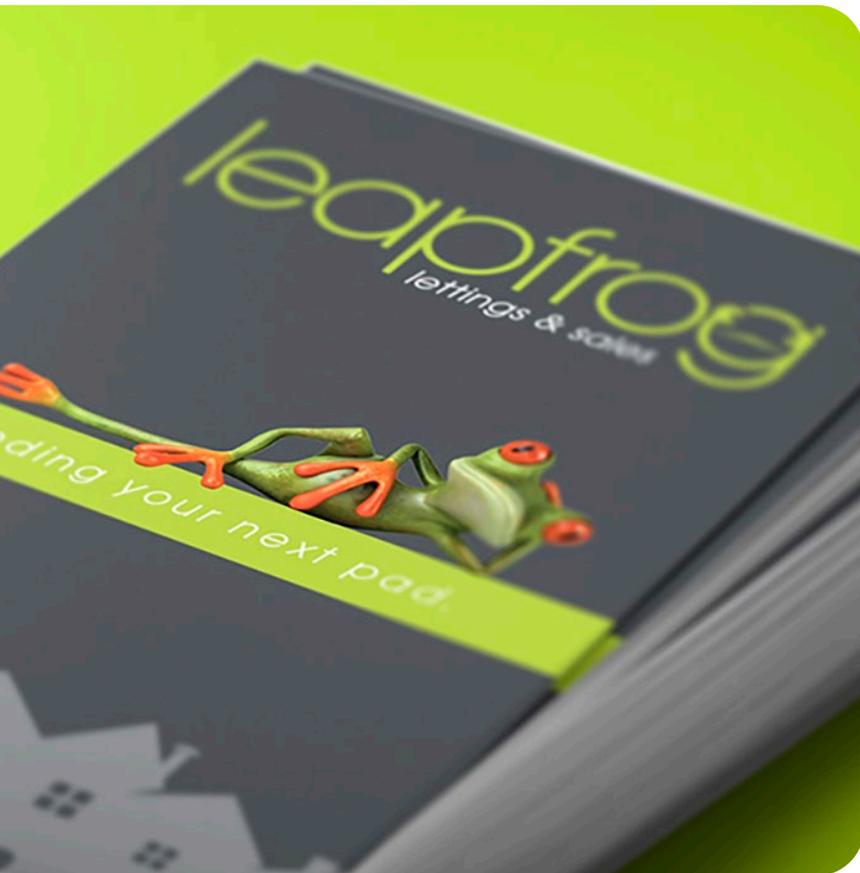


HOW TO GET THE BEST
LOGO
FOR YOUR BRAND

How to get the best logo for your brand: a step-by-step guide



You see the swoosh on a sneaker, the green mermaid on a coffee, the golden arches peeking up past the horizon. To loyal customers of Nike, Starbucks and McDonalds, that sight alone is an incentive to buy. Logos are more than just pretty pictures - they're guarantees of quality so repeat shoppers know precisely what to expect.

Your logo is the face of your brand... so having a bad one is like showing up to a job interview with chocolate on your chin. But before you find a graphic designer, you need to know what you want your logo to say - and how.

In this guide, I explain everything you need to know to prepare. We'll talk about how to define and display the best aspects of your brand; administer a crash course in design; explain how to build your perfect logo with colors, shapes and letters; and review the common types of logos. But first, let's cover precisely how logos can improve your bottom line.

*Thanks for reading :)
Mark*



How to get the best logo for your brand: a step-by-step guide

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Chapter 1:

How can a logo improve your business?

Logos handle a lot of responsibilities for a company. They entice new customers, reassure old customers, represent your brand, incentivise sales, influence brand identity, explain functions, promote value points and they look good doing it all.

Before we start dissecting logos to reveal the finer points of their design, it's important to understand just why you need a logo and what it can do for you.

What a logo does for your brand

Your logo wears a lot of hats for your business - and they have to look good on top of it all. Here we outline the main duties of logos so you know what to expect from yours.

Improves first impressions for new customers

Your logo will often be the first impression you make on customers, so you always want to put your best foot forward. If a company skimps on their logo, everyone assumes they skimped on other areas too.

Moreover, your logo can answer some initial questions for those unfamiliar with your brand. Logos have the power to instantly communicate certain things just from a glance, such as what your business actually does.



Take a look at the Yorkshire Meat logo above. Using butchers knives to replace the letter 'A', this logo cleverly communicates what the brand is all about. The result is a logo that's likely to stay in people's minds for longer.

Of course, if your industry is new or uncommon, you may need to include additional text to be perfectly clear.

Furthermore, logos legitimise your company, which is especially important for online brands where there's always some (healthy) degree of suspicion.

New customers can make snap judgements about a company based on their logo, so a high-quality visual identity is a shortcut to earning trust.

Communicates your brand's personality

Fun, serious, youthful, experienced. What kind of brand you are reflects what customers you attract. The tricky part is actively portraying your brand personality instead of merely telling people you're young and hip. People draw conclusions less on what you say and more on how you present yourself. That puts

your logo up front for communicating who you are to the right audience... potential customers!

A logo's style - namely colors, shapes, and letters, (explained in Chapter 5) can communicate brand personality with visuals alone. The different logo design choices you make affect how people interpret your brand, so chose the ones that match your business goals.

Chapter 1:

How can a logo improve your business?

Moreover, the right brand personality can help your business even more than an impressive fact sheet. You can list out the graphs and figures behind why your company is so great until you're blue in the face, but an emotional connection can accomplish the same, if not more, in a fraction of the time. Emotional marketing remains one of the most effective ways to generate business, and your logo is front and center for the charge.

Boosts brand recognition and encourages loyalty

Last but not least, the primary function of logos: brand recognition. Your logo is the anchor of your entire branding, the constant factor that unites all your products, stores, websites, social media accounts, advertising - everywhere your brand makes an appearance.

