

Graphic Design Glossary

This **Graphic Design Glossary** contains vocabulary that many designers use on a daily basis and may be confusing to new designers or non-designers who need to communicate with designers. Remember, the following terms are defined as they relate to graphic design and desktop publishing.

Illustrator Document Extension.

Bleed

Bleed is the part of a printed document that is outside the bounds of the final size of the piece. It is used to make sure images and other design elements print all the way to the edge of the paper. It is the designer's responsibility to set up the bleed in a document and an accepted standard is 1p6, or 1/4 of an inch, outside the size of the paper. When placing objects in a document that must go all the way to the edge of the page, make sure they extend to at least this quarter inch mark. Photoshop and Illustrator do not have an automatic way to add bleed, so it must be taken into account when setting up the page size. In layout programs such as InDesign, the bleed is set up separately from the actual page size; in other words, the bleed is in addition to the defined page size.

CMYK

CMYK stands for Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black, the colors a printer works with, as opposed to the screen color space, RGB. This is also known as process color. CMYK is a subtractive color space; in other words, to make white, you take away all the colors.

Compression

The process of an algorithm making file sizes smaller by combining similar data. Most of the time this is a good thing, but it can also cause severe loss of quality, especially in regards to images.

Comps

Also known as comprehensives, these are the step after thumbnails in the creative process. This is usually where the designs are taken into the computer and the details such as backgrounds, color schemes and images are more thoroughly worked out. Comps are the "first draft" of design. Many times designers show several different styles in comps to a client

and let the client decide on a look and feel that he or she desires. Then the comps go back to the designer with some feedback and changes from the client and usually several rounds of this feedback process occur. Sometimes the client may ask (or the designer may want to present) mock-ups.

DPI

Dots per inch is the more exact way to define the resolution for a file that is to be printed. Some use DPI and PPI interchangeably, though this is technically incorrect.

Elements of Design

The Elements of Design are Color, Shape, Size, Space, Line, Value and Texture

EPS

EPS stands for Encapsulated PostScript (not to be confused with ESP: Extra Sensory Perception). A common file format for exporting Illustrator files, it contains a bitmap preview of the image as well as instructions written in the PostScript language that describe how the object is to be printed.

Font

Technically, a font is the complete collection of characters and glyphs, including numbers, symbols, accented characters, punctuation marks, etc. in a given face design. A font also includes the design in various weights, such as bold or italic; it is more comprehensive and complicated to design than a typeface.

Freehand

Freehand is the Macromedia equivalent of Adobe Illustrator.

Fireworks

Fireworks is the Macromedia equivalent of Adobe Photoshop.

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Ghosting

Also known as screening back, it is where an image is made transparent so that the background shows through.

GIF

A proprietary file format from CompuServe. It is used in web graphics and is best for images that are made of solid colors, like logos. GIFs support transparency (however, pixels are either transparent or opaque, nothing in between) and they can be animated. GIFs are also considered a lossless format—meaning they do not suffer compression artifacts—as long as they do not exceed 256 colors.

Gradient

A gradient is a fade from one color to another. There are many shapes a gradient can take, but generally it is either linear (straight) or radial (round, where it fades from the center outwards). Gradients can also be highly customized with many different color patterns so that it is difficult to tell if an object actually has a gradient. Generally gradients are used to add depth, or sometimes a shiny or metallic look, to a design element, but they can also be used simply to color an object.

HSB

Hue, Saturation, Brightness is a color space that you can use when dealing with images in graphics programs. It separates the hue—what you think of as color—from the saturation—how much white is mixed with the hue—and the brightness—how much black is mixed with the hue.

Illustrator

A vector program often used by designers to create logos and work with or manipulate type.

Imposition

The process of setting up pages in their correct order for print. This order is sometimes referred to as a Printer Spread.

INDD

InDesign Document extension. InDesign is used for page layout—assembling images and text—and is the Adobe version of Quark. It is capable of much more intricate and precise control over text.

InDesign

A page layout or desktop publishing program used by designers to combine text and images.

JPG

An abbreviation for Joint Photographic Experts Group, the committee that created this file type. It is best used for photographs or images that have gradients. JPGs do not support transparency and cannot be animated.

Lossless

The opposite of lossy, lossless describes file types where there is no image data deleted or erased when that data is stored. Image formats like GIF, PNG and TIFF (without compression) are considered lossless

Lossy

Describes file types where compression is applied and image data is deleted or erased in order to decrease the files size. If done properly, this loss is not critical and it makes the image much smaller, which helps to speed up download time and saves hard drive space. JPG is a file format that is lossy.

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Mock (or Mock-up)

A close-to-reality rendition of a project. This is often used in packaging design to show how a proposed design would look on a box or other type of package. It is used to give the client/stakeholders a better idea of the final product. It can also be used in web design to show a rough approximation of what the final website would look like in a screen shot of a browser.

