

6. Logos



Hundreds of logos fight for attention with hundreds of other logos every day. If your logo design is going to have a chance of being noticed, it needs to have a unique personality that people will not only notice, but *remember*. In this chapter we'll look at some common techniques and themes of logo design that never get old because they are capable of unlimited variations and interpretations.

A designer whose portfolio has lots of logos in it has a great advantage because it says a lot of things about a designer: it says you know how to think visually and conceptually, and that you can take a complex communications challenge and condense it into its simplest and most effective form.

In all the chapters in this section we used the following typefaces:
Large heads: **ITC Bailey Sans Bold, 60/60**
Body copy: **Centaur MT, 10.5/11.8**
Small heads: **Bailey Sans Bold, 10.5/11.8**

Designing a logo

Using creative typography along with simple visual/conceptual correlations between images and type is the key to solving most logo design challenges.

Experiment, experiment, experiment! You're using a computer, not rubbing down press-type or hand-tracing letters from a book of type samples, so play with all the possible combinations of faces. Not happy with your fonts, want to experiment further but you can't buy every font you want? You can see what your logo will look like in any of thousands of type-faces from a variety of different vendors: go to Veer.com, go to the "Type" section, then find the link to "Flont." You can choose a face, choose a type size, type your company name, and see it rendered in any font of your choice.



This logo is too busy—there are too many elements in this small space, too many gradations of tone that won't hold up well in many situations, and the typeface is difficult to read. Simplify for clarity, strength, and usability.

Often when designing logos, we go through versions like this (too complex) and then start revising it, reducing it to the simplest interpretation of the desired theme.



*The same logo is still fairly complex, but each of the elements will render easily in a variety of situations. Instead of setting all the type in the difficult face, we limited it to just the larger words and chose a contrasting, more legible face to work with it. We eliminated several of the extraneous elements. We managed to keep the client happy by adding a few details, like the dots and the tag line, but kept ourselves happy by making the details clean and simple. Most importantly, we concentrated on what would create the most effective **contrast**.*

Different files for different uses

For many logos, you will need to create several different files to be used for different purposes.

For instance, you might have a subtle drop shadow in a logo that works great when you use it in a slick, high-quality magazine. You might have a version of your logo in color for full-color brochures, and

a low-res JPG or GIF version for the web. You need a version in black-and-white without the subtle drop shadow for newspaper ads, flyers that will be reproduced on copy machines, and your fax cover sheet.

Don't get attached to a particular design until you make sure it will translate well into all the different media it will be used in.



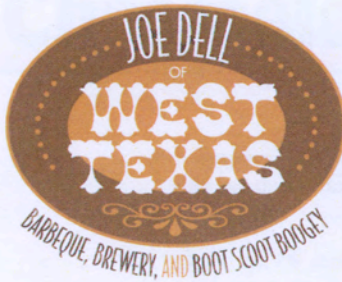
This is the full-color logo with subtle drop shadows that can be used in high-quality color printing, preferably on glossy stock.



This is the same logo in black-and-white, still with the subtle drop shadows because this version is for high-quality printing.



Here are two files of the same logo for an email service. The top one can be used where the printing and paper are high-quality, and a GIF version can be made from this for the web. The bottom one is useful for lower-quality printed pieces.



This version is the low-res GIF file to be used on the web. It doesn't look good in print, but looks great on the screen.



This black-and-white version is designed to hold up well in a newspaper, copy machine, or even a fax machine because there are no soft shadows that tend to get lumpy under poor printing conditions, and the contrast is stronger.

All type logos

Many logos are nothing more than type. But just because a logo is all type doesn't mean it didn't take creativity and skill to put it together. An all-type logo, used with a classic face, often creates a corporate look, a solid, dependable, no-nonsense sort of company. Think of the logotypes for IBM, Apple, or Pond's.

If you use nothing but characters, you had better be sure you're using excellent typography; check your letterspacing, linespacing, word spacing, the placement of hyphens or dashes, true apostrophes, etc.

ChromaTech Helvetica/Arial

ChromaTech Times/Times New Roman

CHROMATECH Avant Garde/Century Gothic

CHROMAtech Palatino/Book Antiqua

If you plan to use all text as your logo, be very conscious of your type choice (dub). As a general rule, don't use any font that is built into your computer (like the ones shown above). Buy a new one.

Be especially wary of Helvetica (Arial is also Helvetica, it's just called another name). Helvetica was the most popular typeface in the world in the 1960s and '70s, so anything you create with it automatically has a '60s/'70s look. Do you want the same visual identity as thousands of other companies and organizations who still have their Helvetica logos held over from the '70s?

