


# GUIDE TO GRAPHIC DESIGN







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# GUIDE TO GRAPHIC DESIGN



**Scott W. Santoro**

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS  
AND EDITING BY JOAN LEVINSON  
AND MARY GAWLIK

**PEARSON**

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*Dedicated to my sons, Ellis and Lowell Santoro—and to future generations of graphic designers.*

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Watch the Video on [myartslab.com](http://myartslab.com)



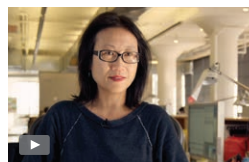
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## ► Chapter 1

**About Graphic Design**

This chapter describes graphic design as a creative process and explains its basic components. Because graphic design's inherent nature involves delivering a message, it has a strong relationship to the public and the community in which it exists.

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 [myartslab.com](https://myartslab.com) Video: Steven Heller

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This chapter explores ways in which designers bring design ideas to a visual solution, emphasizing the importance of cohesive integration of concept and form. Students will learn the difference between ideas and concepts as well as how one can lead to the other. Then, students will explore ways to develop ideas and methods for using them as the building blocks of strong design.

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**Researching a Graphic Design Project**

Proper research is vital to the design process. Through research, students can infuse their projects with meaningful content and understand what they are doing within a clear context. This chapter explains how to apply focused analysis and problem-solving skills. Students will learn the importance of knowing about their clients, audience, and subject matter. All the basic tools needed for good research are discussed, including best practices for using research wisely.

 [myartslab.com](https://myartslab.com) Video: Somi Kim

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### Generating Ideas

Creativity is frequently perceived as being abstract or random. This chapter brings an active and applied approach to the creative process with a discussion of techniques such as sketching, montaging, word play, and benefitting from accidents or chance. Many ideas for exploring and recording ideas are presented, including tips for expanding one's thinking process beyond the commonplace.

 [myartslab.com](https://myartslab.com) Video: Luba Lukova

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### The Elements and Principles of Form

The elements and principles of form are basic aesthetic components that all artists must master to turn ideas into compelling graphic designs. The form an idea takes will draw the viewer into a work and keep that viewer there long enough to comprehend the message being conveyed. As this chapter explains, when form and an intellectual idea unite, they create a solid communication. In effect, form becomes as much a part of the content as the information being presented.

 [myartslab.com](https://myartslab.com) Video: Paul Sahre

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### Type and Typography

Developing a deep understanding of typography is essential for the design student. Type is the essence of almost any graphic design project. This chapter includes a discussion of the finer points of type use, typeface design, and type as a graphic image. Students will learn about the history of type as well as how to use type as a tool and as an element within the broader context of a complete design.

 [myartslab.com](https://myartslab.com) Video: Paul Shaw

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### Proportion Systems: Grids and Alignments

Structural harmony helps to make a composition work visually and conceptually. This chapter demystifies how to build a proportion system into a design. It explains modular and grid structures, proportion, balance, layouts, and sizing. These components are all practical elements of design that enable designers to express their ideas more clearly and vividly.

 [myartslab.com](https://myartslab.com) Video: Barbara Glauber

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**Concepts in Action**

In this chapter, well-known designers discuss their projects as case studies, revealing their own conceptual approaches and their successes in the problem-solving activity of graphic design. Looking to the work of others is one of the best ways of learning a new art. These designers have much to teach about their creative processes and studio practice.

 [myartslab.com](https://myartslab.com) Video: Hillman Curtis

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**Visual Coding: Loading Form with Meaning**

This chapter explains how form can be loaded with meaning. In other words, the way something looks has meaning, and that meaning will make a design more effective to the viewer. The main focus here is to help students become aware of how a viewer perceives a design. The chapter explores semiotics, gestalt theory, and symbols. In addition, imagery, color, and form are loaded with meaning that is unique to every culture. The discussion covers ways that one can use these coded meanings when designing to carry messages and bring a greater depth to every project.

 [myartslab.com](https://myartslab.com) Video: Greenblatt-Wexler

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This chapter explores relatively new multimedia areas of interaction, motion, and sound, where the possibilities of conceptual thinking expand into broader realms. Elements such as contrast, emphasis, and unity merge with motion, time, and sound to create interactive experiences for the user. This field of design is growing rapidly as technology advances. Active designers must become familiar with the available software and learn about the amazing things they can do with it.

