sections above, such as font size and colour, are justified as accommodations to people with even mild visual impairment. Someone with colour blindness, for instance, may be confused if you use coloured text alone as an organizing principle, which is why you should use colour only to enhance text readability while using other means of organization such as boldface type. Not only must you accommodate such individuals, but also those whose severity of impairment requires that they use assistive technologies such as screen readers that convert text to automated voice. The more straightforward your text is presented, as well as formatted with “true headings” that a screen reader can identify as headings, the easier a person with a disability can hear and understand your message when it's read out by a screen reader.

Once you are done drafting your document, you can begin to check for any accessibility issues and act on them right away. In MS Word, just to go to File and, in the Info tab, select the “Check for Issues” button in the Inspect Document section. It will identify accessibility problems in your document as well as suggest fixes (watch the video below for a demonstration). For instance, if you have a photo without alt text, it will prompt you to write a caption by right-clicking on the image, selecting “Edit Alt Text...” from the dropdown menu, and writing a one- or two-sentence description of the image so that users with screen readers will be able to hear a description of the image they can't see very well or at all. See the Resources for Creating Accessible Documents (<https://www.algonquincollege.com/accessibility-resources/resources-for-creating-accessible-documents/>) (Algonquin College, 2013) for more on how to make your documents AODA compliant.

Watch Using the Accessibility Checker (2 min) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/mSY2EyA0rH4>)

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- Cases section is adapted from Letter case In *Wikipedia*, CC BY-SA 4.0

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2.2 COMBINING TEXT WITH VISUAL ELEMENTS AND MEDIA

Graphics

Graphics can be very beneficial in supporting text: A good graphic can help you separate numbers from text or can help you reduce the number of words you need to describe something. But graphics can ruin a document if not used correctly. Consider purpose of the following types of graphics.

- ***Objective graphics depict reality.*** When you look at an objective graphic, you clearly see the object you are depicting. Photographs are the most obvious form of object graphic. Most of the time, photos show the reader a clear image of what the writer is providing. They are good for helping to reduce the amount of descriptive words in a document: a picture says a thousand words, after all. Illustrations can also be objective, but remember, they have to visually represent the object they are portraying.
- ***Symbolic graphics, naturally, symbolize reality.*** That's why illustrations don't always have to be objective. A graphic artist can distort an illustration to emphasize a point. Caricatures, for instant, do not depict reality. They resemble people, but noses or eyes or ears stand out to symbolize a point. Maps are examples of symbolic graphics. The lines for states and roads and cities are all symbolic of what is really there. Topographic maps, however, that actually show the terrain and not human-made objects, are more objective. Legends are often symbolic. In a map of Lake Champlain depicting marinas, the marina locations might be symbolized by a triangle.
- ***Abstract graphics, in a nutshell, are everything else.*** More specifically, abstract graphics are charts, tables, graphs, graphics that pull numbers out of text. They are very useful because lots of figures in text can become confusing and lost. A pie chart or bar graph, used correctly, can do wonders in presenting figures clearly.

The placement of graphics is important, as they can ruin a document if they are not done well.

Tips for Graphic Placement

Use graphics that are *perceptible*.

They should be separated from the text with white space. Some kind of border, ruled lines perhaps, can help

keep graphics separate from text, so they can be easier to see and understand. They should be large enough for your audience to understand. I once saw a photo in the local newspaper depicting about 100 former Oscar winners. The picture was so small that you couldn't make out any of the faces. It was basically a wasted photo.

Make your graphics *accessible*.

They should be as close to the text that they are referring to as possible. They should always be on the same page as the related text, unless you are dealing with a folded text (like a book) and the graphic is on the facing page. If you are using many graphics in a document, you should use an appendix to place them all in one section.

Clearly label your graphics.

Study graphics in textbooks, newspapers and magazines and see how objects in graphics are labeled. Lines are neat and definable and clearly point to the objects they are defining. Language used is not complex but easy to understand upon viewing the graphic.

