

MODULE 7

Designing Effective Pages



Good page and screen design not only enhances the visual appeal of your writing, but improves its legibility—readers will be able to locate information on the page faster using skimming and scanning techniques, and once they start to read, will read the text faster.

Many of the page design and typographic conventions that we see in business publications today evolved because of the limitations imposed by typewriters. One example is the use of

Courier, a non-proportional typeface. With Courier, every letter and character on the keyboard uses the same amount of space, whether it's an “l” or an “m.” While it made the typewriter easier to design, it's considered slower to read because of the unnatural word lengths that result. Now that we use word processors and laser printers, we can drop some of these typewriter conventions and go back to standard typographic conventions.

In this module, you'll learn how to create a great page design, what typefaces work the best, how to highlight for emphasis, what information headers and footers should contain, how to present information graphically, and ways to get the most from your word processor.



Real Resume Bloopers

“Insufficient writing skills, thought processes have slowed down some. If I am not one of the best, I will look for another opportunity.”

“My intensity and focus are at inordinately high levels, and my ability to complete projects on time is unspeakable.”

Page design and layout

An attractive and legible page design will encourage your readers to use your document, and will make it easier to find information and faster to read.

Line length

Keep your line lengths short. If you use the full width of the page with one-inch margins, you'll have 6.5-inch-long lines—too long for comfortable reading. Instead, use only the right-hand two-thirds of the page like the sample on the right, or use two columns like this workbook. Think about the width of columns in the newspaper—most are about two inches wide.

Typefaces and type sizes

The two main classes of typefaces are *serif* typefaces and *sans serif* typefaces. Most typefaces clearly belong in one class or the other. Serifs are the small extensions at the ends of letters and are widely believed to make them more legible, and the text faster to read.

<p>Serif: Times Roman Sans serif: Arial</p>
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While you probably have many typefaces to choose from, most business documents use only two typefaces: a serif typeface, such as Times Roman, for the text, and a sans serif typeface, such as Arial, for

headings. This workbook uses these typefaces in this way.

Most people using Microsoft Windows simply select from the TrueType typefaces that were installed when they installed Windows. TrueType typefaces have both printer and display fonts so that what you see on the screen is virtually identical to what you get from the laser printer. As well, if others print out the file on different laser printers, they'll get the same typefaces as long as they installed the TrueType typefaces when they installed Windows.

Examples of TrueType typefaces	
Serif:	Sans serif:
Bookman	Avant Garde
Century Schoolbook	Century Gothic
Courier	Impact
Garamond	News Gothic

The normal type size for text is from 10 points to 12 points. This is the size your readers are most comfortable reading, and therefore they'll read it the fastest. If you are writing for the visually challenged, younger readers, or where the text may be read at a distance, you may need to increase the type size of the text to 13 points or 14 points. Type smaller than 10 points is much harder to read and noticeably slows down readers.

Sans serif typefaces work well for headings because they stand out. Bold for emphasis.

Use a 10-point to 12-point serif typeface like Times New Roman for easy reading.

Use plenty of headings to break up text. Two or three per page is typical.

Use lots of white space to make the page reader friendly and to let headings stand out. Solid text intimidates readers.

Writing Styleguide

Abbreviations Avoid abbreviations except where the abbreviated form is more commonly used than the full term (for example, “a.m.” and “p.m.”). For common abbreviations such as “e.g.,” “i.e.,” and “etc.,” the English equivalent is preferred.

Abbreviation	English Equivalent
e.g. (exempli gratia)	for example
i.e. (id est)	that is
etc. (et cetera)	and so on, and so forth

Acronyms Minimize the use of acronyms as much as possible. They confuse novices, and sometimes even experts forget what they mean. When you do use them, spell them out the first time—for example, “Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).” Use small caps to format acronyms.

To form the plural of an acronym, add “s” (for example, PCBs).

Affect and Effect The verb “affect” means to influence or produce a change, while the verb “effect” means to bring about.

Example
 The changes to the Act will affect three departments.
 They effected many changes in the organization.

“Effect” is usually used as a noun, and means the result.

Example
 We felt the effects of the stock market crash.

Among and Between Use “between” to describe the direct relationship or comparison of two or more items. Use “among” when the relationship is less direct. In other words, use “between” when the relationship of the items is individual; use “among” when the relationship is collective.

Example
 You can choose between steak, chicken, and fish.
 John was among the candidates chosen.

End the page at an appropriate spot. Don’t leave single lines.

Highlighting for emphasis

If you want to emphasize certain words or passages, you can use **bolding**, notes, *italics*, underlining, UPPER CASE, or SMALL CAPS. But use these effects sparingly—they all slow reading speed if used for more than a few words.

Bolding – Normally used to emphasize headings. Avoid using to emphasize key points—if you photocopy the text, you may lose the bolded effect. Instead, make it into a note.

Note – Make a note for key information that needs to be emphasized, particularly if it's more than a word or two. Enclosing it in a box draws the reader's eyes.

Italics – Normally used to identify emphasized or new words. We've used italics in this workbook to introduce new terms or identify terms that are being defined. Italics can also be used for document titles, such as the title of a form or publication.