 [myartslab.com](https://myartslab.com) Video: Agnieszka Gasparska

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### Becoming a Designer

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 [myartslab.com](https://myartslab.com) Video: Scott Stowell

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## VIRTUAL CRIT WALL

➡ Follow *Guide to Graphic Design* on Instagram @guide2graphicdesign to see some of the best student work currently on the critique wall in Scott Santoro's classroom, plus his encounters with great graphic design in his hometown of New York City.

Join the design conversation by using the hashtag #mycritwall to submit your own work, your class's critique wall, or examples of great design in your neighborhood.







## DEAR READER

Years ago I took a week-long workshop with famed graphic designer Paul Rand. I was in such awe of Rand that when he assigned his first project I felt creatively immobilized. He came over to give me a one-on-one desk critique, but I had nothing to show him, confessing that I didn't know where to begin. Rand looked me straight in the eyes, put his hand under my chin, and with a thick Brooklynese accent said, "Think."

*Guide to Graphic Design* emphasizes what Rand stated so genuinely—that no matter what the context or problem, one starts any graphic design project by thinking. This fundamental is why graphic design is so "cool" (sorry, I just don't know how else to say it). There's hardly a better job than one that pays you to think (to go through an intellectual process) and then to play (to work ideas out in aesthetically inventive ways). As my mentor Charlie Goslin used to say, "An idea is the hat rack that everything hangs on." My own design practice and simultaneous teaching is based on this approach. The result is an integration of meaning and form. It's the way to go.

The eclectic spirit of *Guide to Graphic Design* is no accident. Designers throughout the book have contributed short essays on their work styles, their studio habits, and their inspirations. Each designer offers a new perspective and approach to possible working methods. At the same time, they all show a passion for design and communication.

*Guide to Graphic Design* is supplemented by videos of talented graphic designers—in other words, great thinkers (see [myartslab.com](http://myartslab.com)). Every student who reads this book has the same core talent that they began with. Do something with your talent as these designers did; learn the mechanisms used to convey information, integrate ideas and form into full concepts, but most important, learn how to think like a graphic designer. When you do, the identities you create for companies and organizations will define your own personal identity. You will care more about the work you make, and that care will make your work better.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo: Robert A. Ripps

Scott W. Santoro is principal of Worksight, a graphic design studio in New York City. He holds graphic design degrees from Pratt Institute (BFA) and Cranbrook Academy of Art (MFA). He is also an adjunct professor of graphic design at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York. As an active speaker on graphic design, he has lectured around the world including Australia and the Czech Republic. Scott has served as vice president of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Design (AIGA) and as a national screening committee member for the Fulbright program.

Worksight has been a noticeable entity within the design community for more than twenty years and is well known for its "design for the everyday" approach to graphic communication. Its work connects with

diverse audiences: an annual report for the Brooklyn Public Library; a series of brand logos for Steelcase Furniture; an alumni magazine for Purchase College; a book jacket and interior design for *The Sea Around Us*, Rachel Carson's environmental classic; a website design and maintenance for a New Jersey textile manufacturer—Absecon Mills; and now, with *Guide to Graphic Design*, a textbook for college students. The studio has won awards from the AIGA, NY Bookbinders Guild, and *Print Magazine*, and was a grant recipient for Sappi Paper's annual Ideas that Matter program that brings design to charitable organizations.