Every time someone familiar with your brand sees your logo, their brains draws up all the relevant "data" on your brand. This includes previous experiences with your products (good or bad), things friends have said about you, ad campaigns, etc. String these together - and ensure these experiences are positive - and you create a perpetual brand recognition engine. The more times people see your brand, the stronger the associations become.



Logos also do wonders for helping you stand out, in more ways than one. First, your logo communicates a different personality or benefit than your competitors, which will make people reach for your products first on the shelf. Second, in more practical terms, loyal customers will remember you when they see your logo and they will come back time and time again.

Don't underestimate the power of a logo

Depending on your company's needs, some of these benefits are more important than others. New companies will want to focus more on introducing themselves to new customers and explaining their business; more established companies might want to focus more on separating themselves from their rivals. That's not to say aim for some benefits while ignoring others.

Your logo should satisfy as many of the above duties as it can. However, some design decisions, like choosing colors, will force you to prioritise certain goals over others. It's better to figure out where your priorities lie before going on.

Chapter 2:

Define your brand:

what do you want your logo to say?



Logos are not one-size-fits-all. A logo's success or failure depends on how well it serves the brand's goals, so every brand has different criteria for an effective logo. Otherwise, this guide would be only be a single page that says, "use a big-eyed, cartoon dog."

So before you start designing what you think the perfect logo is, you should first reflect on your brand. What is your brand's personality? How do you want it to be perceived? What are its goals?

The early stages of logo design revolve around defining your brand. Let's start with what makes a brand strong in the first place.

What separates strong brands from weak ones?

A strong brand has no doubt about what it stands for, and its logo reflects that. A weak brand is ambiguous and wishy-washy, making it hard for people to understand what it's all about.



Specifically, strong brands excel in these branding elements:

- **Mission.** A strong brand has clearly defined goals, both conceptually and in business. Brands reflect these goals in their mission statements and on their About page, where everyone can see.
- **Values.** What values does your business stand for? Social values and environmental impact are becoming increasingly important to customers.
- **Personality.** Are you a fun, laid-back brand or a serious, trustworthy brand? Strong brands have strong brand personalities, with consistency across all mediums and channels.
- **Market position.** How your brand stands out from the competition says a lot. Do you offer superior quality, lower prices or better customer service?
- **Tone of voice.** The writing used on all brand publications—from your social media to your investor handbook—affects how your brand comes across publically. Just imagine a law firm overusing emojis in their newsletters.

Chapter 2:

Define your brand:

what do you want your logo to say?

How your brand handles these five areas determines what kind of logo would best represent it. That's why the first step is pinning down what kind of brand you are. If that sounds daunting or intimidating, don't worry; it's easier than it sounds as long as you ask yourself the right questions.

Define your brand personality: questions to ask yourself before designing a logo.

When sculpting the perfect brand, one of the best strategies is to simply ask yourself questions. This allows business-minded people to think more abstractly and it guides them directly to the answers they need. It all depends on which questions you're asking yourself, though, so we've made a list of the most useful:

- **How does your brand improve the lives of your audience?**
- **What do you do better than other brands?**
- **What do your customers love/hate about your brand?**
- **Why was your company started?**
- **What beliefs and values are tied together with the brand?**
- **What do you want your customers to love about your brand?**



- **If your brand was a person, what kind of person would it be?**
- **Who do you want to attract?**
- **Who don't you want to attract?**

These questions are meant for early branding brainstorming; answering them is a mental exercise to get a deeper understanding of your brand and its goals. Your answers solidify what kind of brand you want. Another similar exercise is making a list of adjectives that describe your brand. This serves the same purpose of helping you identify the ideal brand personality for you.

A list of 25-30 adjectives can help keep you focused on a consistent brand identity throughout the logo design process. Try to be as specific as possible;

words like "energetic" or "friendly" will help your logo design far more than generic adjectives like "successful."

For even more insight into your brand's direction, try making multiple lists of adjectives that focus not on what you think, but what your audience thinks. In particular, list how your customers feel about your brand, or how you want your customers to feel about your brand. These lists are similar and may have some overlap, but the subtle distinctions can also reveal new insights.

Planning and inspiration

Now that you've defined your brand, you need to plan. This involves understanding the business environment you're entering, finding inspiration and brainstorming productively.

Check the competition

First, before moving forward, it's good to check up on your competition and how they handle their logos. For starters, you want to avoid designing a logo (or entire brand identity) that copies your competition. You need to know what your main rivals are doing simply so that you don't accidentally do the same thing, plus keeping abreast of your competition lets you identify the best ways to stand out.

Chapter 2:

Define your brand:

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Moreover, examining your competitors' logos creates a frame of reference for when you design yours. It helps you understand what your target market accepts, expects and desires. Just remember that your rivals are human just like you, so just because they do something doesn't mean it's the best choice.

Brainstorming best practices

Brainstorming is a skill on its own, with its own strategies and approaches. If you're new to working creatively with a group, or if you simply want to make your existing brainstorming techniques more efficient, here are some best practices:

- **Diverse participation.** Invite people in your professional and social network for a wide spectrum of perspectives. They will all have a unique viewpoint of your brand, and good ideas come from unexpected places.
- **No wrong answers.** Brainstorming is about exploring and experimenting, so don't be afraid of a "bad idea." Bad ideas are still useful in that they tell you what directions to avoid, plus you never know when a bad idea could grow into a good idea with a few minor tweaks.
- **Copious notes.** Due to the nature of spitting out ideas as they come to you, it's common that some suggestions fall through the cracks. Avoid this pitfall by having someone write down every



idea. What seemed negligible during the initial meeting may, in retrospect, be the solution you've been looking for.

- **Sleep on it.** Don't commit to anything at the first brainstorming session. Take some time to mull it over, review the notes and explore worthwhile options.

Above all, conduct brainstorming sessions in the way most comfortable to your group. Different company cultures might want to approach the task from different angles—and that alone should offer some insight into what kind of brand you are.

