

# Lessons in typography

Must-know typographic principles  
presented through lessons, exercises,  
and examples.

Jim Krause



CREATIVE CORE



BOOK03

# Lessons in typography



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### **New Riders**

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Acquisitions Editor: Nikki Echler McDonald

Production Editor: Tracey Croom

Proofreader: Jan Seymour

Indexer: James Minkin

Cover Design and Illustrations: Jim Krause

Interior Design and Illustrations: Jim Krause

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## LESSONS IN TYPOGRAPHY

# INTRODUCTION

**W**hen I was in high school there were only two things I wanted to be when I grew up—a pilot or a painter. I spent pretty much all my time either reading about airplanes or drawing and painting pictures of them. And then something unexpected came up and changed everything. I met typefaces.

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It's true. I signed up for a graphic arts class with the idea of learning how to print the things I was drawing and painting, and then one day the instructor introduced the class to typefaces. And that was it. I was completely smitten and awed. I mean, to think that typefaces didn't just happen, that someone actually designed the things, that there were so many different kinds, and that such intricate and tiny works of art had always been sitting there inside every book I'd ever read and within just about every advertisement and movie title I'd ever looked at. And not only that, but that there was a certain species of

artist who actually created these alphabet designs—and another that put them to use in all kinds of logos and layouts. It blew my mind, and the more I looked into all the different styles and varieties of typefaces, and applied them to the posters, programs, and business cards I was working on in class, the more interested I became in both typography and graphic design.

So yes, it was an infatuation with typefaces that drew me into the only career I've had as an adult, and typefaces are still one of the main things that keep me as eager and interested as ever to keep going in my work as a designer.

*Lessons In Typography* is my sixteenth book on some aspect of design and creativity, and it's one that I've been wanting to do for a long, long time. I decided to open this book with a spread that talks about what I consider one of the most important thing designers

can cultivate to deepen and expand their typographic savvy: appreciation.

Why appreciation? It's because appreciation makes us look closer at things, and looking closer leads to greater appreciation, which makes us look even closer... and on and on and on. This is true whether you're talking about chocolate, music, cinema, fine art, or any other truly appreciation-worthy subject—typography included.

From there, *Lessons In Typography* gives readers a quick rundown of the terminology used to talk about typefaces (you've got to speak the language of type if you're going to learn about it—just as you'd need to learn the language of chocolate, music, cinema, or fine art if you were going to learn deeply about any of those things). After that, the book takes the reader through subjects involving individual letters, complete words, multi-word graphics (logos, headlines, and

such), paragraphs, and page layouts. Notes toward the finer points of typographic appreciation thread their way through each of these topics, as does an emphasis on practical real-world uses of typography as it can be applied to things like logos, word graphics, and layouts.

What sort of designer is *Lessons In Typography* aimed at? All sorts, really. This book is for new designers who want to begin their study of the graphic arts with a good foundation of this all-important aspect of design, mid-level designers looking to bring their knowledge of typography to a higher and more focused level, and experienced professionals who are interested in refreshing and rebuilding their typographic awareness and competency.

Thumb through this book and one thing you'll notice right away is that there are a whole lot of visuals:

letterforms, word treatments, typographically inclined logos, page layout examples, and much more. I think most designers will enjoy this sort of presentation—as opposed to one that’s overly text-heavy—since most people who make their living in the commercial arts seem to be visual learners.

**8** | And speaking of the book’s many visuals, every one of them was created specifically for *Lessons In Typography*. This is an uncommon approach for a design-related book (given that nearly all books on design are compilations of preexisting logos, graphics, and layouts) but I prefer it and have used this method in all my books since it’s allowed me to use imagery and examples that speak very directly to the topics I’ve covered and the points I’ve made through my books’ text.

*Lessons In Typography* also has a number of exercises scattered throughout its pages. Whatever your

level of experience and expertise, I urge you to try out these exercises (and I encourage teaching professionals to consider them as classroom projects). Each of the exercises builds on topics and ideas presented in the book and each is designed with real-world applications in mind. Feel free to follow the exercises’ instructions verbatim or to reinterpret them to fit project ideas of your own. Entirely up to you.

And finally, a couple notes on certain software programs that are mentioned throughout *Lessons In Typography*. It should come as little surprise that Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, and Photoshop come up often in the pages ahead. It’s not that Adobe has sponsored this book, or that I’m getting a commission every time I mention one of their products—it’s just that these three programs are unquestionably *the* tools of the design trade these days and it seems clear that they’ll remain so for

some time. It's assumed, then, that most readers will be familiar and functional with some or all of these products—at least those readers who are either a student or a professional of graphic design. Very few specific how-to tips about these programs are offered here, so if you're new to these programs, know that none of the uses for them mentioned in this book require much knowledge about them, and with a little help from a tutorial and/or a Help menu you should be able to follow along.

Thank you for picking up a copy of *Lessons In Typography*. I hope you enjoy this book and that its content not only makes you more appreciative of typefaces and the way they're used in works of design, but also makes you better at what you do as a designer.



Jim Krause  
jimkrausedesign.com

# CREATIVE CORE

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## BOOK03

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*Lessons In Typography* is the third book in the New Riders Creative Core series.

The first book in the series, *Visual Design*, deals thoroughly with principles of aesthetics, composition, style, color, typography, and production.

The series' second title, *Color for Designers*, teaches designers to confidently select and apply colors to layouts, illustrations, graphics, and more.

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# Multi-Word Presentations

## LOGO, HEADLINE, AND WORD GRAPHIC FUNDAMENTALS

Typography as it applies to solitary letters and individual words was the focus of this book's earlier chapters.

Here, the topic is *words*. Plural—as in *words* that show up in logos or as headlines or word graphics within layouts. And more words means more opportunities for creative expression—which is always good news for designers, right?

Naturally, topics like typeface selection, the thematic effects of font choices, type-plus-images strategies, and legibility concerns will be talked about in the pages ahead—just as they were in earlier chapters.

New here will be discussions of baseline configurations (straight, slanted, curved, and so on) as

they apply to both single and multiple lines of type, size relationships between words that appear together, and strategies involving using different fonts within multi-word designs.

And lastly, because this chapter often deals with assembling multiple typographic elements into cohesive designs (sometimes with imagery, too), it also gets into a discussion of visual hierarchy. Visual hierarchy is the apparent pecking order of a composition's elements, and it can be a real make-or-break factor when it comes to the aesthetic impact of logos and word graphics. (You'll also find visual hierarchy talked about quite a bit in this book's final chapter, *Text and Layouts*, beginning on page 182.)

# *Bluebird Hats*

BLACK  
SWAN  
EYEGASSES

purple  
martin  
SCARVES

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## GOLDFINCH GOWNS

### Simple and effective

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Before getting into more involved type and type-plus-imagery solutions for logos, headlines, and word graphics, a reminder: Some of the most elegant and effective typographic solutions are also the simplest.

Each of the logos shown here are made from the characters of a single typeface, and each is presented without any kind of special effect, backdrop, or add-on imagery.

It's not only  
fine feathers  
that make  
fine birds

*It's not only  
fine feathers  
that make  
fine birds*

**Font choices, font voices**

Going along with the notion that the man named Aesop lived and wrote fables about 2000 years ago (an assumption that's been debated by historical scholars for many, many years), a quote from his fable *The Jay and the Peacock* is presented here through eight different typographic voices.

The two samples shown above are featured in fonts that might be seen as expected choices for time-tested words of conventional wisdom—in the minds of many viewers, anyway.

It's not only  
fine feathers  
that make  
fine birds

**IT'S NOT ONLY  
FINE FEATHERS  
THAT MAKE  
FINE BIRDS**

A casual brush-style font injects the type at top with notes of playfulness, good-natured wit, and kitschiness. This projection of personality is clearly different than that coming from any of the other quotations on this spread—a claim that could also be made by each of the other quotations individually.

