

Instructional Design is 50% Graphic Design

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At least 50% of instructional design skills are actually graphic design skills. Especially when one considers the design and layout of participants' workbooks or other materials (such as job aids and handouts), quite a bit of the instructional usefulness is dependent on the way the page is laid out.

We all know that we read from left to right, but did you know that paragraphs of more than three sentences are generally skimmed and not read? Did you know that the eye is drawn to photographs or sidebars / call outs before the "regular" text on the page? Did you know that more whitespace is better than cramming as much text onto the page as possible? Just knowing these three high-level items will make your page readability and comprehension much more user friendly than trying to replicate a book page.

The key to a well-designed page is selecting a style and sticking to it. The reader's focus should be on the content. The format should be supportive, not confusing or distracting. Here are some additional graphic design tips to help you create useful and impactful printed materials for your training groups:

- Include headers and footers - these allow the reader to determine "where they are" at a glance; headers and footers might include the title of the course, the topic or sub-topic, the name of your company, a copyright date, and, of course, the page number
- Along with choosing a title font and size, keep its positioning consistent on the page; have no more than two subsequent levels of headings - the sub-headings should be in the same font as the title, a smaller size, and italicized, bolded, or underlined (but not all three!) to differentiate them
- Have consistent and adequate margins between the edge of the page in the text or graphics; use at least a 1 inch margin on all four sides and a larger left margin if the printed material will be bound
- Whitespace allows your participant room to take notes as well as resulting in a "cleaner" presentation of the page; the combined text and graphics should only fill between two thirds to three quarters of a page
- Line spacing: allow at least two line spaces between paragraphs, sections, and between a heading and its text
- Justification: all text should be left justified; titles, headings, headers and footers are exceptions
- Use bullets to detail steps, processes, or similarly grouped items; generally use bullets when you have three or more items to include
- Use numbered lists only if what you are describing must be followed in a prescribed order; otherwise use bullets
- When your content can be grouped into similar types of information tables often help to minimize confusion, such as: symptoms, questions to ask patient,

diagnosis. Clearly label the table, rows and columns. If the table has many rows, use alternate shading.

By following these simple guidelines for page arrangement, your printed materials will be easily understood and serve as a valuable resource for your trainees once they're back out on the job.