◀ Mood boards

Pinning down the abstract emotions you want connected to your brand can be one of the most difficult parts of logo design. After all, the very definition of abstract means difficult to pin down. To help make this task more heuristic and hands-on, make a mood board.

Mood boards are collages of meaningful visuals and words to represent the emotional elements you want for your brand and logo. They're a great transitional step between brainstorming and the actual design.

Like logos, mood boards can be done in a variety of different ways depending on your company.

Get inspired

The exercises and best practices in this chapter are meant to help you isolate which emotional connections you want to establish with your audiences so that you know what direction to go in. These preparations are your design road map.

In the following chapters we'll teach you how, exactly, to communicate these ideas through design techniques.

Chapter 3:

Essential design principles for making logos

Sure, you can just hire a designer to build your logo from scratch. But the final product will better meet your expectations if you build up a little design background beforehand. Knowing the fundamentals of design will help you to both fine-tune your vision and articulate what you want to the designer.

Let's start by going over some of the discipline's core principles, then discuss some basic logo styles to give you background on what to expect. Whether this is your first introduction to design or just a refresher, it's worth covering the basics before progressing to more advanced techniques.

Core design principles applied to logos

Emphasis

One of the main tasks in design is knowing which elements to prioritise over others. Where you place your emphasis determines what the logo communicates most strongly. Start by asking yourself which is the main piece of information you're trying to communicate. For logos, this is most often what your company does or what industry it's in, although more established brands may prioritise emotional connotations or value points.

If you're stuck, try listing out everything you want your logo to communicate, and then reorganize the list from most to least important.

Balance & alignment

You often hear designers talking about "visual weight." Just as it sounds, this refers to how noticeable or attention-grabbing certain elements are. A design work is "balanced" when all the elements are "weighted" in a way that the entire piece fits together smoothly.

Perhaps the greatest factor to balance is alignment, or whether your design is symmetrical or asymmetrical. Symmetry means that all elements on either side of the center line are equally weighted; asymmetry means they are not. Symmetry works best for traditional brands that want to appear stable. Asymmetry works better for brands on the edgier side that want to stand out.

Contrast

Contrast allows you to accentuate certain elements by playing them off of others. For example, in the logo for Cricket Pavilion, the text has more impact because of the black keyline around the edge. While contrast is most often used with colors, it also applies to sizes, placement and other design principles as well.



Where and how you use contrast in your logo depends on the style. Having a stark contrast like black on white creates a more stimulating and dynamic look, but would sabotage a brand going for subdued and relaxed. Knowing how to use contrast also means knowing how not to use it.



Chapter 3: Essential design principles for making logos



Proportion

Proportion is one of the more advanced principles on this list. It's influenced by how the designer governs the other principles like contrast and balance.

Specifically, proportion deals with how the weights of the different elements interact with each other. Say you want to emphasize your brand's slogan as part of the logo. If you use a muted color or diminutive font size for the slogan, then the logo's proportions are off. Likewise, if your slogan stands out too much, your proportions would still be off.

Proportion becomes exponentially complex the more elements you add to a design. While a veteran designer might be up to the challenge, you still don't want to overtax them (or the design) with too many elements.



Movement

When reading, English speakers start at the top left of a page and read in a horizontal line to the right before dropping down a notch vertically and starting over. This movement of the eye, also known as visual flow, is what this principle refers to. Designers can manipulate this flow with certain visuals, like the type, shape and gradient in Track Technique's logo above.

Depending on where and how you place certain elements, you can influence how the viewer moves the focus of their eyes. So if you place a giant red word in the bottom corner of your design, that's going to steal attention and possibly interrupt the visual flow.

Good designers plan out what elements they want the viewer to see and in what order. Working closely with the principle of emphasis, you want to plan your design so that the viewer's eye follows a specific movement, even on a canvas as small as a logo.



White space

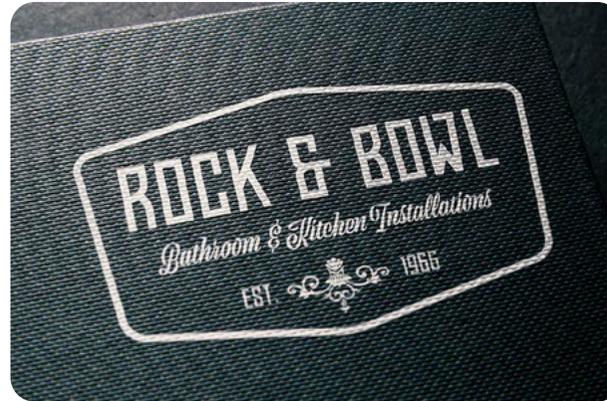
Also known as "negative space", white space is an area of a design that doesn't have anything in it. The 'Roots2Nutrition' logo above demonstrates this principle.

Any photographer will tell you that white space is one of the most important elements in composition. It serves a variety of purposes, from counterbalancing the weight of "heavier" visuals to adding extra emphasis (the more white space surrounding a single element, the more emphasis that element receives), to giving your viewer "breathing room" so you don't overstimulate them. To put it another way, a design relies just as much on what isn't there than what is.

Chapter 3: Essential design principles for making logos

Common logo styles

Depending on how you apply the above principles and mix them together, you can create any number of styles. Below, we've listed five of the most common styles to inspire you and help you decide which direction to head off in. The most important part to consider is what kind of look suits your brand personality.



Classic

The elements of a classic logo use fonts, colors and imagery that are either timeless or old-fashioned enough to be considered standard. Classic logos take no risks, but rather rely on aesthetics that have proven effective over the years, decades or even centuries.

◀ Retro

While retro styles draw on elements from the past like the classic style, the difference is that retro styles draw on a specific time period. Retro elements immediately communicate a certain era, such as a 70s psychedelic font, or a 90s pastel color scheme. Retro style is perfect for embodying the ideals of a particular time, but be careful because a little goes a long way.