The ultra-bold Helvetica used for the lower example delivers the quote's message with an emphatic feeling of absolutism.

Ponder for a moment how each of the quotes presented on these two pages might fit into a layout, what kind of imagery that layout might include, and what the piece's overall message might be. Quite a range of differences, aren't there?

It's not only  
**fine feathers**  
that make  
**fine birds**

*It's not only fine feathers*  
**THAT MAKE  
FINE BIRDS**

At top, two weights of the same contemporary serif font lend different levels of inflection to the quote's words—much like a speaker's voice might be used to affect certain aspects of a verbal message.

At bottom, two typefaces that clearly don't have any sensible business being seen together work as one to add inferences of a hidden meaning or an inside joke to this presentation.

IT'S NOT ONLY  
FINE FEATHERS  
THAT MAKE  
FINE BIRDS

*It's  
not only  
fine feathers  
that make  
fine birds*

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If the highly unorthodox typeface featured at top were applied to this quote, and if the quote were part of a layout, then viewers might feel strongly compelled to read the layout's text in search of an explanation.

The lower font, being heavily biased toward an era of bygone grooviness, might be just the thing needed to convey these words if they happened to be paired with imagery and/or text that was similarly themed.

The lesson of all these samples? The moral of the story?  
*Take at least as much care choosing your fonts as you do your words.*

Tom Thumb  
**BBQ**  
 SAUCE

Tom  
**THUMB**  
**BARBEQUE**  
*sauce*

Tom  
**Thumb**  
**BARBEQUE**  
**SAUCE**

Tom Thumb  
**BBQ**  
*sauce*

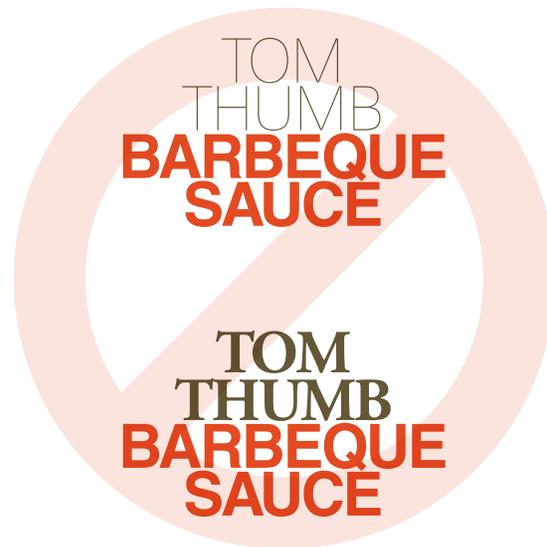
### Combining fonts

You can find much advice about combining fonts: what works and what doesn't. Here's this book's straight-up recommendation on the matter: Decisively aim for either clear and obvious connections or clear and obvious differences when combining typefaces.

The example at the middle top is a demonstration of conspicuous visual harmony between fonts. Each word of this design (and the two dingbats as well) share a common ancestry as part of the extended Bodoni typeface family.

On the other hand, the lower three examples all depend on obvious differences for the successes of their font pairings.

*Tom*  
THUMB  
Barbeque  
*sauce*



### Multi-font failings

This sample, too, works well both visually and stylistically because of pronounced differences between the script, display, and blackletter fonts it uses. Marked differences in the sizes of the design's words also contribute to its expressive conveyances of diversity and energy.

Spend plenty of time on the computer trying out different combinations of fonts when working toward results like these. Experiment also with size relationships and color variables within your design. Give yourself plenty of possible solutions to choose from before deciding which ones are most worthy of further development.

The upper sample in this column pairs two sans serif faces: Futura Light and Helvetica Bold. Don't do this. As typefaces, Futura and Helvetica are not nearly different enough to be used together.

And the lower sample—even though it uses adequately different typefaces (Helvetica and Garamond)—presents its fonts in weights that are far too similar.

Fixes? Solutions? The upper sample could only be cured by going with a light/bold combination of fonts from just one typeface. The lower assemblage could be saved simply by applying notably different weights to the two fonts it features.

# ALEXIS AVENUE ARTISTS' COOPERATIVE

ALEXIS AVENUE **ARTISTS'** COOPERATIVE

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# ALEXIS AVENUE ARTISTS' COOPERATIVE

## Breaking lines

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Some of the most important logo-building considerations are also the easiest to overlook. Line breaks, for example.

Line breaks are the points at which multiple words are broken down into more than one row of type. A logo doesn't necessarily need to have any line breaks (as demonstrated in the middle example above), but designers often apply breaks to help direct attention to a certain word or a group of words within a logo, and also to shape the footprint of a design into something other than a long horizontal rectangle.

Explore all kinds of ways of breaking lines when designing logos. Different sets of words provide unique compositional possibilities in this regard: Some line-break strategies may present positive design opportunities (like a functional overall footprint) while others might create insurmountable compositional challenges (like a line of type that is way longer than any of the others in a design, and for no good reason).

In addition to trying out different line breaks for type you're wanting to stack, investigate different weights and sizes for the words within your design. Weight and size attributes can also help put sought-after notes of emphasis where they belong.

ALEXIS AVENUE  
**ARTISTS'**  
COOPERATIVE

ALEXIS AVENUE  
**ARTISTS'**  
COOPERATIVE

ALEXIS  
AVENUE  
**ARTISTS'**  
COOPERATIVE



#### Nontraditional line breaks

Would the logo you're working on benefit from a footprint that's neither overly tall nor exceedingly wide, such as proportions that might lend themselves easily to a wide range of printed and posted applications? If so, try out line breaks, font weights, leading solutions, and justification settings\* that help shape your design accordingly.

\*The samples above make use of either justified or centered formatting, but flush-left, flush right, and even asymmetrical solutions could also be used toward similar ends.

Say you're working on a logo for a creatively aligned organization. An artists' cooperative, for example. Wouldn't it make sense—given the presumably open-minded nature of the organization's members—to explore unlikely and nontraditional solutions while you're at it?

What about offering at least one idea that dismisses some of the so-called *rules* of typography when presenting designs to the client? What about, for instance, applying non-traditional line breaks to the words you're working with, and using color-based cues to help viewers decipher what they're reading?

SUN  
SUNRISE  
SUNSET

**Baseline considerations**

Typographic baselines usually sit straight and level. But they don't have to—particularly when it comes to presenting words within logos and word graphics.

In addition to being horizontal, baselines (and ascender lines, too) can be vertical, slanted, curved, bent, or broken. They can also follow the form of a circle, a rectangle, a triangle, or an abstract shape.

Illustrator and InDesign offer several ways of altering the orientation, direction, and flow of baselines. Learn how to use these software features fluently so you'll be able to quickly and easily bring your ideas to life when aiming for out-of-the-ordinary baseline configurations.

**Getting lucky**

Here's something worth keeping your eyes open for: situations where a word with a certain number of letters is being paired with a word that has either one more or one less letter. In these cases—and with the help of some wide-open letterspacing—you might allow baselines and ascender lines to overlap to produce an unorthodox and visually compelling arrangement of words.

## YOUR TURN TO: **CREATE TYPOGRAPHIC LOGOS**

*This project is not unlike the kind of work you'd be doing if you were preparing to present a set of logo ideas to a client.*

### **Type-only logo design**

Here's the name of your client's business: *Zachary Avenue Cafe and Coffee House*. The establishment serves gourmet-quality lunches and the expected lineup of espresso drinks in a relaxed and contemporary atmosphere. Their target clientele is younger, well-to-do, urban professionals. Keep all of these factors in mind when designing.

For their logo, the client has specifically requested a design that's made purely from type—possibly with the addition of a backdrop panel or an enclosure of some kind. And, as far as the logo's type goes, font choices, case configurations, and the overall proportions of the design are all up for grabs.

