

# Typography

## Typography in Action | The Language of Type | Font Pairing and Hierarchy

### National Visual Art Standards

**VA:Cr1.1.I:** Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary practices to plan a design.

**VA:Cr1.1.Ia:** Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

**VA:Cr1.1.IIa:** Individually or collaboratively formulate new creative problems based on student's existing artwork.

**VA:Cr10.1.IIa:** Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through art making.

**VA:Cr7.1:** Evaluate the effectiveness of images to influence ideas, feelings and behaviors of specific audiences.

**VA:Cr8.1:** Analyze differing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works in order to select and defend a plausible critical analysis.

### Guiding Questions

- What is typography and how does it affect the meaning of design?
- What role does persistence play in revising, refining, and developing work?
- What factors prevent or encourage people to take creative risks?
- How does collaboration expand the creative process?
- Where and how do we encounter typography in our community?

### Objectives

*Students will...*

- Analyze the role of typography in everyday life;
- Explain the effects of functional typography;
- Identify experiences or products that need redesign;
- Apply the elements and principles of design to real life problems;
- Critically evaluate completed design.

### Vocabulary

**Alphabet:** a set of letters or symbols in a fixed order, used to represent the basic sounds of a language; in particular, the set of letters from A to Z.

**Time Period:** at least two classes, 45-60 minutes in length

### Lesson Introduction

As seen through The Brief History of the Alphabet previously presented (see Unit 4A), typography has been in a state of constant evolution throughout time. It is still evolving as technology and methods change. People used previous knowledge and inventions to create the next "version". They adapted them for their particular needs to use in their own ways.

One thing a designer can count on being present in almost every design projects is type. Unfortunately, it is often put aside or ignored until the last minute. It has become so ubiquitous that new designers often overlook it. The technical skills of typography, from an educational standpoint, are neither difficult nor time consuming to learn, yet the application of technical typography skills can take much time and practice to develop. Typography is also one of the most complained about elements in young designers' portfolios. Well thought-out type can accentuate a design's meaning and aid in communication, while poorly executed type can stand out like a sore thumb (see Figure 1).



**FIGURE 1:** Example of poor typography choices. This avoidable problem is easily remedied and could have been avoided by simply adding some space between all the characters in the word (tracking), space between the "L" and "I" (kerning), a change in typeface, or the use of lower case letters.

### ACTIVITY PROCESS

#### Engagement (the hook–motivation and relevancy)

Figure 1 exemplifies the need for typography prowess. Have students imagine situations where the wrong word or use of typography would have a negative (or detrimental) effect (e.g. road sign, warning labels, medication packaging or instructions). Have them think of the consequences of these errors, then have them think of possible solutions to remedy the problems they come up with. Graphic design is problem solving and problem solving is a major part of the design process (more on this in Unit 3).

**Color:** the property possessed by an object of producing different sensations on the eye as a result of the way the object reflects or emits light.

**Hand lettering:** is the art of drawing letters by hand, typically crafted for a single use (see Smashing Magazine's article *Understanding The Difference Between Type and Lettering*—<https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2013/01/understanding-difference-between-type-and-lettering/>).

**Hieroglyphics:** a formal writing system used by the ancient Egyptians that combined logogram and alphabetic elements.

**Ideograph:** a written character symbolizing the idea of a thing without indicating the sounds used to say it.

**Pictograph:** a written symbol that depicts an object.

**Texture:** surface quality that can be seen and felt.

**Type:** printed characters or letters.

**Typography:** the style and appearance of printed matter; the art or procedure of arranging type or processing data and printing from it.

**Symbol:** a thing that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract.

## Materials

- An assortment of paper, pencils, markers, charcoal, colored pencils, watercolor paint and brushes
- Cell phone with capability to make a movie or slide show

## Figures

1. Example of poor typography choices
2. Examples of Assignment 1
3. Eight Triangle Typography example
4. Example of Assignment 2

## Art Context, Cultural Connections and Relevancy

This introductory section of the typography unit connects the history of the alphabet to activities that give students practice in using words and letters to communicate visually.

## Handouts

- Handout 4B.1-Elements of Art.pdf
- Handout 4A.2-Principles of Design.pdf



FIGURE 2: Examples of Assignment 1.