Integrate your graphics into the document.

Callouts should be used in the text, and the graphic should be labeled clearly. Labels used in the graphic should match wording in the text. If you call it an antenna in your text, don't refer to it as a aerial receiver in the graphic.

Use graphics that are *easy to understand*.

Plenty of bad graphics are made by professionals who did not do a good job with explaining the content of the graphic. Don't let jargon from your field overwhelm the graphic. Use simple, clear language.

Choose graphics that are *relatively easy and inexpensive to prepare*.

Remember, you're creating these documents for organizations, and cost is always an issue. Don't let the graphic overwhelm the project.

Think About Audience

Whether you're presenting information, designing a document, giving a demonstration, creating a poster, or trying to change people's minds, your goal is to get your message across to your audience. For that reason, it's important to remember that they may not interpret the information you are presenting exactly as you have. It's your job as a presenter to explain your ideas using specific details, succinct and clear wording (avoid jargon), vivid descriptions, and meaningful images. As you organize your message, keeping this imaginary audience in mind can help you gauge how much background information and context to provide.

Choosing effective document design enhances the *readability* or *usability* of your document so that the target audience is more likely to get the message you want them to receive, and your document is more likely to achieve your intended purpose. Designing a document is like designing anything else: you must define your purpose (the goals and objectives you hope your document achieves, as well as the constraints—such as word count and format—that you must abide by), understand your audience (who will read this document and why), and choose design features that will best achieve your purpose and best suit the target audience. In essence, you must understand the **rhetorical situation** in which you find yourself: *Who is communicating with whom about what and why?* What kind of document design and formatting can help you most effectively convey the desired message to that audience? You want to use the most effective rhetorical strategies at your disposal; document design is one of those strategies.

Consider

Think about a presentation you're working on for this, or one of your other classes

1. Who is your audience for the presentation?
2. What document design features would help that particular audience understand your message?

Choosing Media and Format for Visual Aids

Perhaps you've heard the phrase "Death by PowerPoint" to explain that all-too-familiar feeling of being slowly bored to death by a thoughtless presenter who's droning on and on about boring slide after boring slide. If

you'd like to know what the experience is about, and you have time for a laugh, watch the following video, starring stand-up comedian Don McMillan. McMillan pokes fun at bad presentations, but he has some very sound advice about what *not to do*.

Watch Life After Death by PowerPoint (4 mins) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/MjcO2ExtHso>)

You may consider using PowerPoint for your presentation, and that's perfectly fine. PowerPoint can be a very effective tool with the right organization, layout, and design. Below is a list of five common pitfalls that you can and should avoid, and doing so will go a long way toward making your PowerPoint presentation successful:

1. **Choosing a font that is too small.** The person in the very back of the room should be able to see the same thing as the person in the front of the room.
2. **Putting too many words on a slide.** Remember it's called PowerPoint, not PowerParagraph! Keep your bullet points clear and succinct.
3. **Having spelling errors.** Have somebody proofread your slides. Any typos will detract from your presentation.
4. **Choosing distracting colors that make it hard to read the information.** PowerPoint gives you a lot of color choices in their design templates. The ideas in your brilliant presentation will be lost if your audience is struggling to read the content.
5. **Selecting images or visuals that do not clearly align with the content.** For instance, a cute photo of your cat may look lovely up on the screen, but if it doesn't connect to your topic, it's just fluff that detracts from your message. Every slide counts, so make sure the visuals support your message.

Though many of these suggestions focus on PowerPoint and presentations, they are applicable and useful in the creation of all types of messages and media.

Attribution & References

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- Content under Think about your audience has been added from 14.1: Audience Analysis in Document Design In *Advanced Professional Communication* by Melissa Ashman; Arley Cruthers; eCampusOntario; Ontario Business Faculty; and University of Minnesota, CC BY-NC 4.0

Adaptations: Removed and streamlined text, adjusted to 3rd person, enhanced the audience section.