The client has not decided whether they want to play up the restaurant's street name, the fact that it's a cafe, or that it's a coffee shop—or to emphasize all three of these things equally—within their logo. That said, make sure each of your ideas present different options in this regard (certain words in your designs could be emphasized through size differences, line breaks, the use of bold type, and/or accent colors\*).

Your job is to come up with three ideas for presentation. Each idea should come across notably different than any of the others. This range of looks will give your client a good scope of approaches to consider. Keeping this in mind, it wouldn't be a bad idea to further expand the variety of your designs by presenting one in all caps, one as all lowercase, and one with an initial cap.

\* See the following four pages for more about emphasis strategies such as these.

## EMPHASIS STRATEGIES

The logo, headline, or word graphic you're working on may have several words, but are each of its words equally important to the reader? That's doubtful.

For example, let's say you're working on a logo for *Memphis Guitar and Music*. Within this name, does the word *and* deserve to be presented with equal importance as *Memphis*, *Guitar*, or *Music*? Probably not, even though it's a word that plays the important role of making sure people know that the shop has more than one thing to offer.

Which, then, among the words *Memphis*, *Guitar*, and *Music* is most critical? That all depends on which one—or ones—the client wants to emphasize. (Interested in seeing how different incarnations of this logo might appear, depending on different choices in emphasis? Turn to the next spread).

With considerations like this in mind, make it a priority to talk with your client about the relative significance of the words within the logo you're designing. If it turns out that one or more words needs to stand out above the others—as is very often the case—then make a point of coming up with a design that guides viewers to the word—or words—that need emphasizing. Take this work very seriously. After all, logos usually have only a second or two to catch viewers' attention, and if a logo's primary message can't be delivered within this amount of time, then it may not be delivered at all.

How can you establish different levels of emphasis among a logo's words? Two ways: First, by enhancing the visual impact of certain words by making them bigger, bolder, and/or more colorful than the others. And second, by making sure you're playing down the visual presence of other words within the design by restraining their size, weight, and coloring.

# UNDER- STANDING **VISUAL** HIERARCHY

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## Directing the eye

The eye likes to avoid confusion by being given cues as to where it's supposed to look.

On this page, the eye is first drawn to a bold central word and its impossible-to-ignore colored character before being pulled toward typographic elements that offer themselves more quietly (this block of text among them).

MEMPHIS  
GUITAR  
& MUSIC

MEMPHIS  
GUITAR & MUSIC

*Memphis*  
GUITAR  
AND  
MUSIC

---

#### Size considerations

Size differences, of course, are one way of ensuring that a logo's type sends the right message to viewers. And not only that, size differences between any of a composition's elements—especially when those differences are great—can add feelings of energy and excitement to a design.

Note how two of these three designs play up the importance of just one word, and how one of them highlights two words equally. The correct solution for any logo depends on the goals you and your client are after in presenting it to the world. You can help your client solidify these objectives through the range of ideas you present to them.

Memphis  
**Guitar**  
& Music

**MEMPHIS**  
**Guitar**  
**& music**

**Weight and color**

Each of the logos above features sets of words from a single typeface that are presented in identical point sizes. See how weight and color are employed to bring emphasis to one or more words within each design.

When you're looking for ways of establishing visual hierarchy within single-typeface logos, headlines, and word graphics, consider each of these variables—weight, color, and size—and think about employing one, two, or all three to bring emphasis where it belongs.

**MEMPHIS**  
**GUITAR**  
AND  
**MUSIC**

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It's a great idea to begin any logo or word-graphic project by simply writing down the words you'll be working with in different case configurations and with different line breaks. What this does is give you a quick set of visual reminders of how your words might be presented as you begin considering font choices, type sizes, and line breaks.

For example, you might be thinking about pairing an especially thin and condensed font with an especially bold and wide font and are wondering how these faces might be applied to your given set of words. You can quickly find out (or at least narrow down your options) by taking a look at your handwritten word-configurations to see which ones seem best able to allow for the fonts' different proportions.

So start here, with handwritten sets of the words you're working with. It'll only take a few minutes to jot them down, and it's very likely you'll find that they speed up and improve your search for both a font and a compositional arrangement for the logo or word graphic you're creating.



As far as deciding on specific fonts for your project, try the following.

Type out some or all of your words using whatever software you'll be using for your piece's creation.

Type them out in the three case configurations shown above: initial cap, lowercase, and uppercase.

Place your words within oversized bounding boxes that will allow their letters to get bigger or smaller—depending on which fonts are applied to them in the next step.

Also, to help streamline the upcoming exploratory work, place your set of words in the upper left corner of a relatively large document. This will leave you with plenty of space to position copies of the words as you begin exploring typeface options.

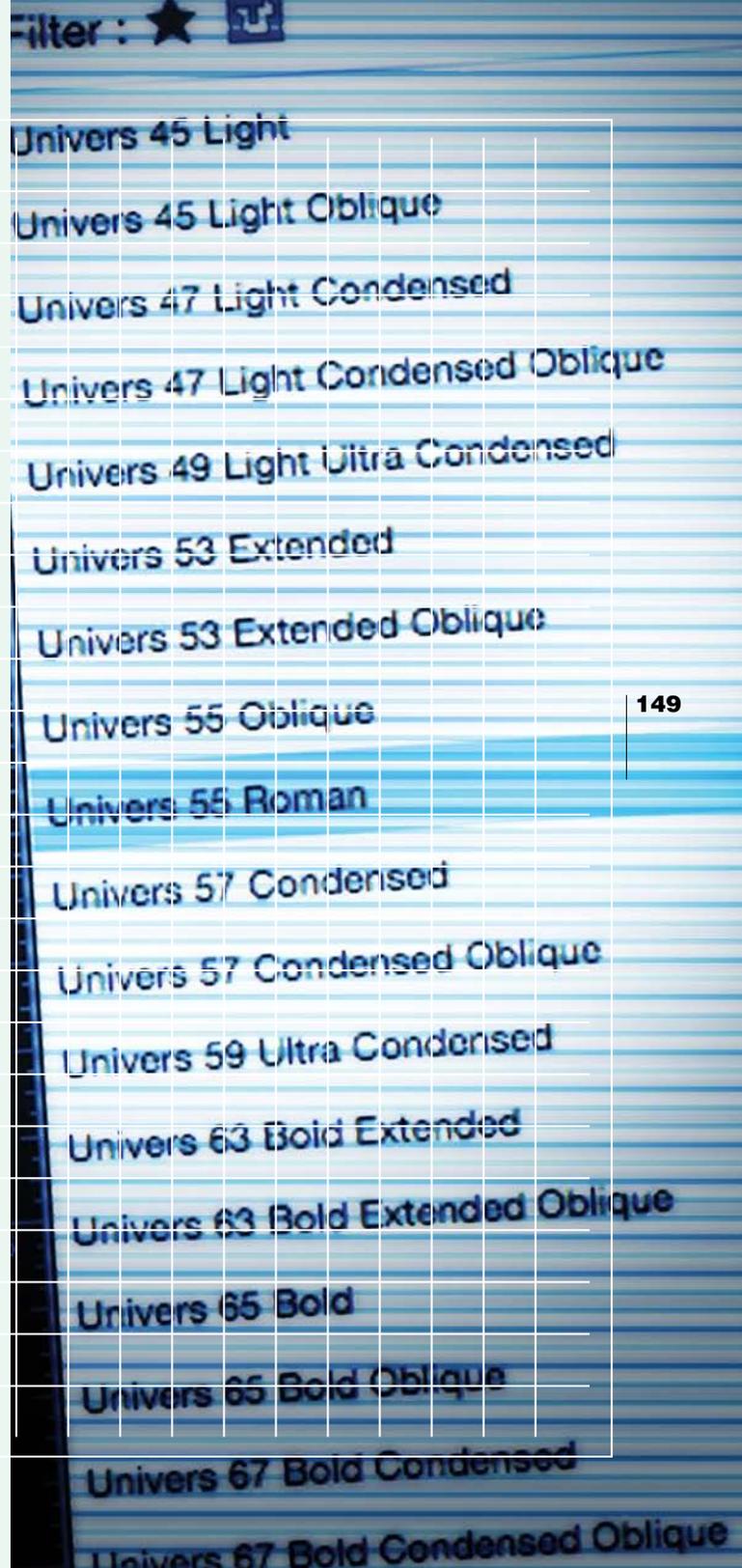


Now it's time to look at typefaces. This is where you search through your font menu to see which ones might work best for your project.