Material

The most recent style on this list, material design is Google's own creation as an evolution of flat design. Along with blocky and simplified visuals, the style is characterised by a layered effect, created through smart use of shadows, shading, or coloring. Elaborate, overly complicated details have no place here.

Because this style is new and tied to computer interfaces like Google's, it gives a "tech" vibe that works well with digital brands.

Chapter 3: Essential design principles for making logos



Handcrafted

Standing in contrast to the material style, the handcrafted style gets its name from its use of hand-drawn (or mock-hand-drawn) elements. While material design shies away from details, handcrafted designs embrace it. Look at how the Cherry Tree Coffee House logo above has intricate detail in the tree and uses hand drawn type.



Minimalism

Another style that's attracting a lot of attention recently, minimalism gets its name from utilising only the bare minimum of elements necessary. Simple and abstract, minimalist designs are easily identified by the abundance of white space and strict omission of details. Minimalism runs on the principle of "less is more" - whichever elements are left over in the final design receive extra emphasis just because there's less competition. This style has an inherent personality of sophistication and even futurism, such as Apple or the Amy Wells Aesthetics logo shown above.

Get the basics right!

Don't feel the need to master the design principles listed in this chapter. I wanted to discuss the fundamentals of design so that you can speak with designers about your needs. Being aware of these principles should also help you ask yourself the right questions to discover what kind of logo you want. But in terms of applying these principles to an actual design logo, don't sweat it; that part is best left to the professionals.

Chapter 4:

The seven types of logos

If designing a logo were as easy as choosing the right color, shape and typography, every logo would just end up being a red ball—and there's already too many red ball logos to begin with!

You don't want your logo to look formulaic. The best way to avoid this is to expand your awareness of common logo archetypes. The more you know about logos, the better you can differentiate your logo and more accurately target your business goals.

There are seven generally accepted logo types. Let's explore how to use each type effectively.



1. Lettermarks

Logos centered around your brand name—both lettermarks and the next section, wordmarks—are the best strategy for “getting your name out there,” literally. As you can imagine, they do wonders for name and brand recognition.

Because letters carry all the artistic responsibilities of lettermark logos, their success depends on typography. This is the chance to go all out with your font, where loud and flamboyant fonts actually work for you.

One key consideration is the shape of the letters you're using. If your letters have many parallel lines, you must choose whether to lean into this aesthetic or counter-balance it with another style. Letters have their own circular, rectangular and triangular shapes, so you must incorporate them into the overall design.

Rounded fonts retain some characteristics of circular logos, mentioned in the next chapter, and angular fonts follow triangular and rectangular shapes.

Heavier type weights are common in lettermark logos to add more strength, or simply to make them easier to read. And because there are no other visuals to compete with, you can make the letters as big and bold as the space allows.

If you can't find a font that communicates exactly what you want, it is possible to commission a custom or modified typeface from a designer.

One final note: the inclusion of your full business name can help explain unknown monograms, or add context with a logo. Just remember that all secondary text should be small and unobtrusive so it doesn't compete with the main image.

Chapter 4: The 7 types of logos



2. Wordmarks

The other word-based logo, wordmarks are the entire brand name as the logo, with visual flourishes to hold attention.

What separates lettermark and wordmark logos is that lettermarks are abbreviations or acronyms while wordmarks are entire words. Frankly, the longer the brand name, the harder it is to remember. Even outside of logo design, it's worth considering abbreviations for your name. After all, you can't go around putting National Aeronautics and Space Administration on all your branding materials—but NASA is an acronym that sticks.

Wordmark logos follow many of the same best practices as lettermark logos above: artistic fonts,

heavy type weight, incorporating individual letter shapes, etc. One interesting difference, though, is that wordmarks are more forgiving of lowercase letters. That means you sometimes have a second option for choosing the best word shapes to fit your brand identity. For example, an angular uppercase F insinuates stability and offers the chance to do something creative with both vertical and horizontal lines.

A rounded lowercase f draws on circular connotations and appears more playful.

If your brand name is a person's name, it's not uncommon to use a signature as the wordmark logo. Just make sure you adequately differentiate it from other signature logos.

3. Pictorial marks

A picture is worth a thousand words, so many companies opt for pictorial logos instead of just letters. These are the logos that utilise icons to symbolise their brand, like Twitter's bird or Domino's domino.

Which icon you use is up to you. Some companies like to make puns on their name (John Deere's deer logo), while others try for something that helps describe their brand or service (the transience of Snapchat's ghost).

Pictorial mark logos can also borrow the pre-existing symbolism of an icon for the brand. Predatory animals are a favorite of brands who want to appear powerful and/or aggressive. But no matter what image you use,



you can still influence what it communicates by the style you use, like the horse icon used in the example above.

Be mindful of future changes to your business and don't pigeonhole yourself with your logo. If your logo represents only one type of product, it would be harder to promote expansions into other product types. In other words, a restaurant with a pizza logo would have trouble selling burgers.

If you do a lot of business internationally, consider pictorial mark logos since images translate into every language.

As with word-based logos, young and unknown brands may also want to include their full name in a secondary position.

Chapter 4: The 7 types of logos



4. Abstract marks

Whereas pictorial marks use images of real things, abstract marks use wholly original shapes to represent their brand. The only limit for personalisation is the designer's imagination.

Because there are essentially no boundaries and no fixed routes, an abstract mark logo is only as good as its designer. Knowing which shapes and colors to use, and how they fit together, requires experience with shape psychology and color theory, or an exceptional amount of natural talent. Still, in the right hands abstract logos can become iconic - just look at the logos of Adidas and Pepsi.

Just like pictorial logos, abstract logos work well internationally without language barriers.



5. Mascots

Depending on the brand you're building, mascot logos can be hit-or-miss. They're a little more difficult to get taken seriously, but if you get it right, you could create a beloved character that survives over a hundred years, like Planter's Mr. Peanut.

Mascots can originate from different sources, whether an animal (Tony the Tiger), or even real-life people (Colonel Sanders). Again, the innate meaning can be altered by the style you use - that explains how a vicious, man-eating tiger can sell children's cereal.