## DAY 1

### Introduction

Students love to express themselves and tend to be more engaged when putting themselves into a project. Typography can be a great vehicle for expression. Students will start to manifest their own unique taste for typography as their eyes are opened to the fact that typography is all around them. The following assignments will help students better understand the communicatory ability of characters, words, and typography.

### Assignment 1—Illustrate an Emotion

Using any art materials available, students will illustrate an emotion they feel strongly, using the letters that spell that word. Use **color**, **texture**, **hand lettering**, and **composition** to illustrate the emotion. Representational images, like hearts, stick people, chains, flowers, or smiley faces are off limits, because they already have meaning (see Figure 2).

**OBJECTIVES:** Students will illustrate an emotion; Help uncover their creativity and talent; Encourage self expression within a typographic execution.

#### PROCESS:

1. Lay out available art materials and give each student a large piece of paper.
2. Students can use any art materials available to make an illustration of an emotion that they feel strongly.
3. Critique: Display the finished emotion illustrations in the classroom. Constructive comments and suggestions on how to improve each others' work are encouraged and acceptable. Negative personal attacks are not. Distribute both *Handout 4B.1-Elements of Art.pdf* and *Handout 4A.2-Principles of Design.pdf*, so the students can use the language of design in their critique. Students should use design vocabulary whenever possible when commenting on each other's work, such as: balance, emphasis, elements of design, form, line, movement, pattern, principles of

design, proportion, repetition, rhythm, shape, space, variety, and unity (see Unit 5B\_Glossary).

**HINT:** There are lots of right ways to do this project and only one wrong way—not do the assignment.

### Adaptations and Accommodations

Students who need physical accommodations can work in pairs with another classmate. If a student is reluctant to express an emotion, they could express a mood.



FIGURE 3: Eight Triangle Typography example. This is an example of Assignment 1 Extension if needed.

### Extensions: Eight Triangle Typography

If students really enjoy Assignment 1 and want more, Eight Triangle Typography is a similar activity that often produces visually striking results. This activity works well with students working in pairs.

**EIGHT TRIANGLE TYPOGRAPHY:** A pair of students will brainstorm a theme for the text that will go into the squares (e.g. creativity, politics, something that is relevant in the students' lives at the moment). They will come up with two brief statements to use in the design, and select three to four colors that will enhance their message.

Have students draw a square on a large sheet of paper. Divide that square into four squares, then divide each square into two right triangles. Then draw the messages in the triangles using hand drawn letters (see Figure 3).

### Homework or Independent Work

If students want to dig deeper, suggest to them that hand lettering is a popular craft. They can research it on [Pinterest](#) or [YouTube](#), and practice making letters by hand. (Visit Inspirationfeed (<http://inspirationfeed.com/inspiration/video-inspiration/12-awesome-hand-lettering-tutorial-videos-for-beginners>) for examples and tutorials on hand lettering.)

### Closure

Students can make alterations to their work suggested in the critique. Revising a work is valuable time spent, because a design is seldom its best on the first try. Responding to feedback given in the critique is an excellent way to grow as a designer. And, the more practice students get, the better designers they will be by the end of this curriculum.

## Checks For Understanding

Ask the following questions as students work on Assignment 1:

- Are the decisions they're making helping to communicate the chosen word (achieve the purpose)?
- What does their assignment remind them of?
- What questions does it raise?