Do this by making copies of the words you typed in the previous step, going through your font list from top to bottom, and applying any that seem like they have the slightest chance of working out. Sometimes you'll come across clear and expected winners, and other times you'll discover unexpected choices that offer themselves irresistibly well to what you're designing.

If a certain font looks good, keep it within your document and move on to additional possibilities. Keep at this until you've gone through your library of typefaces. This may take some time, but it's time well spent: Afterwards, you'll be left with a document that you can conveniently refer to—and sample from—when you begin assembling your logo or word graphic.

What happens if your typeface menu doesn't provide you with just the right font for the project you're working on? Well, naturally, this might mean it's time to spend time (and possibly money) to expand your collection of typefaces.



# Florence by backpack & bootstraps

*A hostel-by-hostel journey  
to the core of Italy's historical  
epicenter of art, architecture,  
food, and espresso.*

# Florence by backpack & bootstraps

*A hostel-by-hostel journey  
to the core of Italy's historical  
epicenter of art, architecture,  
food, and espresso.*

## Color for emphasis

Imagine you're creating a headline and a subhead for a magazine or a website. You've come up with typography that looks good, and now you're looking for ways of adding notes of style and/or emphasis through color alone.

What about coloring just the subhead or just the headline? It's a simple and attractive solution that also helps the design's two main components differentiate themselves.

How about using a bright accent color to bring emphasis to a single word—especially if that word is likely to attract notice and act as bait for further reading?

Note, also, that gray has been used to shade this example's subhead—a ploy that adds a subtle degree of visual complexity to the design.

Don't use just any good looking hue when adding color to type. Color should not only look good, it should also echo meanings and feelings that are being communicated through a design. The head/subhead examples on this spread have been adorned with the national colors of Italy: green, white, and red.

# Florence by backpack & bootstraps

*A hostel-by-hostel journey  
to the core of Italy's historical  
epicenter of art, architecture,  
food, and espresso.*

# Florence by backpack & bootstraps

*A **hostel-by-hostel** journey  
to the core of Italy's historical  
epicenter of art, architecture,  
food, and espresso.*

Things are turned around here as black is used as a background for white and colored type.

The headline/subhead presentation above gains an extra measure of visual flair through an unconventional application of alternating colors within its first word and also through its use of three colors within the following two lines of type.

On a technical note, the red that appears on this page is slightly lighter than that used on the previous page. This page's red was lightened to help it stand out better against its black backdrop. Be attentive to adjustments like these whenever applying color to type.

And what about a less intuitive application of color within your headline/subhead? In this case, an unexpected item is highlighted within the subhead to bring attention to certain words deemed more worthy of attention than the headline itself.

Note also that most of this design's subhead is a light gray. Not something that readers would necessarily notice right away, but still a treatment that helps the headline and subhead stand apart from each other.

## TYPE AGAINST BACKDROP

Type is almost always there to be read. Sure, there are times when words or characters are set on a page purely as a visual backdrop or as peripheral matter, but those cases are relatively rare. The rest of the time, type needs to be presented clearly and legibly.

Which brings us to the topic of type-over-backdrop.

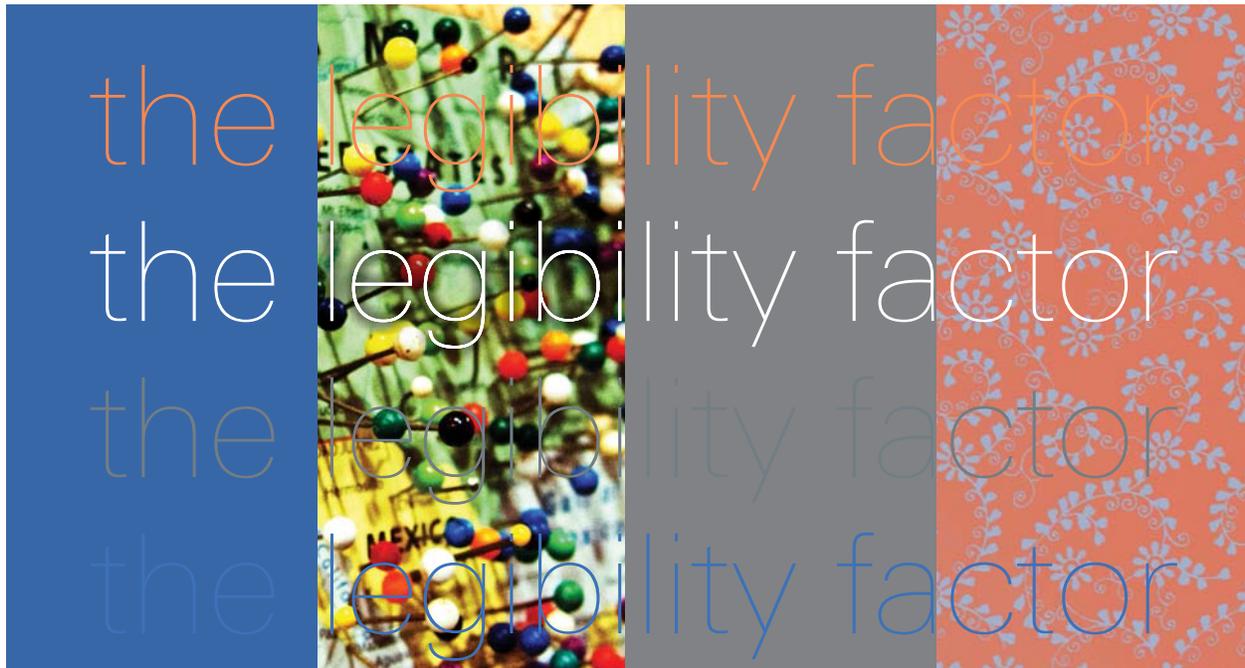
**152** | Few things can interfere with the legibility of an other-wise perfectly readable headline or block of text than a visually competing background color, image, or pattern. It's very important, then, that you take whatever steps are needed to maintain the legibility of the type you set over a backdrop of any kind.

The good news here is that while digital media makes it easier than ever to place text over potentially troublesome colors, images, and patterns, it also provides designers with tools to solve just about any readability issue that comes up.

When discussing strategies for type legibility, it's important that you fully understand the meaning of the term *value* as it relates to art and design. Value is how light or dark a color or a shade of gray is. A deep burgundy has a dark value. A pale blue has a light value. And the key to maintaining the readability of type that's set over a backdrop is to make sure that there are strong differences between the value of the type and the value of the backdrop.

This is relatively easy to manage when you're simply setting type over a single-color background. You just have to make sure your type is clearly darker or lighter than the color it's sitting over.

Things get more complicated when type is set over a visually active backdrop—like a photo or a pattern—since the values in these backdrops can vary widely and abruptly. Stay tuned for more advice on handling backdrops such as these as the chapter continues.



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### The legibility factor

Just watch as the legibility of the text above rises, falls—and sometimes disappears completely—as it travels from backdrop to backdrop.

Except in the case of the white text, anyway: The white letters maintain their readability as they pass over the busy photograph because of a subtle and value-darkening drop shadow applied between them and the image (see pages 156–157 for more legibility-preserving techniques like this).

