

Design for readability

The choices you make while designing a print project affect not only the “look and feel”, but also how easy the piece is to read. Follow the guidelines below to maximize the readability of your projects. After all, isn’t enticing your audience to read your message the ultimate goal?

Choose a readable typeface

With the overwhelming number of typefaces available today, it’s easy to choose a typeface that compromises readability. If in doubt, use proven, classic typefaces such

as Times, Garamond, Caslon, Bookman, or Century for body copy. Some studies have shown that for lengthy passages of text, “serif” typefaces such as these are preferred. Use novelty, ornate, and script typefaces sparingly for special display headlines. Avoid using ALL CAPS or italics for headlines or large portions of body copy.

Optimize your line length

About 35–65 characters per line is best for optimum readability. You can adjust line length by adjusting your column width,

margins, page size, or type size. Be sure to increase leading (vertical space between lines) for wide columns, and decrease leading if you are using narrower columns.

Maximum color contrast

Use colored type sparingly, and choose colors that have a maximum amount of contrast. For example, avoid green type on a blue background. Studies have shown that reverse type (white type on a black background) also decreases legibility.

Keith Gilbert provides training & support services to help graphic designers and communicators convey print and Web messages effectively. Gilbert Consulting, 651 633-7148 www.gilbertconsulting.com