## FEATURES OF THE BOOK

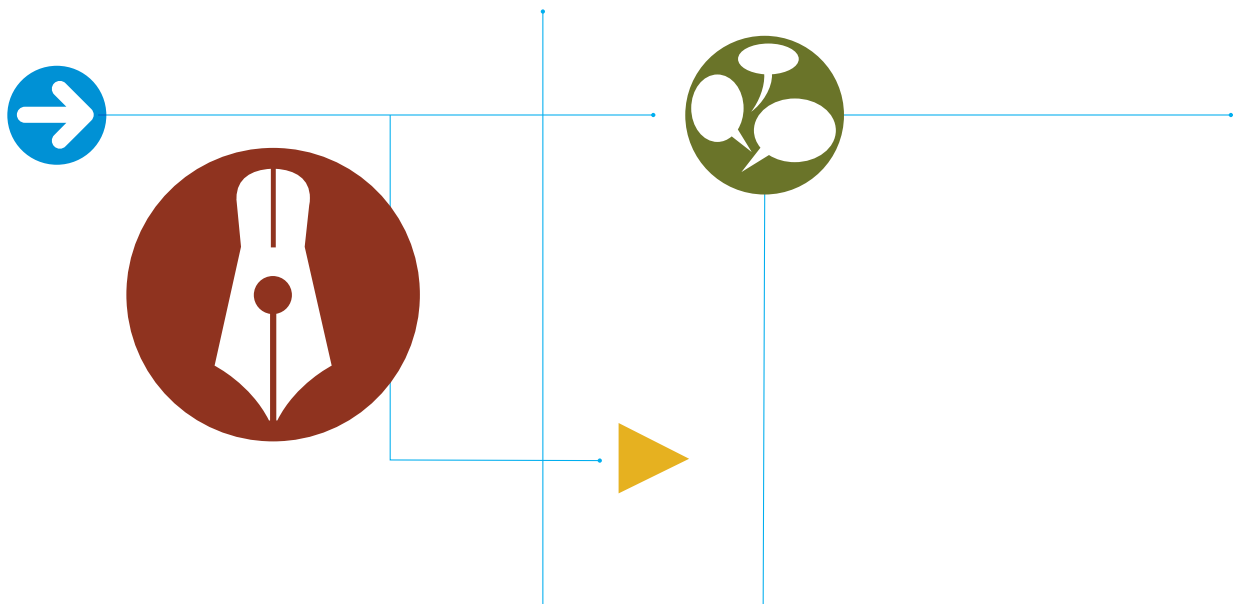
Why study graphic design—after all, isn't it just moving type and image around the page?

*Guide to Graphic Design* presents design as a layered and evolving profession. Each feature of the book is focused on that principle and seeks to guide students toward a successful and fulfilling career as a graphic designer. To do this, it highlights step-by-step design processes and how to build good work habits. It illustrates and supports each chapter with work from top design firms and design school programs. It guides and motivates students with thoughts from AIGA Medalists Katherine McCoy, Steven Heller, April Greiman, Michael Bierut, Rick Valicenti, and many others.

All of these features are meant to inspire, encourage, and steer students through the contents of this book.

Specifically, each chapter contains:

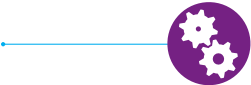
- **Designer Vignettes** feature interviews from well-known designers intended to inspire students and pique their interest in the material being discussed.
- **Chapter Objectives** list key learning goals that readers can work to achieve in each chapter.
- **In Practice** provides tips that offer a real-world perspective to the specific design problems being discussed.
- **Steps in the Design Process** gives readers step-by-step instructions on how to approach solving a specific design task.
- **Worklist** offers sets of checkpoints and practicalities that students can use throughout the design process.
- **Speakout** features personal accounts and experiences from designers and educators, intended to expose students to unique and varied perspectives on the field of graphic design.



## EXERCISES AND PROJECTS

With each exercise and project students will get better at making decisions and understanding the connection between an idea and its execution. Any book on graphic design should be considered as nothing more than a guide to an exciting and unique field that continually focuses on solving communication problems with creative and skillful solutions. With mindful reflection, research, and practice, each student can start designing, turning his or her creative thoughts into forms that communicate and developing a graphic design career.

Each chapter presents quick, in-class exercises and longer, more complicated projects. Successful solutions to these practice opportunities will be determined by the level of commitment a student brings to them. The idea is for students to practice creating effective designs by:

- 
- keeping up with current events and culture, which can influence their effectiveness as a designer,
  - using the design skills they have learned,
  - reflecting on the design work of others, and
  - researching history, issues, and expectations related to a project.