Never settle for *almost* when it comes to legibility. Always seek solutions that positively ensure that the text you set over a backdrop color, image, or pattern stands out clearly.



### Solid backdrops

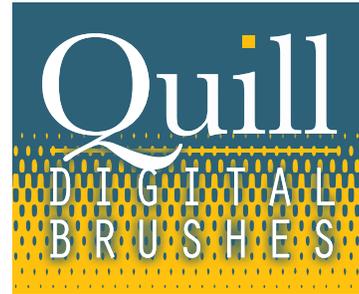
Some designers are prone to feel lost when struggling with type-over-backdrop legibility issues. If you feel like you may be one of these designers, turn to this spread the next time you're having trouble: Each of its logos (except for one) presents its type legibly and each has a lesson to offer.

First of all, a reminder: Value is critical (as mentioned on page 152). In the upper sample, dark type and a white line and tittle show up clearly against the mid-value gray backdrop over which they sit.

The lower example works simply by featuring type, line, and tittle that are clearly lighter than their dark gray backdrop.

Get used to seeing value difference whether you're looking at shades of gray or at colors. Painters have a saying: *A color can't be right if its value is wrong.* This is true, always. No exceptions. So take this advice to heart whether you're applying colors to a landscape painting or to a logo design.\*

\*Color-related advice such as this and much more can be found in this book's Creative Core companion volume, *Color for Designers*.



Maintaining value differences is all the more important when backdrops become more complex, since they may also become more disruptive to type that sits on top of them.

The upper sample is a failure. Why? Because the blue and yellow in the background are so different in value that neither black nor white, nor any shade between, can simultaneously stand out against both colors. As a result, this logo's lower type runs into serious legibility issues.

This problem is solved in the lower sample—not by altering the colors of the type but by lessening the differences in value between its backdrop's colors.

Which isn't to say that there's no way to use the backdrop that failed so miserably in the previous column. At top is a solution where a dark halo was added around the white type, and the logo's line and title were changed from black to a light and bright yellow.

And what about adding a translucent layer of white between a busy backdrop and the text it holds? If all else fails—or if you're simply a fan of this look—then this might be the solution you're looking for when dealing with a busy backdrop.

# Death

156

## Type over imagery

Here are ways of placing readable text over a visually active backdrop (an image, in this case). For starters—as shown in this column, and picking up where the previous page left off—you could put a translucent white (or lightly colored) panel between your text and its backdrop image.

The yellow header at the top of this page demonstrates how making type extra-large is another way of maintaining legibility. The mid-value yellow used to color this type would hardly help small text stand out against this spread's photographic backdrop, but the hue succeeds here through a combination of its brightness and the image-spanning size of the type it fills.

You can use black—and dark colors—to create legibility-protecting panels for reversed type. Panels such as these can be presented as solids or as translucent shades.

Be opportunistic, too, when looking for ways to set type over busy background images. See the line of white type at the upper left corner of this page? Notice how the type is positioned just above some mountain tops before threading its way through a convenient gap in the clouds? This is no accident: The background image was placed in just such a way as to allow things to work out like this (and, in all honesty, Photoshop was used to remove one small cloud that originally stood in the way of the type's path).

# Valley

It's relatively easy to feature type in vacant areas of a photograph—as demonstrated here.

And then there's the trick of adding a light glow around dark type that sits on top of an active backdrop...

... or a dark glow around light type that does the same. (Also note that this white type is a step bolder than the dark type directly above—and this also helps with legibility.)

**Bigger and bolder type, presented with a black, white, or colored outline, might also work if you're okay with louder projections of personality.**

## FOCUSING ON: ALTERING PHOTOS TO ASSIST LEGIBILITY

158



*The previous spread demonstrated ways of treating and assisting type to safeguard legibility. Here, the focus is on ways of altering photographs to do the same.*

*Pretty much any designer can benefit from an understanding of basic Photoshop tools and effects. And that's all that's been called upon here to keep the headline in the three examples at right clear and readable in spite of the visually active photo they're sitting over.*

*New to Photoshop? Two of the first things you should become acquainted with are adjustment layers and layer masks. Adjustment layers are layers that don't contain images but rather apply effects to whatever sits beneath them (effects that darken, lighten, alter colors, and much more). Apply layer masks to adjustment layers to control exactly where their adjustments show up. The three sets of samples to the right were created using layer masks and show how various adjustment layers affected the original image shown above.*

*Want some practice working with adjustment layers and layer masks? Try the exercises on the next spread.*



In this sample, an image-darkening CURVES adjustment layer was applied to the image. A graduated window was created at the bottom of the adjustment layer's mask to produce the effect shown at top. The headline type is now visible, and otherwise would have been difficult to see against the image's complex visual content.

Keep in mind that you can also apply these headline-protecting treatments when adding blocks of text to photographs.



An opposite strategy was used to handle the look of this image: A lightened area was created at the top of the photo to preserve the legibility of a headline that would have otherwise struggled for clarity.

Photoshop provides a strong set of controls for modifying the effects of adjustment layers and their masks. Each treatment on this spread could have been made either more subtle or more pronounced with only minor changes to their settings.

The left side of this image was neither darkened nor lightened. In this case, its values were confined to a mid-range of grays using both a CURVES and a HUE/SATURATION adjustment layer. The resulting backdrop-area provides a perfect setting for the placement of a colored headline.

## YOUR TURN TO: **MIX TYPE AND BACKGROUND IMAGERY**

*This image-plus-type exercise has as much to do with altering photographs as it does with working with type. And why not? Designers regularly find themselves melding photos with type when creating layouts, and image-related skills often need to be applied hand-in-hand with typographic know-how.*

### **160** | **Exploring type-over-photo solutions**

The instructions for this project are simple. Select a few favorite photos from your personal cache (you do have a sizable personal cache of digital images, right?), open the images in Photoshop, set some type over the top of your images, and then use adjustment layers and their layer masks (mentioned at the start of the previous spread) to protect the legibility of your word(s).

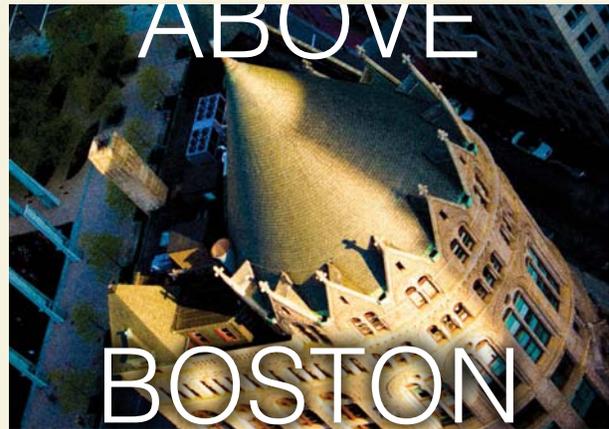
What sort of text could you add to your photos? Take a look at the facing page for ideas.

In addition to adding adjustment layers to support the legibility of your type, also be open to trying out any other Photoshop effects you think might be of help. (You could apply effects directly to your text, too, as talked about on pages 155–157).

If you're brand new to Photoshop or your experience with this program is limited, this might be a great time to go through a tutorial that covers things like adjustment layers, layer masks, blend modes, and special effects (alternatively just consult the Help menu and figure things out while you work on this project).

