

Graphic Design Terms

Alignment – In graphic design, alignment refers to keeping the elements on the page connected, or aligned, so the elements, when put together, flow well. Each item placed on a page (or web site) should be somehow connected with the others for proper alignment.

Bleed – Allowing a graphic or some other element to extend beyond the actual margin of the page. The element touches the side of the page, leaving no margin or white space at the edge.

CMYK – This color mode used by printers uses cyan, magenta, yellow and black (CMYK) to create colors during the printing process.

Color Theory – The study of how colors make people feel and their effects on a person. In graphic design, color theory is used to explore the best types of colors to work in different situations: ie: for a website that needs to feel soft and relaxing or a magazine ad that should pop out of the page and evoke energy in the reader.

Complementary colors – The colors that are opposite of each other when viewed on the color wheel.

DPI – DPI, or dots per inch, refers to

Focal point – In graphic design terms, the focal point is where you want to draw the reader's or viewer's eye. This may be large or it may be small. Sometimes graphic designers create a focal point by placing only one tiny object on a page, and in this case the focal point is obvious. Other times the focal point may be within a variety of elements.

Grid – An important concept in graphic design, grids are often used in layouts for both web and print projects. Grids help graphic designers arrange text and images on the page in a way that will look even, attractive and consistent throughout. Grids can be used on paper or can be set up in graphic design software, such as Photoshop.

Illustrator (Adobe) – Program used by many graphic designers for creating vector images, such as logos and other graphics used for print and online purposes. Those starting out in the program will want to take **Adobe Illustrator CS6**, which goes over the fundamentals of utilizing Illustrator for graphic design projects.

InDesign (Adobe) – Program used by many graphic designers who deal with magazine, brochure or other print material layouts. Allows the designer or other professional to create a layout, insert photographs or images, add text and send to printer as a completed booklet, pamphlet or other printed item.

Kerning – In typography, creating the perfect space between characters (letters) so they work together. For instance, understanding when a letter should be moved slightly because it pushes into another.

Line – One of the main elements in graphic design, a line is a mark created using a pen or other tool. Lines form shapes, another element of design. They may be straight, as we often think of them, but they might also be curvy or zig zag.

Mockup – The original design or idea created and either displayed on the screen (for instance, if you are a graphic designer specializing in web design and you want to show your client your ideas before you begin to code you might create a mockup in Photoshop and then show the client the mockup as a .jpg or PDF) or in a printed format (for example, a printed copy of the layout for a magazine or brochure spread for printer's and clients to view before the actual product is produced). Mockups allow the client to see what the final product should look like.

Negative space – The area on a page that is left without images and words is referred to as negative or white space. This negative or white space is very important in graphic design projects.

Photoshop – Program used by many graphic designers and photographers to create or edit photographs and images. If you are interested in learning more about Photoshop, [our Foundations of Photoshop course](#) will get you started with the program.

PPI – PPI, or pixels per inch, refers to the number of pixels per inch in an image.

Raster images – These images are created using thousands of pixels. They are not easily resized as are Vector images; enlarging a raster image too much will diminish quality. Photographs are an example of a raster image.

Resolution – Number of dots per inch, or dpi, in an image. Images for the web are usually be around 72 dpi, or a low resolution, while images for print should be around 300 dpi, or a higher resolution.

RGB – This color mode is used for web design, digital cameras, scanners and other electronics and combines the colors red, green and blue to create what is seen on the screen.

Six Elements of Design – Six basic elements are used to create an attractive graphic design project. These include line, shape, value, space, texture and color. Learn more about these six elements in our [Introduction to Graphic Design](#) course.

Typography – The art of arranging type, which includes letters, numbers and symbols, so that it is pleasing to the eye. This includes not only the font that is used but how it is arranged on the page: letter by letter, size, line spacing, etc. Typography is an important part of creating a pleasing final graphic design product.

Texture – A graphic design term that refers to creating depth to a graphic design product so they have dimension rather than appearing flat. This can be done through the use of patterns behind color, for instance. Learn to add texture to your projects [in this class](#).

Vector image – A vector image, such as a logo, is one that can be easily resized without loss of quality.