
What is Graphic Design?



Graphic Design is
“the art or profession of visual communication that combines images, words and ideas to convey information to an audience”

Design must be interpreted the same way by everyone to function.



Most people have a vague idea of what a graphic designer does. Creating logos for businesses? Fixing up images in Photoshop? Making magazine ads? Yes—designers do these things—but they’re only elements of a much bigger picture.

Graphic design, also known as communication design, is the art and practice of planning and projecting ideas and experiences with visual and textual content. The form of the communication can be physical or virtual, and may include images, words, or graphic forms. The experience can take place in an instant or over a long period of time. The work can happen at any scale, from the design of a single postage stamp to a national postal signage system, or from a company’s digital avatar to the sprawling and interlinked digital and physical content of an international newspaper. It can also be for any purpose, whether commercial, educational, cultural, or political.

Graphic = Visual

ART, IMAGINATION, EXPRESSION

Design = To decide upon the look and function of something before it’s made.

THINKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, PRACTICALITY

“We are Visual Communicators, we solve problems”

“Art is someone using a medium to change how you see the world. Whereas design is changing how we live in it.”

Art v Design

Good Art Inspires | Good Design Motivates

Typically, the process of creating a work of art starts with nothing, a blank canvas. A work of art stems from a view or opinion or feeling that the artist holds within him or herself.

They create the art to share that feeling with others, to allow the viewers to relate to it, learn from it or be inspired by it.

Good Art is Interpreted | Good Design is Understood

Another difference between art and design is how the messages of each are interpreted by their respective audiences.

Although an artist sets out to convey a viewpoint or emotion, that is not to say that the viewpoint or emotion has a single meaning.

Art connects with people in different ways, because it's interpreted differently.

Design is the very opposite. Many will say that if a design can be "interpreted" at all, it has failed in its purpose.

The fundamental purpose of design is to communicate a message and motivate the viewer to do something.

If your design communicates a message other than the one you intended, and your viewer goes and does something based on that other message, then it has not met its requirement. With a good piece of design, the designer's exact message is understood by the viewer.

Good Art is Talent | Good Design is Skill

More often than not, an artist has natural ability. Of course, from a young age, the artist grows up drawing, painting, sculpting and developing their abilities.

But the true value of an artist is in the talent (or natural ability) they are born with. There is some overlap here: good artists certainly have skill, but artistic skill without talent is, arguably, worthless.

Design, though, is really a skill that is taught and learned. You do not have to be a great artist to be a great designer; you just have to be able to achieve the objectives of design.

Some of the most respected designers in the world are best known for their minimalist styles. They don't use much colour or texture, but they pay great attention to size, positioning, and spacing, all of which can be learned without innate talent.

Adobe Overview

PHOTOSHOP

Adobe Photoshop is a pixel graphics editor developed and published by Adobe Systems for macOS and Windows in 1988 and has become the de facto industry standard for image editing. Photoshop files have default file extension as .PSD, which stands for “PhotoShop Document.” A PSD file stores an image with support for most imaging options available in Photoshop. These include layers with masks, transparency, text, alpha channels and spot colours, clipping paths, and duotone settings.

Photoshop’s primary strength is as a pixel-based (also called Raster or Bitmap) image editor, unlike vector-based image editors.

Photoshop is Not an Illustration Program!

Photoshop is not intended for layout work like leaflets and business cards.

Adobe provides other specialist programs such as Adobe Illustrator.

So What Does Photoshop Do?

The real power of Photoshop is in working with existing images. Typical tasks include treating and manipulation, layer compositing, converting to different formats, printing, etc.

ILLUSTRATOR

Adobe Illustrator is a vector-based drawing and graphic design tool.

What are Vector Graphics?

Unlike JPEGs, GIFs, and BMP images, vector graphics are not made up of a grid of pixels. Instead, vector graphics are comprised of paths and fills, which are defined by a start and end point, along with other points, curves, and angles along the way. A path can be a line, a square, a triangle, or a curvy shape. These paths can be used to create simple drawings or complex diagrams.

- Because vector-based images are not made up of a specific number of dots, they can be scaled to a larger size and not lose any image quality.
- If you blow up a raster graphic (JPEG etc.), it will look blocky, or “pixelated.”
When you blow up a vector graphic, the edges of objects within the graphic stay smooth and clean.
- This makes vector graphics ideal for logos, which can be small enough to appear on a business card, but can also be scaled to fill a billboard.
- Vector graphics also typically take up less space than bitmap images.

INDESIGN

Adobe InDesign is a page layout application for multi-page publishing, whether that be print or digital. It was originally released in 1999 as a high-end replacement for Adobe PageMaker, and competitor to QuarkXPress.

Most publishing and media companies, newspapers, magazines etc. will use InDesign as their application of choice.

The cool thing about InDesign is that you can also convert standard layouts into digital formats, like interactive PDF’s, eBooks and things like that.

What Designer's Use

General File Formats

If you're one of the many, many people who have found themselves overwhelmed by the sheer number of file formats that Adobe presents us with when trying to save an image, good news! You can safely ignore most of them!



PSD - Photoshop's native file format

JPEG - format for viewing and sharing digital photos

GIF - format of choice for web graphics

PNG - a lossless file format and supports transparency

TIFF - universally accepted standard for images destined for commercial printing

EPS - EPS (Encapsulated PostScript) is another print industry standard format

PDF - PDF supports and preserves all of Photoshop's features, including the ability to use spot colors



AI - Illustrator's native file format

EPS - Illustrator eps

AIT - Illustrator Template

PDF - Adobe PDF - PDF files support both vector and raster (bitmap) information

SVG - Scalable Vector Graphics files are used on the World Wide Web



INDD - InDesign's native file format

PDF - Adobe PDF - PDF files support both high & low resolution output for print

What Designers Do

To give an example of what we do:

- 1.** We are given a brief by a client with a particular problem to solve or message to communicate. The initial brief is important as it will contain the clients wishes and also becomes a point of reference for the designer.
- 2.** The designer will then do some research, for example looking at competitors, examining trends and also looking at the company itself, both it's history and it's future direction.
- 3.** Next a strategy is developed by analyzing the research and deciding on a path or process.
- 4.** This idea is then developed.
- 5.** And then presented to the client along with quite possibly a small section of the intended audience, where it is then reviewed and tweaked in accordance with feedback.
- 6.** After the last of the tweaks and when everyone is happy (or at least the majority who actually make the decisions!) the project is launched.

A Designer will take a problem, research why it exists, devise and create a concept, develop and elaborate and test on a sample of target audience and finalise for delivery.