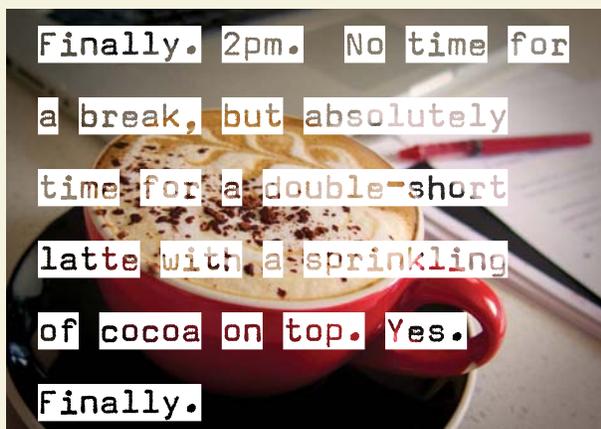
Not only will this exercise give you ideas for future client-based jobs, it'll also stock you with possible solutions the next time you want to create a custom-made card for a friend, a piece of wall-art for your office, or a purely artistic weekend project.

Ideas: How about adding the name of a person, place, or thing to your photo? Or what about adding a favorite passage of text, a brief comment, or a journal-like entry?



"I don't care how many bugs there are in the sunflowers," she said. "If Van Gogh liked sunflowers, then so do I."

The Last Day in August  
JAMES EDWARDS



## LOGOS THAT INTEGRATE TYPE AND ICON

Logos can be created using only typography, or they can be designed to include an icon.

Type-plus-icon logos are the focus of this spread and the next. And since designers are very often asked to create logos like these, it wouldn't be a bad idea to have your own strong and adaptable plan-of-action that you can go to whenever you're asked to develop a set of designs for presentation. Got such a plan? If not, consider shaping the routine described here into a plan you can apply to upcoming projects.

Start by talking to your client and finding out as much as you can about their hopes and expectations for the project. Best to know these things right up front since information like this can guide you toward solutions that have a good chance of selling while also steering you away from ones that probably won't.

Get to know your target audience, too. Your final design will have little value if its target audience isn't

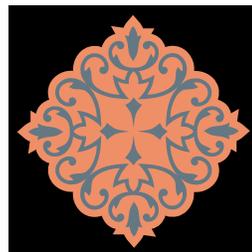
wowed by it—regardless of how much you and your client love it.

Next, brainstorm for both visual material and thematic inferences that might be at home in your logo. See pages 108–109 for more on this process.

Once your brainstorming has churned up some useful thumbnail sketches and given you a strong sense of direction, go to the computer to create your icons and to select just the right fonts for your designs.

From there, explore all kinds of different arrangements between the icons you've developed and the fonts you've selected. (Use the visuals and text on the next three pages to help you brainstorm for solutions during this stage of the project.)

Once you finalize your logo's compositions, apply color and make any finishing touches needed to complete your designs.



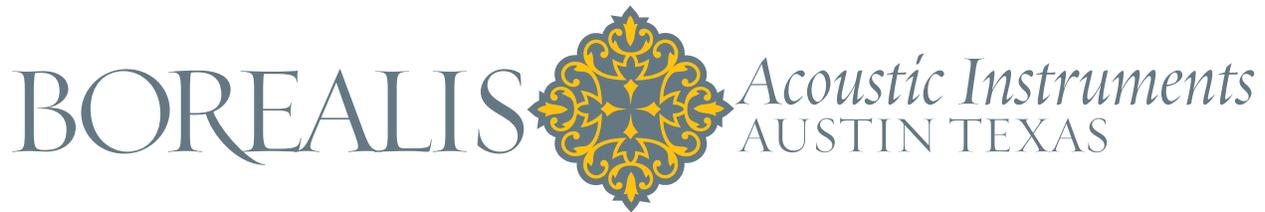
Borealis  
Acoustic  
Instruments  
AUSTIN TX

### Basic associations

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Icon-over-type and icon-next-to-type associations between a logo's elements may be commonplace, but they shouldn't necessarily be dismissed for lack of originality. After all, logos built in this tried-and-true manner can look beautiful and function quite nicely.

The main thing to keep in mind when working with these kinds of arrangements—or any of the several others featured on the following two pages—is to make sure your icon and type aren't fighting for attention. Establish visual hierarchy by making one larger, bolder, and/or more colorful than the other. That way, viewers' eyes won't have a hard time knowing which to go to first when they come across your design.



### Considering options

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*Above, below, alongside, within, behind, or in front? Exactly where should my icon sit in relation to my logo's type? Can my icon be used in place of a letter? Can it sit within a space between words? Should it be more colorful than the type? Should it appear faded and restrained?*

Ask yourself questions like these whenever you're developing a type-plus-icon logo. Use the computer extensively to put potential solutions in front of your eyes and to give your designer's mind plenty of material to consider when picking favorites.\*

\*Designers commonly present clients with three to five designs during the initial stages of a logo project. Ideally, each of the designs will convey itself differently than any of the others, and each would work beautifully if it were chosen by the client. Well-prepared designers might also bring a laptop to the meeting that holds variations to one or more of their designs...just in case.



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Explore, explore, explore. What about wrapping your type all the way around the icon you've designed? How about framing your icon with type that arcs both above and below it? How about adding a backdrop panel to your design? And what about developing a more complex enclosure/emblem style of logo—something that might look especially attractive when silkscreened on a T-shirt or printed on vinyl as a vehicle graphic? (See pages 116–117 and 177–179 for more about emblem-style logos and word graphics.)

## LAYOUTS AND GRAPHICS

When things go just right within a layout, it's usually because its typography, imagery, design elements, and textual content are contributing successfully toward in-common visual and thematic goals.

Given that this is a book on typography, this spread and the next focus mostly on the role type plays within this formula for success. This discussion mentions, however, other visual material and abstract concepts since typography must very often collaborate with these kinds of things in order to do its job effectively.

Much more will be said about typography and page compositions in the final chapter, Text and Layouts, beginning on page 182. But here you'll get a good head start on later material by seeing how visual hierarchy comes into play whenever headlines, imagery, and text share space together.

Also, even though the examples on the next three pages have to do with headlines, imagery, and blocks of text, you can adapt and apply their lessons to layout scenarios of many different sorts.

For example, even though the facing page gets into a discussion of how conceptual matters might affect how visual hierarchy is established through a layout and its headline—know that the idea presented there can be easily adapted to logos, signage, packaging, and word graphics. And the examples of compositional visual hierarchy on the next spread, well, with a little imagination, their lessons can be applied to pretty much any work of art or design you create—whether or not they include type.



# Making your point.

## Questions and answers

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Working on an advertisement or a brochure? Brainstorming ways of presenting a headline? Ask yourself, *What's the point?* As in, *What's the point of this piece? What's its message? How is that message supposed to come across?* And, as your layout starts coming together, ask, *Is my headline speaking in the right typographic voice? Is it connecting conceptually with the piece's imagery? Does it stand out properly against other compositional elements? Would a different font, different size, or different color help it call for just the right amount of attention?* Try to answer each of these questions, not only as a designer but also as a target-audience member. Listen carefully to whatever responses come to mind and act accordingly.



**Establishing pecking order**

Use this spread as a tool. Turn to these two pages the next time you're working on a layout and let these images spur you toward compositions that position your layout's components at targeted levels of the visual hierarchy spectrum.

Take a look, for instance, at compositions that give strong visual precedence to your headline, to a single word within the headline, to the piece's image, or even to white space that's been granted the greatest amount of visual real estate within the layout.



### Sameness

The visual strength of this layout's headline, image, and text block are relatively similar. Too similar, in fact, to be used as any kind of example of visual hierarchy.

Usually, it's best to avoid visual sameness within layouts since a lack of visual hierarchy can come across as uncharismatic and indecisive. Sometimes, however, visual uniformity is a perfect thing to aim for—as when you're creating a layout that's meant to present itself without strong hints of personality. If you do decide to pull back on the visual hierarchy within a layout, just make sure the design scores well in terms of its overall attractiveness—otherwise viewers may find no real reason to be drawn into its message.