Mascots are most appealing to family and child-focused industries, but lose some of their charm with more serious brands. Their cuteness doesn't always convert for formal industries like banking or manufacturing. On the plus side, mascots add an extra

degree of playfulness to any industry or brand, so they can be used strategically to make your company seem more approachable.

Another problem is using your mascot on different mediums. More detailed mascots won't work in low-resolution prints, nor will they fit on materials with limited space. If you bear these things in mind when opting for a mascot logo, you'll be on the right track to create a memorable face for your brand.



6. Combination marks

What if you want a stylistic font for your brand name and an accompanying pictorial mark? What if you want your mascot to pop out of a letter in your company name? The logo types in this chapter don't need to exist in isolation - you can mix and match them to build the perfect logo for you.

Chapter 4: The 7 types of logos

Considering their versatility and how easy they are to customise, combination logos are perhaps the most common on this list, even though they incorporate all the other logo types. It's also a great transitional step for new brands: it creates easy associations between pictures and your company name.

If you're combining images and text, it's best to go all in. That means really blending them together and using the same artistic styles and colors. Design the combination logo as one complete picture, not just as two separate parts next to each other.



7. Emblems

Finally, we'll end with the oldest type of logos, the emblem. The most traditional and recognisable form a logo can have, emblem logos are badges, seals and crests that represent brands.

Emblem logo styles range from vintage styles with the iconic typography (like the one for Your Mom's Restaurant) to the more modern styles where the company name is written in the outlying circle with a poignant image in the center (like Neighborhood Nourishment). They present the opportunity to add extra information about your brand, such as a one-line description, slogan, or most often the date of establishment, which furthers the "traditional logo" theme.

With their extensive pros and cons, emblem logos are a double-edged sword. Their main benefit is that everything the logo needs is self-contained: name, image, additional information, etc., all in a space-efficient package. They're easy to stamp on all your branding materials. Another core advantage is that they automatically make your brand seem established, as if it had been around since the 1800s when the style first appeared.

The drawbacks revolve around their details: emblem logos feature more information than other logo types, which can be a nuisance. Emblem logos are difficult to recreate on certain materials, such as low-resolution mediums or the small spaces of business cards. More complex printing methods like embroidery are also difficult to pull off.

With that in mind, the best strategy for designing logos is to stay in the middle ground between complexity and simplicity. Oversimplifying logos negates one of their main advantages - recognition value - but overdecorating them limits where you can use them.



What's your type?

Logo design is one big puzzle, but you get to choose what the final image is. Design choices like emphasis, placement, visual movement, colors, shapes, typography and the actual type of logo all fit together to form a greater, more meaningful message.

If you find that your logo just seems "off," try switching out one of those pieces for another. One of the goals of this ebook is to collect all your logo design options in one place, so you have your choices laid out in front of you. And if you're new to design, don't be afraid of a little trial-and-error until you get your feet wet.

Chapter 5:

Colors, shapes and letters: the nuts and bolts of logo design

The principles from the last chapter can help you with your design blueprints, but what about the raw materials? **Colors, shapes and letters** (text & typography) are the proper building blocks of your logo, and as such have the most influence on whomever sees them.

Manipulating these three design assets are how you make the logo look the way you want. If you want your brand to be bold and aggressive, you use bold and aggressive colors, shapes and typefaces. Changing these elements changes the meaning you communicate - would a blue Coke Can feel the same?

Below, we explain the psychology behind colors, shapes and typography, so you know how to sculpt them to your needs.

Colors

Even the ancient Egyptians knew that each color evoked a different emotion in the observer. Today, color has become one of the most important tools for branding and marketing designs, and nowhere is it more important than the logo.



Here's a quick list of the most popular colors, their emotional connotations and what they signify to most people. Think about which emotions and traits you want associated with your brand;

Red: power, passion, importance.

Think "red alert." Red is one of the most attention-grabbing colors, and its links to passion and anger bring feelings of power, energy and warning. Its "heart-pumping" aspects make it a favorite choice for many brands, but it can be a poor choice for relaxed and casual brands.

Orange: playfulness, friendliness, vitality.

As red's neighbor on the spectrum, orange inherits some of red's energy, but is a little more muted. That means red's aggressiveness becomes orange's friendliness, making it a more playful and fun choice.

Yellow: happiness, optimism, approachability.

Another warm color, yellow is also energetic but the color of sunshine is more often associated with happy feelings. It's not only joyful, but also very accessible. Yellow may not be the best choice for brands who want to exude luxurious scarcity.

Green: nature, growth, stability.

Green is a well-rounded choice for well-rounded brands. Its obvious connections to nature make it popular for environmental brands, as well as brands showcasing all-natural ingredients or materials (especially in combination with brown). In the U.S., green can also signify finances as the color of money.

Blue: friendliness (light), professionalism (dark).

Blue is perhaps the most widely used color for branding because it signifies one of the most important aspects of business: trust. Light blues, such as Twitter's sky blue, are welcoming and friendly, while darker tones suggest a more formal professionalism. Blue is the favorite of financial institutions, which rely on customer's trust to part them from their money.

Chapter 5:

Colors, shapes and letters: the nuts and bolts of logo design

Purple: luxury, royalty, creativity.

The historic color of royalty continues its decadent implications today. Purple works well for luxury brands, and also carries undertones of mystery; but be careful because it scores higher with women than men.

Pink: youth, innocence, femininity.

As a watered-down red, pink retains some of red's energy and appeal, but with a more youthful skew. However, years of being the "girly" color have forever linked it with femininity, for better or worse.

Brown: rusticity, sturdiness, masculinity.

The rugged and natural color of tree trunks suggests sturdiness and dependability. Like green, brown also carries strong ties to nature and the environment, particularly trees and dirt. While certain colors like pink and purple score higher with women, brown appeals more to men.

Black: dominance, sophistication, edginess.