2.3 VISUAL LANGUAGE & SKETCHNOTING

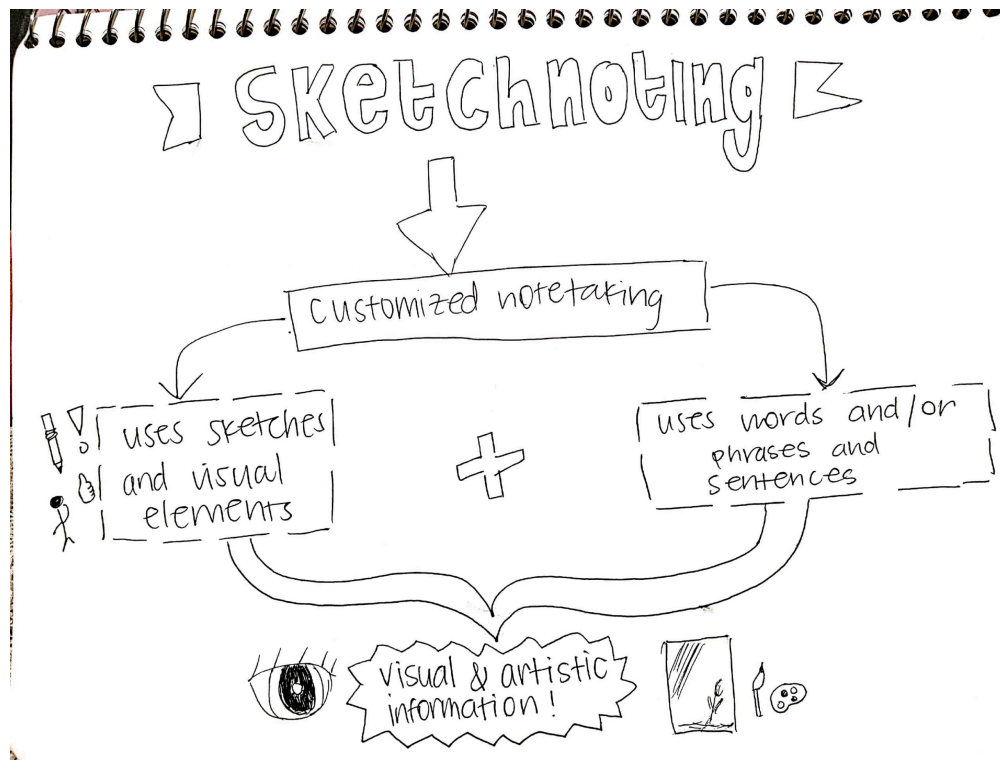
Expressing Ideas Visually

Let's explore what it means to visually express it. In order to think visually, you need to have the equivalent of visual "letters", words, and vocabulary to express your ideas visually. Often, we rely on written words to document or capture our thinking. But how might you express your thoughts and ideas visually?

Consider

1. In what contexts do you typically take notes? In class? At work?
2. In which of these contexts would a sketch note be a potential option?

While some people may think this requires exceptional drawing or artistry skills, that is incorrect. Anyone can express themselves visually and the best way to start practicing this is to start using a combination of text and "visual images" whenever you take notes or are jotting down ideas. Keep in mind that, much like handwritten notes, these "visual images" are not intended for broad consumption (or even viewing) by others. Rather they simply capture your ideas or perceptions using a visual icon, doodle, sketch, or basic drawing. This practice is commonly referred to as sketchnoting. **Sketchnoting**, also commonly referred to as visual notetaking, is the creative and graphic process, where people record their thoughts by using illustrations, symbols, structures, and texts (see example below).



Sketchnoting is customized notetaking using sketches and visual elements, plus words and or phrases and sentences to convey visual and artistic information.

Source: Sketchnoting definition by Amytangg, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Watch How to Sketchnote without Drawing (12 mins) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/oNQJReku9Gw>)

In general, by engaging in visual notetaking, you can enhance your own learning, become a better problem solver, and better connect and share ideas.