Underlining – Commonly used when working with typewriters, but not used much anymore. Avoid underlining.

UPPER CASE – Often used with typewriters for headings because of the lack of other available heading attributes. All-upper-case letters, however, slow reading speed because of the loss of characteristic word shapes—words in mixed case have a shape that aids in their recognition. Avoid using all-upper-case headings, except for acronyms and abbreviations.

SMALL CAPS – If acronyms and abbreviations are set in full capital letters like this—SPCA—they are too dominant and will jump out visually. It's better to put them in *small caps* like this—SPCA (usually two points smaller than the text) to give them about the same visual dominance as other words in the text.

Headings

When deciding on the typeface and size of headings in your document, make sure that the reader will be able to easily distinguish one level from another. Look at the headings in this book. The first-level headings (the module headings) are 36-point Eras Medium, flush left. The second-level headings (the section headings) are 24-point Eras Medium, flush left. The third-level headings are 14-point Eras Medium, also flush left.

When determining the attributes of your heading levels, make sure:

- the size runs from biggest to smallest as you descend the hierarchy
- at least three points of type size separate each level of heading, for example, 18 points, 15 points, and 12 points (otherwise readers may be unsure of what level they're looking at)
- the typeface runs from boldest to lightest as you descend the hierarchy

Keyword headings – We’ve used another type of heading in this book that we call *keyword headings* (like here). They are not fifth-level headings because they can be used at any level in the hierarchy.

On the Web, the user’s browser often determines the typeface and type size of each heading level found in a file. Each of the major browsers has a default, but these can be reset by the user.

For more information about headings, also see *Design a hierarchy*, page 27.

Line spacing

Leave the line spacing set at the default on your word processor. This is the setting considered to be the most readable. Increasing the line spacing, or *leading*, will give the text a more spacious or relaxed look, and is often used in magazine and book publishing. Decreasing the line spacing will make the text more difficult to read.

Use extra line spacing to separate paragraphs. Avoid indenting the first line of a paragraph—this convention is not commonly used in business publications. Additional line spacing is often used to set off headings from the text above and below them. Look at the spacing above and below headings in this workbook.

Justification

Justification refers to how the lines of text line up at the left and right margins. All text is left justified—all lines start at the left margin. But text can also be fully justified—lines can

line up at the right margin as well. This paragraph is fully justified. Magazines and newspapers are almost always fully justified, but business documents are usually not.

Fully justifying text often results in awkward word spacing, which affects reading speed. Magazines and newspapers can often avoid some of these problems by hyphenating words, or using sophisticated typesetting equipment to automatically *kern* words on a line (kerning refers to adjusting the letter spacing of words).

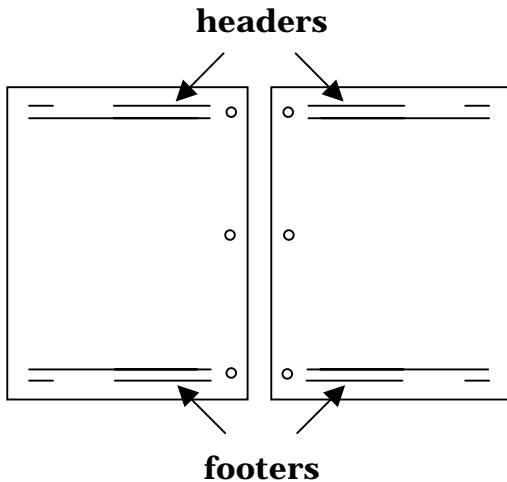
Since most word processors can’t kern in the same way, and hyphenating words slows reading speed, avoid fully justifying text.

A *ragged-right* margin makes it easier for the reader’s eyes to move from line to line. Most of the paragraphs in this workbook, including this one, are left justified and have ragged-right margins.

Headers and footers

Headers are the information and graphics at the top of the page that are not part of the text. *Footers* are the information and graphics at the bottom of the page. Headers and footers are normally only used on longer documents, such as reports or manuals.

Normally there are two different headers and footers—one for left pages and one for right pages—with different information or graphics.



Headers and footers contain important *page control* information, which tells readers where they are and provides other important information about the document they're reading.

The following information may be part of headers and footers:

- organization name and logo
- graphic lines (usually to separate the header and footer from the text)
- document title
- section title
- page number
- issue date
- name of author
- contact department or name
- word processor folder path and file name

Page numbers are usually on the outside edge of the page so they can be seen easily. For documents that are to be printed double sided, the numbers will be on the right on right-hand pages and on the left on left-hand pages.

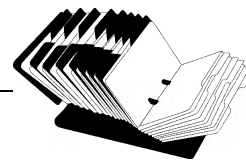
Incidentally, right-hand pages always have odd page numbers and left-hand pages always have even page numbers—this is a universal typographic convention.

Page breaks

Page break refers to where you end a page of text. The standard rule is to never leave a single line of text at either the bottom of a page (an *orphan*) or the top of a page (a *widow*). Most word processors have a *widow and orphan* feature, which automatically guards against single lines. However, for documents that typically use lots of headings, bullet lists, and other methods of presentation, this feature doesn't work well. Once the text is finalized, go through the document and decide where the pages should break.