PDF

Portable Document Format. This file type is often used to send print materials to a print shop. It is also very useful for web, when there are multi-paged documents, reports, forms, etc. that have been designed in a specific format, which cannot be easily translated into HTML. Note: PDF is an Acrobat file, not an “Adobe” file. Adobe is a company and the manufacturer of Acrobat, Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign and many other programs related to media design and production.

Pixel

Picture element. It is the basic digital component that makes up a raster/bitmap image.

PNG (PNG-24)

Portable Network Graphics are the ideal web graphic file types. They are completely lossless and they support alpha transparency. PNG-8 is essentially a GIF.

Principles of Design

The Principles of Design are Unity, Balance, Contrast, Economy, Direction, Emphasis, Proportion and Rhythm

PPI

Pixels per inch is part of how you would define the resolution of an object that is screen-based. Some use DPI and PPI interchangeably, though this is

technically incorrect.

Print

Print encompasses all design that is not on a screen in its finished state. Print can include brochures, reports, postcards, menus, billboards or identity systems (letterheads, envelopes, business cards).

Printer Spreads

The order in which the printing company will lay out pages, generally for a multiple page composition. The pages are not printed in the order that they appear in the final book. For example, in a 16 page book—assuming the front cover is page 1 and the back cover is page 16—page 2 and page 15 would be printed on the same sheet of paper next to each other. Pages 3 and 14 would be on the next sheet, on the other side of that same sheet goes pages 4 and 13, etc, so that when the pages are nested in the final book, they appear in the correct order. The process of setting pages up in this order is called imposition.

Process Color

Also known as CMYK

PSD

Photoshop Document extension.

Photoshop

A design program used to manipulate raster (bitmap) images.

Raster

A raster or bitmap image is made out of pixels. Raster images are typically photos, but they can also be illustrations that have been turned from vectors into pixels.

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Reader Spreads

The pages of a composition set up in the order a reader would see them, page 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. Compare this to Printer Spreads.

Render

A render is a rendition or draft of a project. When someone talks about render, it can mean the project's appearance: "It's a pencil render" means it's a sketch. A render can also be a draft: "I'm waiting for the 3D model to render" means the computer is calculating the appearance of the model, which can include textures, lighting, transparency, etc. A "final render" is the finished project, ready to be presented, printed or shipped.

Resolution

There are so many different meanings for "resolution" depending on who you are and what you do. The best definition I've read is from Real World Photoshop. The authors define resolution as "the number of pixels in each unit of measure." There are two main ways to discuss resolution: you can talk about resolution in terms of image size: "The document is 5x7 inches at 300 ppi," or you can talk about resolution as dimensions: "The document is 1500x2100 pixels." Some people talk about resolution and want to know the file size, but then you have to start becoming familiar with a new way to measure things. Remember the image size dialog box in Photoshop? There is an input field for Resolution (the pixels per unit), and also a drop down box for the unit of measure, which is separate from the fields for the width and height of the image. In reality, these are all just different ways of talking about the same thing: the amount of image information. So if someone asks you the resolution of an image and you merely reply, "300 ppi," you're not telling the whole story.

RGB

Red, Green and Blue are a monitor's color space. RGB is considered an additive color space, meaning to make white you add all the colors together. You view the world in RGB, not CMYK.

Spot Color

Inks that are not mixed from the four process colors. They are used for items, like logos, that need to be a consistent color no matter how or where they are printed. Any time you add an extra ink to a print job, it increases the price. Metallic inks are also spot colors.

TIFF

The raster version of EPS. TIFF can be a lossless format if you choose the No Compression option, which is the default in Photoshop. TIFF supports percentages of opacity like PNG and is ideal for the final file type of pixel-based images for print. You can also have layers in the TIFF format, but this will increase the file size.

Thumbnails

Small scale rough sketches of a design concept. They are among the first stages of the creative process. Before thumbnails, designers often collect a design or creative brief, do research and/or word associations and sometimes wire frames as a separate step. Thumbnailing is a process that designers use to quickly illustrate ideas for a design. The longer a designer spends in the thumbnail stage, the more detail that is put into these sketches, the faster the next stage, comps, goes. Thumbnails are to design what an outline is to writing a paper.

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Typeface

A typeface is simply a design or look of letters and maybe numbers. It does not include glyph and character variations or weights like bold (think display or ornamental faces such as Grave Ornamental or Willow), and may not even include numbers or upper or lower case letters (obviously it would have to include either upper or lower case letters, but not necessarily both). A typeface also does not mean that a design is complete; many movie title treatments are merely typefaces (only the letters in the title have been created), though some have been developed further into fonts.

Vector

Vectors can most readily be recognized as illustrations, particularly from programs like Illustrator or Freehand. But not all illustrations are necessarily vector-based. Vectors work by defining points and what fills the space between those points in a document and they are stored as mathematical formulas. Vector files (like Illustrator files) are fractions the size of raster files because there is less data needed to create the images.

Wire frame

A wire frame is a basic layout without design elements. It is generally used in web design as a means to plan where navigation and content will sit on the page.