## YOUR TURN TO: **INCORPORATE ICONS OR IMAGES**

### **Corporate logo design, with icon**

This project is a lot like the logo-creation exercise on page 143, except this one involves a slightly more common scenario—one where a client is specifically asking for a set of logo ideas that include an abstract icon along with the name of their company.

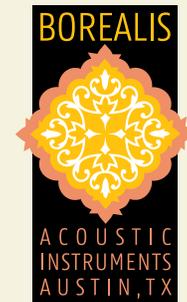
**170**

Here, the client is *Renaissance Contemporary Interiors*. The company specializes in affordable but upscale-looking interior design projects. The client has asked that you come up with a purely decorative icon (something in the general direction of the icon used for the samples at right), and then show three different ways that the icon could be combined with the company's name. Also, the client has asked that each of your designs be targeted toward a demographic with sophisticated—though also fairly conservative—tastes in art and design.

Use the same icon for each of your logos, but apply notably different typographic and compositional solutions to all three designs. Vary fonts, line breaks, type/icon arrangements, color usage, and applications of visual hierarchy among your designs.

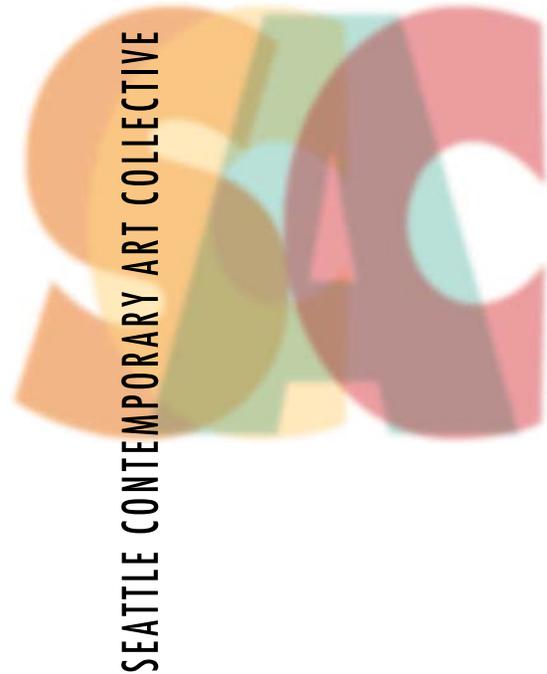
Start your project by developing the decorative icon for your logos. Create something from scratch, or borrow a piece of decor from a family of typographic ornaments and use it as the basis for your icon (as was done for the design seen at right).

Once your icon is finished, start looking for fonts that pair well with its look, and also explore various ways of arranging all of your designs' elements. Use the samples at right to help generate ideas in this regard, and also look to printed and posted collections of logos for inspiration. Make quick thumbnail sketches of your ideas before moving to the computer to finalize your three most promising and visually varied ideas.



seattle  
contemporary  
art collective

SEATTLE CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTIVE



### All type

Enough about imagery for a few pages. What about letters and words that work either alone or with a simple backdrop panel? Typographic structures that are themselves communicative and attractive standalone images?

This is a fun area of exploration for designers who love type—as most designers do. Use this spread and the next as brainstorming fuel the next time you see a chance to create a graphic from words.

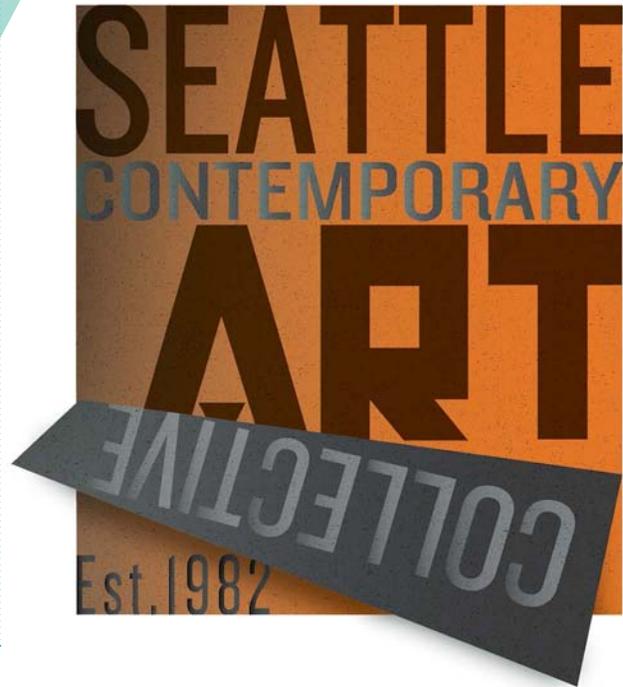
For starters, how about going subtle? The letters of the sample above are actually invisible—it's only their light gray outer halo that defines their presence on the page.

Special effects, anyone? Illustrator and Photoshop offer plenty of choices when it comes to making letters and words blurry, transparent, skewed, rippled, bent, twisted, pixelated, or roughened up.

This design's headline ignores convention and travels bottom-to-top rather than the usual left-to-right; its initials are used for the blurred stack of characters below; and the overall design is configured in a way that might bring notions of a flag or a banner to mind.

# SEATTLE CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTIVE

The dimensional treatment applied here (accomplished with Illustrator's FREE TRANSFORM tool) and its use of Futura Bold lend notes of mid-20th-century design to this composition. It's a look that's bolstered by a shade of blue-green that would have appeared right at home on trendy dinnerware, clocks, and automobiles of that era.



In this sample, a constructivist-looking display font at center, muted and graduated colors throughout, and a touch of faux dimension add up to a design reminiscent of WPA (Works Progress Administration) posters of the 1930s.

How era-aware are you about typography and design? There's much inspiration to be had, and much to be learned, by looking backwards and seeing what designers were up to in times gone by. Bookstores (including those with a good selection of used books), libraries, and websites are great sources for material like this.

SEATTLE  
CONTEMPORARY  
ART  
COLLECTIVE



**All type** (continued)

Legibility is always king, but yes, there are situations where its kingliness can be challenged. For example, this piece might be allowed some leeway in terms of readability since it's aimed at an art-minded audience that's probably spent plenty of time looking at nonrepresentational freeform sculptures, expressionist landscape paintings, and abstract portraits.

And really, when you first saw the typography in the above sample, were you all that challenged by it? Probably not. Sometimes legibility can be surprisingly robust, and other times it's the most fragile component of a design. Listen to your designer's instinct on this one.

Type upon type upon type. Even the backdrop in this sample has been built from dozens of layers of overlapping words.

What about sticking to an ultra-strict all-type regimen like this when designing a word graphic? Your backdrop, line-work, decor, and border elements could all be made from typographic characters.



Here, three colored rectangles have been allowed into a composition that—truth be told—started out with the goal of being purely typographic. It just felt like the thing to do—to fill the spaces with colored boxes—when the crazy configuration of type created a few open spaces that begged for filler.

Be open-minded and open-eyed to unexpected and opportunistic solutions to all your design projects—type-related and otherwise. Just because you started a project with a certain set of rules in mind doesn't necessarily mean you can't break those *rules* if a good enough reason comes along. After all, aren't rules made to be broken? Especially when it comes to expressions of creativity?

A subtitle has been added to this design, and, accordingly, some of the logo's other type has been turned backwards to reflect the subtitle's meaning.

It's interesting how typeset words can deliver ideas and feelings—not only through their literal meaning and through the persona of their font—but also through how they are oriented, scaled, positioned, and colored. Design has many, many ways of delivering messages and emotions to viewers: Be ever open to possibilities that lie outside realms of *normal*, *expected*, and *status quo*.

## ENCLOSURES AND ASSEMBLAGES

Enclosures were mentioned in the previous two chapters, and they come up again here. Given that this is a book on type, why so much focus on not-purely-typographic creations like these? It's because an enclosure can be to typography what a frame is to a work of art or what a stage is to an actor: an attractive partition against the rest of the world that acts as a venue for creative expression.