While we're on the font soapbox, please avoid Sand, Mistral, and Hobo for the next fifty years.

ChromaTech
I M A G I N A T I N G

ChromaTech
I N C O R P O R A T E D

ChromaTech
I N C O R P O R A T E D

ChromaTech.inc.

CHROMATECH
c o r p o r a t i o n

CHROMATECH
i n c o r p o r a t e d

ChromaTech
incorporated

ChromaTech
incorporated

ChromaTech
IMAGINATING SYSTEMS

ChromaTech
IMAGINARY

You can see what an incredible variety there is within the limitations of using one main typeface in the logo.

Combine typefaces

Very often in an all-type logo, you'll want to use two different typefaces. Sometimes you'll use two faces in the name of the company, or you might use a typeface in the large company name that is unsuitable for the small type. For instance, say you use a face with very thin lines in the company name, but you need to put the word "international," "incorporated," "corporation," or perhaps even a tag line like "We do it for you," in very small type. The thin lines that print clearly in the company name will completely fall apart in the small type, so you need a different typeface that will hold up in small sizes.

This is the key to using two (or more) different typefaces: **contrast**. You cannot use two fonts that have anything in common—if they are not members of the same family (like the very thin weight combined with the very heavy weight of the same font), then you must choose faces that are very different.

If you combine two faces and can tell they're not working well together but can't put your finger on it, look for the features that are *similar* between the two fonts—it is the *similarities* that are causing the conflict.

If this concept interests or confuses you, read the second half of *The Non-Designer's Design Book*, which focuses on the specific challenge of combining typefaces.

ChromaTech

This combination uses two members of the same typeface (Clearface); one is black italic and the other is bold italic. There is a bit of contrast between the two words, but not enough to be effective.

ChromaTech

This combination uses two different sans serifs (Frutiger and Avant Garde). They are slightly different, but have the same size, weight, and structure (monoweight strokes); these similarities create a conflict instead of a contrast.

CHROMATECH

This combination uses two different serifs (Garamond and Cresci). They are somewhat different, but both faces have serifs, a moderate thick/thin weight shift in the strokes, and both parts of this word are in all caps in the same size; these similarities create a conflict instead of a contrast.

ChromaTech

This combination uses two different scripts (Bickham Script and Redonda Fancy). They are somewhat different, but both faces have a thick/thin weight shift, curly shapes, hand-scripted forms, and they're about the same size; these similarities create a conflict.

Chroma**Tech**

i n c o r p o r a t e d

This combination uses two different weights of the same sans serif typeface (Frutiger). Although they are from the same family, the difference in weight (thickness of the strokes) is so strong it creates a great contrast. If we combined the medium weight with the heavy weight, the contrast would not be so effective.

Chroma**Tech**

This combination is also two members of the same family (Clearface). The contrast comes from differences in weight (thickness), structure (expanded vs. condensed), and form (italic vs. roman), with a little contrast of color thrown in.

Chroma**TECH**

i n c o r p o r a t e d

This combination uses a modern face (Quirinus) and a sans serif (Frutiger). The contrast is in form (caps vs. lowercase), size (the caps are the size of the x-height), weight, and structure (serious thick/thin vs. monoweight strokes, plus serif vs. sans serif). The choice of color contrast is deliberate: cool colors recede. If we had chosen a warm color, like red, for the word "TECH," the warm color would have come forward, become more important, and there would be a conflict between it and the larger word (Chroma). The small type for "incorporated" is Frutiger.

Chroma**Tech**

i n c o r p o r a t e d

Obviously, we've got a script (Bickham) combined with a sans serif (Impact). To intensify the contrast, we made sure to choose a heavy, rather vertical sans serif, and used the special, fancy initial cap that comes with Bickham.

Kitt & Katt

• CAFE •

The words "Kitt," "Katt," and "CAFE" are the same typeface, but KittKatt is Bodega Sans Black and CAFE is Bodega Sans Light. The contrast of weight and size is emphasized by a contrast of color. The ampersand (&), Redonda Fancy, uses a contrast of structure, color, and weight.

Triple Click

Design

The modern font (Onyx), with its vertical, condensed serif characters contrasts strongly with the horizontal, cursive face (Carpenter). The contrast is emphasized with color.

SA&T

SCHOOL OF ART & TECHNOLOGY

The letters of SA&T are directly from the font Blue Island. The only logical choice of a contrasting typeface would be a sans serif—just about any other category of type (oldstyle, modern, slab serif, script, or another decorative face) would almost certainly have conflicting features.