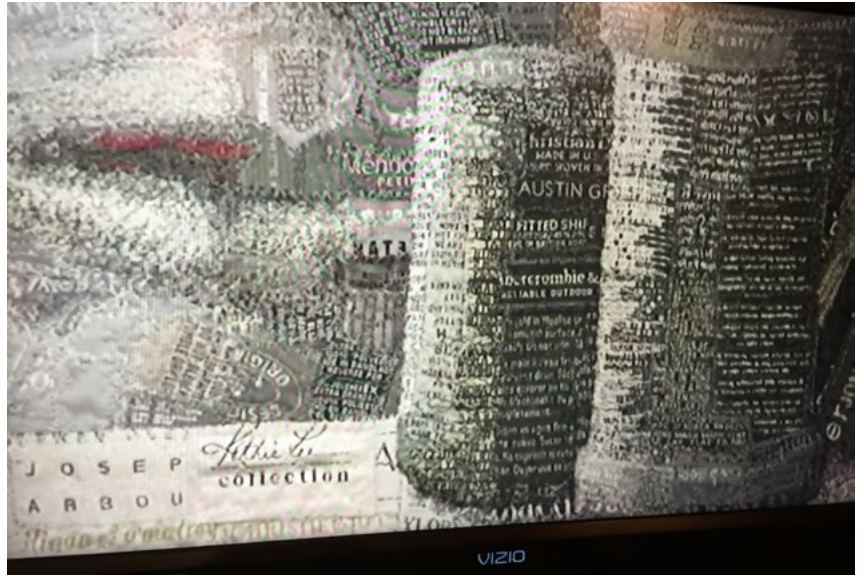


FIGURE 4: Example of Assignment 2.

### DAY 2:

## Assignment 2–Typography Slide Show

This assignment helps students look at and truly see the typography that already exists all around them. It raises their awareness of typography, especially typefaces that they find personally appealing.

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will gain an awareness of the typography that is in their everyday lives and pay more attention to it while photographing the typography they like most.

### PROCESS:

1. Students will work in pairs or groups of three to photograph 50 or more photos, with their cell phones, of examples of typography they find interesting or inspiring—signage, graffiti, posters, or even television programs. All sources of typography can be used. Encourage students to try many different locales and take many photos. While they are shooting, students can think about who the intended audience is that the typography is trying to speak to—moms (baby food), middle aged men/women (Harley Davidson clothing), or teens (students can think about the look of the brands they buy and how the typography speaks to them).
2. Once they have shot all of their photos, they will re-evaluate them and choose the best 15 to 20 examples. Students can form pairs or groups to give each other feedback on which photos are the best examples of typography, using this unit's vocabulary words in their feedback. When they have their photos culled down, they will order their images as artfully as they can (look for similarities,

differences, or stylistic characteristics, etc.). Students will then make a slide show or movie of their images. There are many free apps for slide show making available to download. Students can experiment with different orders of images, and add music to give the slide show depth. They can also try different kinds of music until they are satisfied that they have done the best they can.

3. This assignment is what designers do for themselves (gather collections of interesting things to look at) and when they need inspiration, looking at their collections will help spark new ideas. Viewing each other's examples gives students more exposure to typography.
4. Once the slide shows are done, have each pair or group share their slide shows with the class. Compare and contrast their choices in the form of a critique. Ask the questions, what works in this slide show, and what could be improved? If students have Google Drive accounts, they can upload their slide shows or movies to share with the class.

### **Adaptations and Accommodations**

If enough students don't have a cell phone or a camera, they could do a Google search on typography and select and download images they find inspiring. Or each pair or group could look through magazines and newspapers and collect 50 examples of typography and paste them together in a collage. If students aren't able to download one of the many free apps to make a slide show, they could make a movie, or they can organize and flip through the photos, or make a pdf file to print.

### **Extensions**

The class could collaborate to create a website on Google Drive that showcases all of their slide shows, and link it to the class website to communicate to parents, friends and families the work they are doing in class. After this assignment, encourage students to keep shooting photos of typography they find interesting, and add to and refine their slide show or movie. If they have made a collage, this could be the first piece of a typography journal that they could add to when they find inspiring examples of typography.

### **Homework or Independent Work**

Students can add to their collection by snapping a shot of inspiring typography anytime they see one, beyond the scope of this assignment. They can delve further into how typography appeals to certain age groups, economic groups, or other populations, and photograph examples.

### **Closure**

After showing the slide shows in class, ask students what they would do differently if they redid this assignment. Offer them the opportunity to refine and revise their work.

### **Checks For Understanding**

Ask students questions as you look at their slide shows:

- What did you discover in the process of this assignment?
- Has your awareness of typography changed, and if so, how?

### Lesson Assessment Based On Objectives

Students should be assessed on their ability to demonstrate an awareness and proper use of basic typographic principles and history as it applies to their own work. The correct use of unit vocabulary in class dialog should be accurate and appropriate to the work they make and see. All work produced in and out of class should be collected and analyzed. (See *Unit 4D Rubric.docx* for assessment and rubric ideas. Customize to meet class specific assessment needs.)



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