The only color more attention-grabbing than red, black is a strong choice as long as you can balance it. If you're trying to appear sophisticated (Chanel), authoritative (The Guardian), or edgy (MTV), black is the way to go - especially for fashion brands, who sometimes need all three.

White: cleanliness, health, purity.

The color of hospitals and a freshly-cleaned kitchen floor, white is a strong contender for hygiene and cleaning products. As the traditional color of "good" or "holiness," it can also have virtuous and religious connotations.

Color schemes

As if choosing a color weren't hard enough, you also have to be mindful of choosing which colors to pair together. While there are technically no creative limits, there are four types of color schemes that have proven effective:

Monochromatic: 1 color with multiple shades for variety.

A safe bet for looking good, a monochrome color choice is simple and classic, but offers few additional benefits. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Complementary: 2 opposing colors, opposite each other on the color wheel.

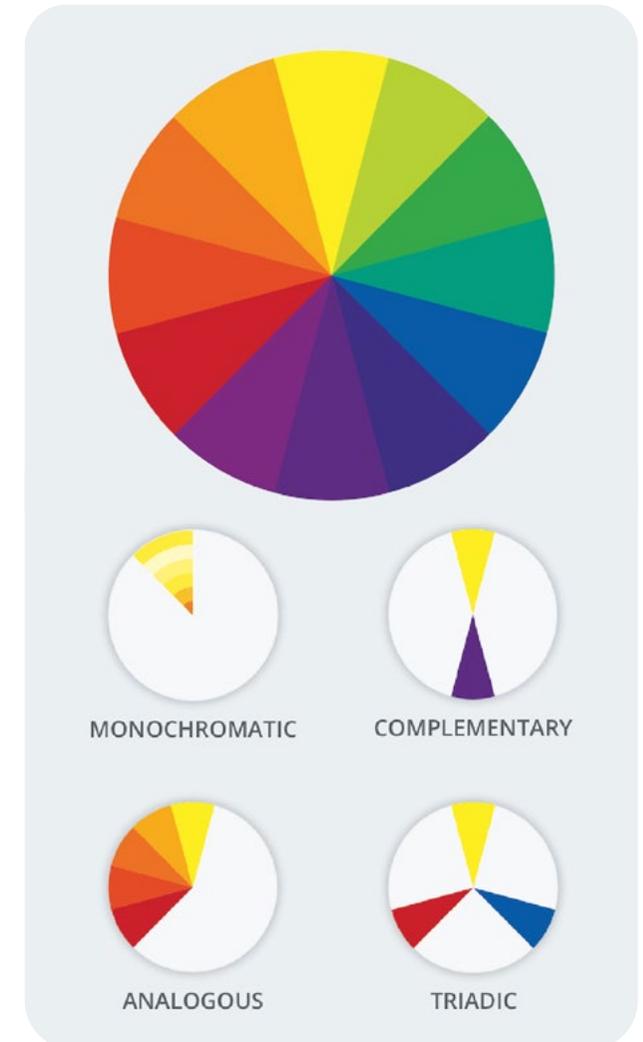
Complementary colors are in direct contrast and so bring out the best in each other, but the effect is stark so this style may not work with more tranquil brands. Also be careful you're not copying another brand; this style has been common for decades.

Analogous: 2 or 3 colors next to each other on the color wheel.

Analogous colors have the opposite effect of complementary pairs; they create more harmonious, but less noticeable, visuals.

Triadic: 3 colors equidistant from each other on the color wheel (forming a triangle).

The triadic color scheme portrays balance and stability, but it can be difficult to find three appropriate colors that all fit your brand personality.



Chapter 5: Colors, shapes and letters: the nuts and bolts of logo design

Shapes

Like colors, each shape carries its own psychological connotations; however, there's more flexibility for customizing the shapes you use, even creating original ones.



Circular

Circles, ovals, ellipses and ovoids (egg shapes) have neither a beginning nor an end, giving a sense of completeness or, in some cases, infinity. Curves in general delight the eye, so circles are naturally pleasant to look at.

Something about round shapes tends to draw in and welcome the viewer, making them a common choice for logos, especially to frame other more abstract

shapes within. Spirals magnify this effect to create almost hypnotising logos, but might be too intense for some calmer brand identities.

Rounded imagery is best for industries that want to convey warmth and inclusiveness, namely charities, but any business can benefit from a welcoming brand identity. Think of circular logos as saying, "come join us."



Triangular

Triangles suggest leadership or dominance—the top of the pyramid - but can also mean having an edge and a direction. The shape is synonymous with stability if pointed upwards, but brands can change the meaning based on which direction it points, such as a right-facing triangle symbolising progression.

Drawing on their leadership connotations, triangular logos work well with scientific, religious and legal institutions - industries that claim to know something others don't.



Rectangular

Viewed as efficient - if not a little bland - four-sided shapes like squares and rectangles expand on the stability of triangles to make the most secure and trustworthy logos. Take this effect even further with right angles, which add order and a heightened sense of structure to the mix.

Industries that need to demonstrate stability and show they're trustworthy prefer squares. Insurance agencies and banks often choose them, but only if they are willing to sacrifice more playful and casual identities.

Chapter 5: Colors, shapes and letters: the nuts and bolts of logo design



Sharp angles

The sharpness of an angle creates its own implications, even when coupled with basic shapes like triangles and squares. Pointy angles purposefully disrupt the visual flow of a logo - the movement principle we mentioned earlier in the chapter on core design principles - but that can be used to your advantage if you want a logo that's edgy or aggressive.

Sharp points aren't for every brand. The pointiest angles suit the logos of metal bands more than conventional businesses, but the effect can be turned up or down by how pointy the angles are.

Lines

Okay, we both know lines aren't shapes... but for the purposes of logo design, they fit right in here. Repeated, parallel lines are common in logo design,

but have different interpretations when used vertically and horizontally.