176

Often, enclosures are designed to unobtrusively frame the type they hold. Sometimes they're allowed to contribute feelings of personality to similarly expressive type. And there are also cases where an enclosure is asked to do *all* of a design's theme-setting work while wrapping around type that speaks in an impartial voice (a good example of this would be when a relatively neutral typeface like Helvetica is used within something like a starburst design filled with a lively pattern of bright colors).

The enclosures shown on this spread are basic and simple. None took much time to create, and none took much planning or forethought to figure out. But still, each of these enclosures bring conveyances of unity, purpose, style, and containment to the words they hold.

It goes without saying that not all typographic logos need to be enclosed by linework, ornamental decorations, or backdrop panels. But what's it really going to take to find out if the logo you're working on might be improved by additions like these? Thirty seconds? A minute? Five minutes? Worth a look, right? And what determines if an enclosure should stay or if it should go? Your art sense, your awareness of current trends in design, and, possibly, the approval (or lack thereof) of your client.

**GREGOR  
DUNCAN  
AND  
JEFFREY**

—  
GREGOR  
DUNCAN  
&  
JEFFREY  
—

*Gregor Duncan & Jeffrey*

### Simple enclosing strategies

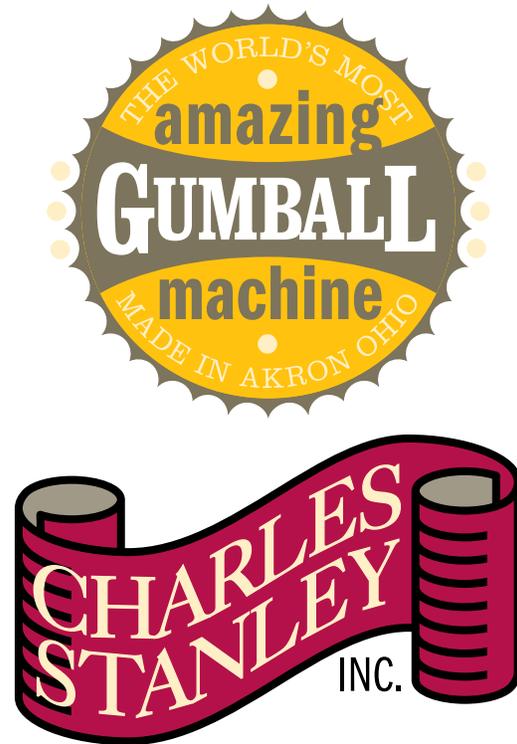
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Imagine removing the linework, ornamentation, and backdrop panel used to enclose these three logo designs (and while you're at it, imagine the type in the lower example changing to black, since otherwise it would become invisible). Each logo would survive and work just fine as a purely typographic design, but each would be different, and each might also lose the very stylistic touch that sets it apart from competitors' logos and makes it especially dear to the client.

Evaluating whether or not an enclosure is needed for a typographic logo is a task that must be handled on a case-by-case and client-by-client basis. And the criteria for evaluation will

be different in each situation since it's bound to be mostly governed by stylistic preferences, which, as we all know, changes within ourselves over time, just as it changes for our clients and our target audiences.

In addition to matters of style and personal preference, there may also be practical considerations that tip the scales either for or against adding an enclosure to a logo. For example, you may learn that a client's logo will often appear within crowded small-space ads—in which case an enclosure might be a handy feature in providing a clear boundary between the logo's type and any encroaching text or graphics.



### Going further

Above is a fairly involved graphic assemblage—and something that not only stands a good chance of catching viewers' attention, but also of providing them with pieces of information that are usually missing from less wordy logo designs.

The interior gradations of color within this logo, as well as its radiating pattern of exterior lines, give this design a glowing-from-within appearance and a warmly energetic demeanor. (The exterior lines, by the way, could be considered an optional feature of a design like this—a feature that could be included when there's space for them, and left out when there's not.)

Multiple appearances of circles in the design at top help it connect to a *gumball* theme (circles were also used to carve out the expressive ring of outward-gesturing shapes around the logo's perimeter.) The design's central type features oversized first and last letters that help the word conform to the shape of its own sub-enclosure, and the logo's mixture of fonts generates feelings of earlier times when multi-font configurations were the rule of the day.

The lower sample features an illustrative enclosure that lends clear feelings of history and formality to whoever Charles Stanley is, and whatever his company does (not all logos reveal these details up front).

THE GREAT  
NORTHWEST  
BREAD CO.

Cherry Street  
Sidewalk  
Cafe  
17 CHERRY STREET EUGENE OREGON

### Purely typographic solutions

At top is an interesting variation of the enclosure theme. In this case, two lines of type are used to enclose—from above and below—another typographic element and two illustrated designs. The resulting assemblage holds together well as a composite visual.

The other example in this column is a purely typographic assemblage that also delivers itself in a compact and cohesive way. If desired, you could further emphasize the tight-fitting look of a logo like this by wrapping the entire design with a close-fitting backdrop panel.

ALL NATURAL INGREDIENTS  
CROSS  
LICORICE  
MADE WITH MOLASSES & ANISE  
STRAIPS

Nothing but type: words wrapping around and crossing paths with other words.

You'll likely need a company's slogan, its address, or information about its product to build up a sufficient word count for a design like this. Consider your options and check with your client about some possibilities.

## YOUR TURN TO: **CREATE A PERSONAL EMBLEM**

Now it's your turn to come up with a personal emblem—a design that includes your initials\*, your spelled-out name, or the name of a club or a business you're involved with.

And by *emblem*, what we're talking about here is a compositional construction that is more or less along the lines of the samples on the previous two pages (as well as on pages 116–117). Your own design could feature decorations, patterns, illustrations, photography, background panels, and/or enclosing linework along with typographic elements. Or it could be made entirely from type.

Start your design process by thinking of the kinds of visual and thematic projections your creation should deliver (see pages 108–109 for brainstorming tips).

Next, move on to the thumbnail stage and try to give yourself three to six sketched-out ideas to consider.

Then, act as your own client and choose your favorite for further development on the computer.

Use whatever software suits your project best as you work toward finalizing your design. Also, even if you're working from a tightly rendered thumbnail sketch, be open to changes and improvements that come to mind as you work on the computer. Make sure to try out a variety of font choices before making up your mind, and also look into all kinds of compositional, decorative, and color-based finishing touches for your emblem (and don't forget to save copies of any promising solutions as you work to avoid making irreversible changes to a design that might have been your best).

What to do with your finished emblem? Up to you, of course. How about hanging a copy on the wall of your office or art space? What about printing some stickers? Or maybe doing a limited run of personal or professional calling cards?

\*You may have already come up with an interesting monogram for yourself after doing the exercise on page 80. If so, you can now incorporate that design into the emblem you create here.

## FOCUSING ON: INVESTIGATING DIFFERENT ENDINGS

Always remember when designing emblem-like logos like these to take advantage of the workflow-boosting capabilities of software and to investigate different ways of finishing your design.

And why not? You've got nothing to lose, and possibly much to gain, by looking into as many alternate endings for your project as possible before calling it done.

Here are three different color variations to an emblem borrowed from the previous spread. Each could be considered a final product, and it would be up to you and the client to decide which is likely to appeal best to the target audience.

Variations in typefaces could (and usually should) be investigated as well when working on an emblem-like design, as could options involving its structure and the arrangement of its typographic and decorative components.



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Answers to quiz on pages 20–21:

1. Crossbar
2. Tittle
3. Tail
4. Shoulder
5. Serif
6. Stroke
7. Hairline stroke
8. Closed counter
9. Cross stroke
10. Cap-height line
11. X-height line
12. Baseline
13. Leg
14. Open counter
15. Spur
16. Ascender
17. Bowl
18. Descender