Follow these guidelines for page breaks:

- Don't separate headings from the text that follows.
- Avoid leaving major headings close to the bottom of the page.
- Don't separate introductory lines from the lists they introduce.
- Don't separate tables from their titles.
- Leave at least two lines of a paragraph at the top and bottom of a page.



Using graphics

Different types of information lend themselves to different methods of presentation. By using the most appropriate methods of presentation, you will help readers find and understand the information they need faster and more easily.

Methods of presenting information

- bullet lists
- checklists
- text boxes
- sidebar text
- tables
- step-by-step procedures
- flow diagrams
- decision trees
- form illustrations
- screen illustrations
- technical illustrations
- photographs
- graphics
- icons

Information is most commonly presented in *narrative* form (paragraph after paragraph). Although narrative text forms most of what we read and is a necessary part of most business documents, it's more difficult to scan for information than most other presentation methods.

Good documents use a variety of methods of presenting information.

The result, instead of narrative text, is termed *structured text*. When you prepare documents, think of yourself as a communicator, not a writer—don't automatically write paragraph after paragraph.

Non-technical graphics can be used to provide visual interest, but graphics should relate to and reinforce the theme of the text. Graphics should always be placed as closely following their reference in the text as possible.

You can get many kinds of graphics from clip-art sources. Try and use graphics created in a similar style.



More complex graphics, or graphics on specific subjects, can be custom-developed by graphic artists.

Tips on using graphics:

- Use graphics to visually enhance the document and break up the text. Always choose graphics that reinforce the message of the text.
- If using graphics of people, make sure you use images of both sexes and different ethnic groups.
- When you're using a scanner, adjust the size of the graphic when you're scanning, not after when you are placing the graphic in your word processor.

Here are some examples of a checklist, a step-by-step procedure, and an If...Then table.

Editing Checklist

✓	Item
	Grammatical and spelling errors eliminated.
	Simple, short word choice.
	Active verb choice predominates.

To make a cup of instant coffee:

- 1 Boil a cup of water.
- 2 Place a teaspoon of instant coffee in a cup.
- 3 Add the water to the cup and stir.
- 4 Add sugar and creamer to taste.

If...	Then...
The information consists of conditions and actions	Use an If...Then...table
The information consists of rows and columns of tabular data	Use a standard table
The information consists of problems and solutions	Use a troubleshooting table

Using your word processor

Most organizations use word processing software rather than desktop publishing software to prepare their documents. While desktop publishing software is excellent for complex page layouts, you'll find that its focus on the page rather than the document increases the amount of work required to revise a document.

The most commonly used word processing programs for personal computers are Microsoft Word and Corel WordPerfect. These programs offer all the features required to produce most documents.

Word processors provide writers with great flexibility. Before the word processor, writers had to write in a basically linear flow, completing one idea or sentence before beginning the next one. After all, it wasn't easy to rearrange sentences. With a word processor, you can write as you please. You can leave an idea unfinished and go on to another idea. Or you can skip around, writing different ideas as thoughts occur to you. You can write the concluding paragraph first and the introductory paragraph last. And when you're finished, you can shuffle the paragraphs around. Take advantage of this flexibility when you write.

While writing with a word processor is easy, page layout and formatting can be tricky. If you find yourself spending

a lot of time trying to get the page to look right, consider having someone else format it. If you've got someone with strong word processing skills, that person can probably lay out the pages faster and with fewer mistakes than you can.

Tips for faster and better word processing:

- Use your word processor the way it was designed to be used—fudged work-arounds can take more time in the end.
- Create a document template to speed formatting and ensure consistency.
- Use the styles feature (don't apply formatting directly to elements of the text). It's faster and way easier to change.
- Learn to touch type, if you don't know how to already—you should be able to type faster than you can think.
- Use understandable file names for your documents, and place them in appropriate folders so you can find them.
- Save your document regularly.
- If you run into problems, look in your manual or help system.



Some tips for proper English

- Avoid alliteration. Always.
- Never use a long word when a diminutive one will do.
- Employ the vernacular.
- Eschew ampersands and abbreviations, etc.
- Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
- Remember to never split an infinitive.
- Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
- One should never generalize.
- Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “I hate quotations. Tell me what you know.”
- Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
- Don’t be redundant; don’t use more words than necessary; it’s highly superfluous.
- Be more or less specific.
- Understatement is always best.
- One word sentences? Eliminate.
- Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
- The passive voice is to be avoided.
- Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
- Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
- Who needs rhetorical questions?
- Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
- Don’t never use a double negation.
- capitalize every sentence and remember always end it with point
- Do not put statements in the negative form.
- Verbs have to agreed with their subjects.
- Proofread carefully to see if you words out.
- If you reread your work, you can find on rereading a great deal of repetition can be avoided by rereading and editing.
- A writer must not shift your point of view.
- Place pronouns as close as possible, especially in long sentences of 10 or more words, to their antecedents.