- **Vertical.** A bold image, vertical lines can insinuate authority (think prison bars or large walls) as well as prosperity (profit graphs). They encourage the viewer to think in terms of "up and down," which is more invigorating than horizontal lines.
- **Horizontal.** Almost the opposite of vertical lines, the more relaxed horizontal lines insinuate calm, stability and security; reminiscent of the horizon itself, they suggest the company is grounded, and therefore reliable. Viewers think in terms of "left and right," which is more comforting than vertical lines.

Because human eyes instinctively follow lines they see, in visual arts like photography and painting



"leading lines" are used to direct attention between two areas. For more detailed logos, individual lines can connect different areas, giving the designer more control over the visual movement.

Abstract and non-basic shapes

Clearly, everyone with an iPhone knows that brand logos don't always conform to basic shapes. Abstract shapes bring a lot of diversity and personalization to logo design, granting extra points for originality.

If you're dead-set on a specific thing to represent you - whether an object, animal, or original Pollockian shape - here's some advice. You can combine elements of basic shapes together to mix-and-match some of their characteristics. For example, a square with rounded edges still seems strong and organized like a square, but a little more playful.

Apple's apple logo may not be a circle, but it's comprised almost entirely of curves, so it retains a lot of the characteristics of circular logos. Imagine if their logo were angular with rigid straight lines: it'd be a lot less fun and sleek, but more authoritative.

And don't forget to account for symbolic meanings - think hearts, crosses and stars. A shield can have rounded edges, but factoring in its symbolism, it represents security even more than a perfect square. Animals, too, have much stronger symbolic identities than their actual shapes.

Chapter 5:

Colors, shapes and letters: the nuts and bolts of logo design

Text and typography

Finally in this chapter we'll talk about typography, the visual styles used for the letters in your text. This mainly involves choosing the right font style for your brand personality, but it also incorporates the size of the text, typeface styles like bold or italics, and the typographical weight. While typography can enhance a logo's visual style, don't forget the top priority is always legibility, especially for small and far-away logos.

Text isn't always necessary for logos, but in most cases it helps. While large-scale conglomerates don't need to include their name with their logo, the majority of businesses don't have the luxury of global recognition. Including their company name in the logo serves them better for developing brand awareness. Some logos are even simply artistic versions of only the brand name.

Other text inclusions can also be useful to add flavor to your brand story, but only if your logo has the appropriate space. To give you some ideas, your logo can also feature a:

- slogan
- industry
- home city
- year of establishment
- one-line description
- call-to-action

Whatever text you choose to include, you want to dress it up. Typography is an age-old practice for turning words into works of art, and it encompasses the art of calligraphy into its own extensive history. If you want to learn some more of the specific classifications, check out this article on the different types of fonts.

Unlike colors and shapes, the options for fonts are infinite, with new ones invented everyday. You can buy high-end fonts or commission original creations from professionals, but there's plenty of affordable options if you're on a budget. Try browsing these sites for fonts:

- **Adobe Fonts**
- **Google Fonts**
- **Font Squirrel**
- **Behance**
- **Creative Market**

You can handle the size and placement of your text using the design principles from the last chapter. What we want to focus on here is font types and styles, as that typographical decision has the most impact on your logo. While we can't analyse each individual font, we can explain the different categories so you can narrow down your search:



Serif fonts

The first lesson in typography: those little tags that hang off letters are called serifs, and fonts that use them are serif fonts. Perhaps the most famous example of a serif font is Times New Roman as pictured above.

Serif fonts are classic, timeless and traditional, but for logos can be difficult to read if the text is too small. They're also a bit on the formal side and would work against more casual brand identities.

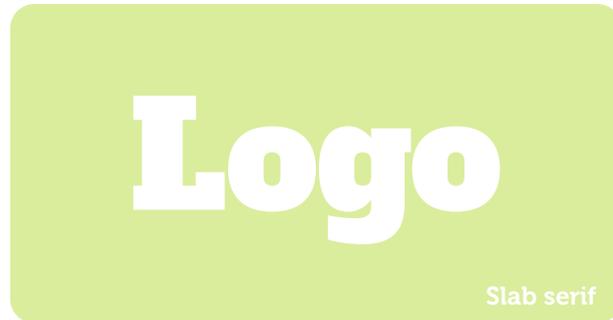
Slab serif fonts

Slab serif is a subcategory of serif fonts that have thick, blocky serifs. You know it when you see it: it's the font of old typewriters.

Fonts with slab serifs come with strong connotations, namely old-fashioned, vintage and relating to print.

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Because they grab attention easily, they're often used for word-based logos; however, if your logo centers around an image instead of text, slab serifs will compete for attention and so are not recommended.

Sans serif fonts

Sans serif fonts refer to all those fonts 'without' the little tags on letters. For reference, Arial is the most common sans serif font.



As the least invasive font on this list, sans serif is the way to go if your logo revolves around a separate image. It's also best for legibility at low resolutions or from far away (if it's thick enough). You can even play with their meaning by changing their weight: fat, thick lines are more bold and aggressive; thin lines seem more elegant and minimalistic.



Script fonts

Script fonts are the ones that look like handwriting, often with emphasis on curves and rounded edges, indicative of cursive writing. While ill-advised for blocks of prints, script fonts feel fun or sophisticated when used with minimal amounts of text— great for logos. If you want to make your brand more approachable or luxurious, unique custom-made script fonts are worth looking into.



Display fonts

Elaborate fonts, the ones that make art from word shapes, are called display fonts. These over-the-top fonts were made to be seen, and are designed for headings, titles and word-based logos.

Visually, display fonts can single-handedly carry a wordbased logo, but they don't work in conjunction with other images since they compete for attention.

Understand your design needs

If you've been following along, you now know what kind of brand you want to be, and the basic design elements and styles to create that identity. So congratulations: knowing what you need is the most important part of creating a logo. But whether it's your first time designing a logo or your hundredth time, you need to know what pitfalls to look out for and what steps to follow to get a great result. In the next chapter, we'll walk you through the design process.

