

# DESIGN Terminology

Graphic design is such an important part of marketing and branding for financial institutions. Understanding key graphic design terms can greatly enhance your collaboration and communication with your in-house or agency designers. Here's a list of terms to help build your graphic design vocabulary and talk the same language as designers!

## TYPOGRAPHY

### FONT TYPES

A font is a set of typography that is a specific style and size. Most people are familiar with fonts because we can change them easily within standard office programs, such as Microsoft Word and Outlook. Within fonts, there is a huge variety of options. Below are a few of the more common ways we describe font characteristics.

#### Serif

Serifs are the little strokes or curves at the ends of letters. Two common serif choices are Times New Roman and Georgia.

#### Sans Serif

Sans means "without." A sans serif font has no serifs. Common sans serif are Arial and Helvetica.

#### Script

Script typefaces resemble cursive handwriting and can appear more polished or casual depending on the details. Script examples include Alex Brush and Good Vibes.

#### Slab Serif

A typeface with thicker, blockier serifs, very commonly used in headlines and titles, but rarely in body copy. Common fonts include Archer and Rockwell.

### FONT SPACING

Within a chosen font, designers can make adjustments to make it look just right within a specific placement or for a specific medium. These are the most common spacing terms:

#### Kerning

Kerning is the adjustment of space between specific characters in a font, which helps you to create proportional and balanced typography.

#### Leading

Pronounced "LED-ing," leading is the space between two lines of text, also known as line height.

#### Tracking

Tracking is similar to kerning in that it refers to the spacing between letters or characters. However, instead of focusing on the spacing between individual characters (kerning), tracking measures space between groups of letters. Tracking affects every character in the selected text and is used to change its overall appearance.

#### Lorem Ipsum

Lorem ipsum is also known as dummy text, and is placeholder text that will be swapped out later with actual copy.

#### Alignment

The lining up of elements to achieve balance, order, and a more logical layout. There are also four common types of typographical alignment – center, left, right, and justified, each with their own time and place for application.

#### Orphans and Widows

This design term refers to the words or short lines that appear by themselves at the top or bottom of a column of type. It's always a good (and easy) idea to check over your body copy before finishing up, and manually removing these when they appear. Adjusting the tracking can fix this as well.

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## WEB-SPECIFIC

### Below the Fold

This term refers to the area of the page that a user must scroll to see. A design will typically try to have the most important information toward the top of the webpage.

### Resolution

This is a quality measurement and is the number of dots per inch (dpi). For most applications, you need 72 dpi for web, 300+ dpi for print.

### Responsive

A web design that adjusts the layout for different screen sizes, including mobile and tablets sizes.

### Web Colors

Web colors are different formulas than used for print, and are represented by 6-digit hexadecimal codes.

### Web Safe Fonts

These are fonts that most users likely have, like Arial, Georgia, or Times. Using a web safe font ensures your online ad or webpage show properly for all users.

## TERMS AND TECHNIQUES

### Scale

The size of one object in relation to another design element. Extreme differences in scale can draw attention and create drama.

### Aspect Ratio

An aspect ratio is a proportional relationship between an image's width and height. Essentially, it describes an image's shape.

### White Space

White space, also known as negative space, refers to the area of a design left blank. It's the space between graphic elements, images, copy, and anything else on the page.

### Grid

A series of intersecting vertical, horizontal, angular, or curved lines used to organize graphic elements on a page.

### Mock-Up

A real or digital proof or model used to test early design ideas and see how they could look in the real world.

### Generative Fill & AI-Generated

It's important to be aware when an image is created by artificial intelligence. There's a difference between "generative fill," which enhances or alters specific areas of an image, and an image being completely "AI-generated," where the entire visual is created by an AI model.

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## COLORS AND EFFECTS

We don't need to tell you color is important in graphic design, but you may be surprised to see there are so many different words to describe color.

### RGB

RGB stands for red, green, blue, and is a color model that is used for on-screen purposes, such as a computer or television.

### Pantone®

The Pantone Matching System (PMS) is a standardized color reproduction system. Every hue is given a number, making it easy for people to reference and reproduce the same colors.

### CMYK

CMYK is a 4-color printing process made up of cyan, magenta, yellow, and key (black). CMYK colors begin as white and then get darker as more colors are combined.

### Hex Code

A six-digit code that represents a specific color, used in computer design programs and online.

### Monochromatic

A monochromatic color palette uses one single color.

### Grayscale

This term refers to a color palette that only uses black, white, and shades of gray in between.

### Duotone

A method of printing an image using two colors, usually black and a spot color.

### Palette

The range of colors used in a design. These are colors that work well together and are often aesthetically pleasing. Sometimes color palettes may be described as cool, warm, or neutral.

### Hue

A hue is a way to describe a color and can be any color on the color wheel. Red, blue, and yellow are all hues.

### Tint

Tints are created when you add white to any hue on the color wheel.

### Opacity

Opacity enables an element of a design to be transparent. The lower the opacity, the more transparent an element is. For example, 100% opacity means an object is solid.

### Gradient

A gradient is a gradual change from one color to another, or a color fading into transparency. Two common types of gradients are the linear gradient, where each color sits on the opposite side of the frame, and a radial gradient where one color sits in the middle, and another at the edge.

## FILE FORMATS

### JPG or JPEG

A common image format, perfect for photographs but not ideal for images with transparency or logos with sharp detail.

### PNG

An image format that does not lose quality when the file is suppressed. It also supports transparent backgrounds, making it ideal for web graphics like logos and icons.

### GIF

An image format typically used for short, looping animations. Gif is a bitmap image format that is limited to 256 colors and best for simple graphics, icons, and short animations.

### Vector (AI, EPS, PDF, SVG)

A vector file allows images to be resized without losing quality. It is perfect for retaining all exact properties of a design.