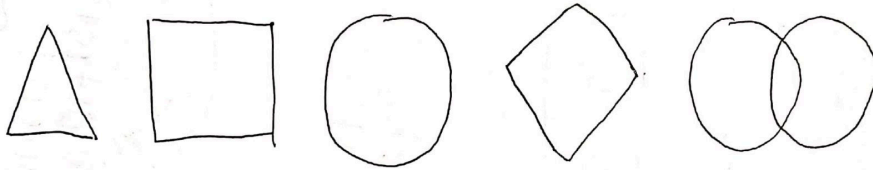
In the following image, you will see that by combining handwritten text, basic shapes, containers, and many icons or symbols, it is possible to build a visualization that communicates your ideas and concepts much more clearly and with fewer words / text. And, remember that our brains are programmed to consume information visually. So, not only will this help you, but it will also be easier for others, regardless of their native language, to understand, as well!

TEXT:

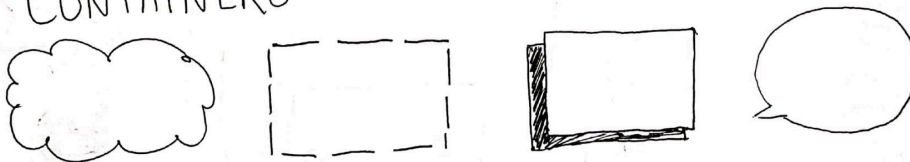
Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj
 Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt
 Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

normal handwriting

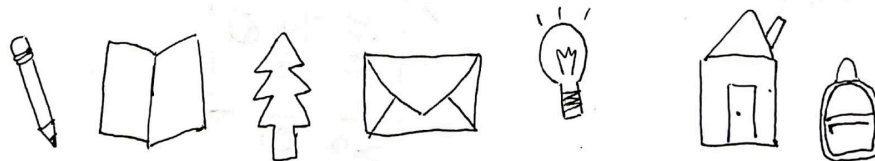
BASIC SHAPES:



CONTAINERS:



ICONS & SYMBOLS:



Sketchnoting Elements: text, normal handwriting, basic shapes (squares, triangles, circles, diamonds), containers (clouds, boxes, speech bubbles), icons and symbols (pencil, book, tree, envelope, light bulb, house and backpack). **Source:** Sketchnoting elements by Amytangg, CC BY-SA 4.0

Surprisingly, most elements can be drawn using 5 basic drawing elements (see image below):

5 BASIC Elements

YOU CAN DRAW ANYTHING WITH JUST 5 BASIC ELEMENTS:



Once you realize objects can be built from these 5 elements, it becomes easier to draw your ideas:



NOT AN ARTIST? NOT A PROBLEM. THESE 5 BASIC ELEMENTS MAKE DRAWING EASIER.

Get more sketchnoting ideas for OneNote in *The Sketchnote Handbook* and *The Sketchnote Workbook* at rohdesign.com/books

MIKE
ROHDE

SKETCHNOTES
TIP #2



You can draw anything with just five basic elements: circle, square, triangle, line, dot. Once you realize objects can be built from these 5 elements, it becomes easier to draw your ideas, such as: laptop, house, coffee, flower, car, robot, donut. Not an artist? Not a problem. These 5 basic elements make drawing easier. Get more sketchnoting ideas for OneNote in *The Sketchnote handbook* and *The Sketchnote Workbook* at rohdesign.com/books. **Source:** OneNote sketchnote tip 2 – 5 basic elements by Mike Rhode, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

- Circle
- Square
- Triangle
- Line
- Dot

If you want some inspiration on how to hand-draw icons or symbols, you can either perform a Google image search on any term (concept, product, etc.) plus the word “icon”, e.g., “ad impression icon”, or you can **watch *Bullet Journal / Planner Icon Doodles | Doodle with Me (19 mins)* on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1zdgGGUtNo>):**

In order to create better visual stories, you will need to practice using visual language yourself. Visual notetaking is a great way to practice for yourself and to begin thinking much more visually. Beyond *thinking* visually, it is essential to also understand how your visual stories can deliver value to your target audience, which brings us to our next topic – target markets and audiences.