Chapter 6:

The design process

This ebook wouldn't be complete if we didn't talk about the design process itself. Like the actual design elements, the process of putting your logo together and working with designers have their own special considerations and best practices that may not be evident on the surface...

So below, step aside from the design aspects and talk about the actual practice of designing. We'll start with some tips our own designers have found helpful, cover some basics for working with designers, explain some documents that help you and conclude with a final checklist.

Design process best practices

Create different versions

So your logo looks great on the computer screen in your design app window, but how will it look on a billboard, on wrinkly clothing, on product packaging, or shrunk down to 12 pixels for the app store? A good logo always looks good, no matter where you put it.

Make a list of the most common places you'll use your logo to determine which and how many versions you'll



need. Also keep in mind other relevant considerations, for example, clothing printing and web formats with different color systems.

You want to retain as much consistency as possible between different versions of your logo, and that means starting out with a well-planned master copy.

Blend styles together

Logo design is less of a straight line and more of a zigzag. You want to incorporate a variety of styles and tastes to reach an end product that's uniquely your brand. That means it's okay to sacrifice a little authority for a little cuteness, as long as that serves your brand goals.

Blending styles to customise your logo also sets you apart from others in your industry. Since you have most of the same goals as your competitors, chances are their logo roadmap will look the same as yours. Avoid this trap by doing something different, by doing you.

Use personas

Personas are your imaginary best friends. Applicable to far more than just logo design, user personas combine all the data you have on your target customers and synthesise it into one single representative. It's easier to design for one pretend composite user than thousands or millions of diverse actual users.

So when you design your logo, ask yourself what your personas would think of it. No matter how much you personally like it, the only opinion that matters is if your target customers like it.

Get feedback and revise

The longer you work on your logo, the more partial you become. It's always smart to get a fresh pair of eyes on your design, especially with something as important as a logo.

Just like in a brainstorming session, you want to get opinions from a variety of perspectives - like the different departments of your company. Show your designs to a diverse range of people, whether at a formal meeting or through an informal email, and consider their feedback.

Chapter 6: The design process

Avoid cliches

You may think you need a logo that fits in with everyone else's, but do you really? Logos are meant to make your brand stand out, but following the cliches of your industry cements your brand as average.

Smart designers will identify the elements that made cliches successful in the first place, then incorporate those elements into an entirely original design. Improving on a cliché is not the same as following one.

Consider your design options

Working with freelance designers

Professional designers have insights, training, and raw instincts that non-designers don't - and they can follow your vision as well as you can describe it.

Get Noticed Branding specialise in creating fit-for-purpose, unique logos designed with your company's personality, ethos, and values at their core.

DIY and logo makers

Of course you could try designing your logo yourself using your own design software, which would cut costs of labor but take extra time. But unless you're a professional designer yourself - or a natural - there will be a steep drop in quality between your logo and a professional's. You can expect similar results from a logo maker, which is a quick and cheap fix but your logo's quality will probably suffer.



Hiring a design agency

On the other end of the spectrum is using a design agency. This is the most expensive option, but offers the most benefits. Rather than working with a single designer, you have an entire creative team of specialists. That's one reason agencies work best for complete branding packages rather than individual logos.

Pricing

If price is your main deciding factor, here's a quick reference guide:

- DIY: Free - £50⁰⁰ (online logo maker) or £238⁰⁰ per year (cost of design software)
- Freelancer design or design contest: £200⁰⁰ - £1500⁰⁰ (highly scalable depending on skill level and experience)
- Design agency: £1500⁰⁰ plus.

The design brief

No matter whether you use a freelancer designer or a design agency, you'll need to write a design brief.

This is a succinct summary of all the need-to-know information about your proposed logo design—the culmination of all your responses to the questions posed in this ebook. Make sure to be very specific about what you need and want, since your brief will be the guide your designer uses to understand what to create for you.

Here's the design brief I use to capture the relevant information from my clients.

The file handover

A lot of designers like to present their work in the form of mock ups, showing the logo how it would look printed on packaging or a business card. However, the final design file of your logo - for each individual version - should be in vector format. The vector format allows you to scale your design to any size without a loss in quality, so having your logo in a vector file is essential security for the future. After all, you don't know what mediums you'll use your logo on years from now.

If you're working with a professional designer, they should automatically provide you with the correct files, but just to be sure, make it clear you want a vector format from the start.

Chapter 6: The design process

The final checklist

So, you've made it to the end of the book... but are you ready to design your logo?
Run through this final checklist to make sure you covered every corner

Before the design:

- What are the top 3 objectives of your logo?
- What is your brand's personality?
- What are some common threads you see in your competitors' logos?
- What did you learn from your brainstorming session?
- Which of the common logo styles suits your brand best?
- What are the best colors to represent your brand?
- What are the best shapes to represent your brand?
- What are the best fonts to represent your brand?
- Which of the 7 types of logos best achieves your company goals?
- Is it better to design the logo yourself, hire an agency or hire a designer?
- Does your design brief cover everything the designer needs to know?

After the design:

- Does the logo personality match your brand personality?
- What stands out about your logo after a split-second glance?
- Does your logo differentiate itself enough from your competitors' logos?
- Is your logo legible from varying distances and in varying resolutions?
- Can your logo be recreated on all your pertinent mediums? (For example, does it have color codes for both print and digital channels?)
- Do you have the proper deliverables in vector format?

Ready for your perfect logo?

GET A LOGO ►

Designing a logo is about putting your best foot forward. For one thing, you need to know which is your best foot, which is why we talked about branding principles at the start. The other component is knowing how to depict your most flattering brand personality using design techniques.

Designers aren't mind-readers. If you want to use their skill to the fullest, you need to use your communication

skills to the fullest. Everything in this guide should help you both to identify the kind of logo you want and to be able to explain it to a professional, maybe even draw up a first draft.

What we're trying to say is, the more you know about design, the better you'll be able to communicate with your designer, and the closer the final logo comes to what you had in mind.

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