A great portfolio of intelligent work goes a long way. The text encourages students to approach these exercises and projects as potential pieces for their portfolios, watching for breakthrough points in their work—times when they really took a chance and did something out of the ordinary—and then adding that work to an evolving portfolio. Students will get the best results and opportunities to practice professional skills if they approach their work as if they were “on the job”:

- 1 Complete the assignment (expected of professionals).
- 2 Do all necessary research (required for creative, professional approaches).
- 3 Make preliminary sketches (allows exploration and refinement).
- 4 Follow the specifications in each design brief (good practice for meeting a client’s expectations).
- 5 Consider your audience (required for a design to be effective).
- 6 Choose imagery that is symbolic and evocative of your message (pushes practice in research to reach an effective solution).
- 7 Try to provoke a thoughtful response from the viewer (combines research with design knowledge).
- 8 Use typography to enhance your design (pushes practice using an important tool in a sophisticated way).
- 9 Make every presentation neat and clean (good professional practice that enhances a portfolio).
- 10 Meet all deadlines given by your instructor (another opportunity to practice a professional expectation).

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- **12 Designer Profile** videos, recorded by the late Hillman Curtis, are intimate portraits of designers in their studios talking about their approaches, ideas, and love for the field of graphic design.
- **Chapter Audio**, read by Scott W. Santoro, allows students to listen to the entire text—a key feature for allowing design students to focus on each example.
- **MediaShare**—a new digital drop box and portfolio tool—can help students submit their work to instructors and facilitate online peer critiques.
- Henry Sayre's *Writing About Art* 6th edition is now available online in its entirety as an eText within MyArtsLab. This straightforward guide prepares students to describe, interpret, and write about works of art and design in meaningful and lasting terms. This skill strengthens their ability to support their own design work, too.

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## VIDEO SERIES

This special interview series, filmed by the late Hillman Curtis, introduces students to twelve working graphic designers. Each designer is a featured voice in the book, contributing their work and thoughts in a *Designer Vignette* within each chapter.

These short films are an intimate look into the daily life of each designer as they offer their thoughts, guidance, and passion for the field of graphic design.

Featuring designers both established and new, young and old, and from all walks of life and areas of the world, this series will be a revealing perspective for students who want to understand the life of a designer.

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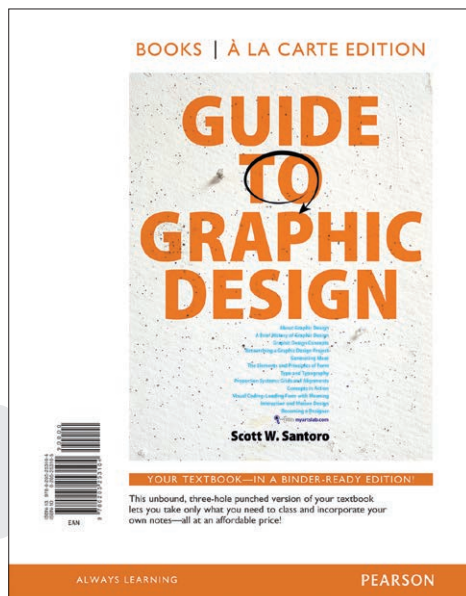
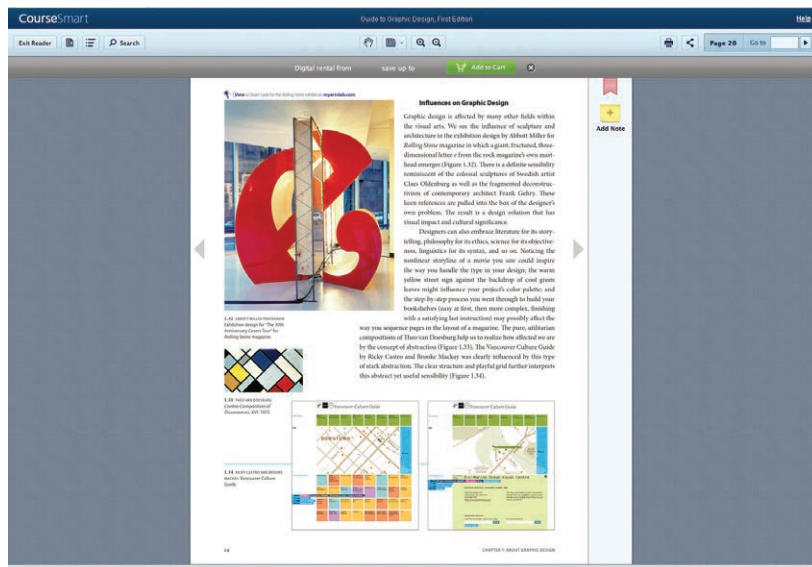
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