Key Takeaways

Visual storytelling is an engaging way to share stories, ideas, and values.

- In order to tell stories visually, it is important to have a “visual language”.
- Sketchnoting is a great way to train yourself to start thinking more visually and in visual metaphors.
- Sketchnoting may only be for your own consumption, but can be used to draft ideas and explore visual ways to present visual stories and ideas.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this page is adapted from Visual Language and Sketchnoting In *Foundations in Digital Marketing* by Rochelle Grayson, CC BY 4.0

2.4 EXPLORE, PRACTICE AND APPLY

Overview: Explore, Practice and Apply

Activities found on this page are designed to provide opportunities to explore, practice, and apply concepts presented in chapter 2.

Explore

Explore Activity 1:

- Obtain a document or documents supplied by professor. If you have perfect vision, impair your vision perhaps by dimming the lights at night or using a friend's or family member's prescription glasses.
- What do you notice about the readability of those documents when you've limited your eyesight?
- What organizational elements do you especially appreciate when trying to make sense of the document when you've otherwise hindered your ability to read?

Explore Activity 2

- Take any multi-page assignment you've done in MS Word that also includes non-text elements like photos or use a document supplied to you. Run an accessibility check on it using the accessibility checker in Word.
- Attempt to fix the issues identified by the accessibility checker.

Explore Activity 3

- Navigate to a font tool such as Font Space (<https://www.fontspace.com/font->

generator#SGFwchkgZGF5cw) which is a font generator and text changer. Explore the features available through this tool.

- Navigate to Metaflop (<https://www.metaflop.com/>) which is a font generator and text changer. Explore the features available with this tool.

Practice

Practice Activity 1

Watch an educational, tutorial, or procedural video on a topic you find interesting. As you are watching it, document what you are learning by sketch-noting. Feel free to pause the video to think about how you can visually best represent your learnings and key takeaways. You can do the same with an educational, tutorial, or procedural podcast.

Practice Activity 2

Navigate online to Kern Type (<https://type.method.ac/>). This is an interactive game designed to help you practice and improve your kerning skills, which is the process of adjusting the spacing between characters in typography. Challenge your accuracy skills. Try the game and see how accurate you are in addressing kerning issues in typed font.

Practice Activity 3

Obtain sample documents, websites, or social media posts provided by your instructor. Analyze each sample and discuss what works well and what doesn't based on the content and audience. Suggest improvements and explain why certain fonts or layouts are more effective in each case.

Apply

Apply Activity 1

Create a simple infographic on a topic of your choice using text, icons, and minimal images. Focus on choosing the right fonts, spacing, and layout to make the information clear and visually appealing. You can use tools like Canva or PowerPoint to design your infographic.

Apply Activity 2

Refer back to the Apply 1 activity from Chapter 1 – creating a slide deck presentation. Reopen this slide presentation and using the content learning from this chapter, review the font you originally used in this presentation. Carefully select an alternative font style for the text areas of slide decks. Change the text areas with the new font selected and resave the slide deck. Consider the following questions:

1. Which new font did you select?
2. What learning did you apply from this chapter to select the new font?
3. Did the learning from this chapter influence your font choice? Why or why not?

Apply Activity 3

Many multimedia creators argue that they are not creative or graphic designers. However, there are many online resources that provide beautiful templates as a starting point. As a result, multimedia creators can focus on developing their story's narrative (text) and key messages and use the following tools to visual their ideas.

Select two of these creative tools to review and explore their features. Document three key features of the tool as well as suggest three reasons a multimedia creator may choose this tool for help in creating a multimedia presentation. Identify if a user needs an account to use the tool. Include also if there are costs associated with access to the tool.

- **Canva** (<http://canva.com/>)

- **Piktochart** (<https://piktochart.com/>)
- **Visme** (<https://www.visme.co/>)
- **Freepik** (<https://www.freepik.com/>)
- **Pexels** (<https://www.pexels.com/>)
- **Pixabay** (<https://pixabay.com/>)
- **Unsplash** (<https://unsplash.com/>)
- **Videvo** (<https://www.videvo.net/>)
- **Powtoon** (<https://www.powtoon.com/>)
- **Biteable** (<https://biteable.com/>)
- **Pixton** (<https://www.pixton.com/>)
- **StoryboardThat** (<https://www.storyboardthat.com/business/team-and-business-edition>)
- **Microsoft Photos** (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-ca/p/microsoft-photos/9wzdncrfjbh4?activetab=pivot:overviewtab>) (Microsoft) (Video Production)
- **Buzzsprout** (<https://www.buzzsprout.com/>)
- **Podbean** (<https://www.podbean.com/>)
- **Bensound** (<https://www.bensound.com/>)
- **Looperman** (<https://www.looperman.com/loops>)
- **Envato** (<https://elements.envato.com/audio>)

Attribution & References

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2.5 KEY CHAPTER TERMS

Chapter 2 Terms

Abstract Graphics:

Abstract graphics are charts, tables, graphs, and graphics that pull numbers out of text.

Accessibility:

Ensuring that all people-regardless of ability-can interact with the documents produced (Case Western Reserve University, n.d., para. 1)

Font:

Characters of a single size aligning with a specific typeface.

Headings:

Titles for sections that help to guide the reader around a document's breakdown of topics.

Icons:

Simplified and stylized visual representations of objects, concepts or actions (Creatopy Team, 2024, para. 1).

Illustrations:

Visualizations that are used to explain information, such as drawings or diagrams (Kaloyanov, n.d.).

Interactive Elements:

Anything a user can interact with in a document, such as hyperlinks (Hrkac, 2018, para. 3).

Justification of Text:

Justified text is spaced so that the left and right sides of the text block both have a clean edge. Usually, text is left-aligned which has a straight left edge and an uneven right edge (Butterick, 2013b, para. 1).

Kerning:

The process of adjusting the spacing between characters in a proportional font.

Leading:

The traditional name for Line Spacing. The vertical space between lines of text (Butterick, 2013a, para. 1).

Line Spacing:

The vertical space between lines of text. Also known as Leading (Butterick, 2013a, para. 3).

Lowercase:

The small and uncapitalized version of letters (“Lowercase”, n.d.).

Multimedia Presentation:

A presentation in which different forms of media are incorporated, such as text, audio, video, and images.

Objective Graphics:

Graphics that depict reality.

Readability:

The ease in which a reader can understand text (California State University Northridge, n.d., para. 1).

Sketchnoting:

The creative and graphic process where thoughts are recorded by using illustrations, symbols, structures, and texts. Also known as Visual Notetaking.

Symbolic Graphics:

Graphics that symbolize reality.

Text:

The words of something written (“Text”, n.d., Definition 1).

Text Layout:

Text that is organized on the page to enhance readability.

Titles:

A concise summary that represents the contents of a document.

Uppercase:

Capitalized letters (“Uppercase”, n.d.).

Visual Aids:

Visual elements that help to reinforce text content.

Visual Expression:

Expressing one’s thoughts and feelings using a visual medium such as images or drawings.

Visual Notetaking:

The creative and graphic process where thoughts are recorded by using illustrations, symbols, structures, and texts. Also known as Sketchnoting.

Visual Vocabulary:

Using shapes or symbols to create meanings with little text involved.

Whitespace:

A gap that is unoccupied by text or graphics.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, Terms and definitions are adapted from the pages and original sources cited within chapter 2, CC BY-NC 4.0.

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