TABS + INDENTS

The book

This combination uses a tall, decorative, yet formal sans serif (Serengetti) in all caps vs. a playful, handlettered, childlike face in lowercase. In this logo, we also used a contrast of direction, size, and, of course, a contrast of color.

Tweak a letterform

Often logos involve tweaking a letterform out of the ordinary. This can be a very simple addition or subtraction to a character, or it might involve an illustrative technique.

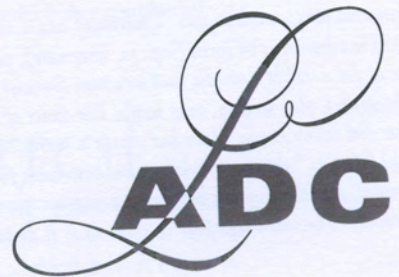
Having letterforms interact with each other, as many of these do, adds visual interest and makes a typographic design more unique.

CHROMATECH

This is simply an all-type logo with a red dot replacing the bar in the letter "A," which not only adds more visual interest to the logo, but provides a color spot that reinforces the word "chroma."



Once we saw this business name set in lowercase italic, it was an easy creative jump to see the letter "f" in the shape of a feather.



This logo for the Lamy Ad Club uses a strong combination of typefaces with a simple reverse of the overlapping stroke.



We pulled out the tail of the ampersand (&) to give this logo a more unique look and provide a subtle visual emphasis to the concept of "art" in the logo.

Lightning Studios

Segura and Lamoreux
Crane Service

HAMMLIN
garden townhomes

Wilton House

Mimi's
flower shop

HOME
HEALTH SERVICES

Mobius

CONNIE'S
MOTOR
SHOP

IM

Integrated Marketing

In each of these examples we simply substituted a small image of some sort for a character. The small images might be from picture fonts, clip art, original art, or just drawn shapes.

In the Integrated Marketing logo, designer Landon Dowlen customized the letters of the company.

Add elements

Many logos have symbols attached to the type. If you have lots of money and can afford to expose your logo excessively, the symbol can eventually stand alone, like the Nike swoosh, the Merrill-Lynch bull, or the Apple apple, and everyone knows who it refers to. But it takes millions of dollars and several years to do that—most symbols will stay with their logotypes rather than stand alone.

There is an entire study in symbology—all we are going to say here is that logo symbols are typically simple in form, with clean lines and shapes that will hold up well in a variety of media. If you look through design annuals and logo books, you'll notice that the symbols are often arbitrary shapes that have nothing to do with the logotype—they are simply marks (often common, everyday marks) that combine with a particular typeface and name of a company to create **a unique combination**. This *combination* of symbol, typeface, and name is the key—there are probably hundreds of logos that use a circle as a symbol in some way, but not in the unique way that *you* use it.

Ideally, you'd like the symbol to look like it belongs with the logotype. Often you'll see the two pieces set so far apart from each other that the connection is fairly obscure. Remember the rule of proximity—the space between elements creates a relationship: if the elements are close, they have a relationship; if they're far away from each other, they don't.

Chroma**Tech**

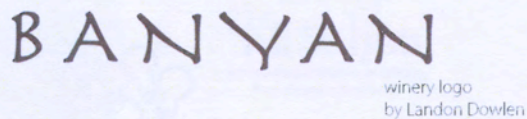
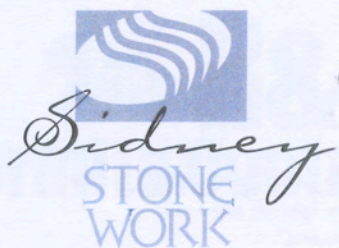
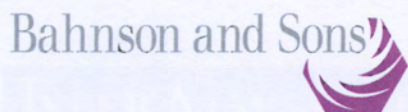

Chroma**Tech**


Chroma**Tech**


Chroma**Tech** ::

:: Chroma**Tech**

These imaginary logos each use a mark in addition to the company name. You can see that a mark can be very identifying, yet very simple.



Add clip art

There is so much great clip art available, including the dozens of images you get in one picture font. Not only is clip art great for using in logos, but just skimming through collections of it can give you great new ideas.



We repeated this little clip art of the lightbulb to represent both concepts of "idea" and "swarm." The font is naturally playful and unpredictable, but the entire logo is still a bit too static for a "swarm."



We bounced the type around to add energy to the letterforms.



In the process of adding more energy and visual interest, we created the unexpected element of a stray lightbulb that breaks away from the swarm.



TREVOR CLIFTON
computer geek to the rescue!

Emilie Brooke



Writer



TYLER MARSHALL

satellite communications experts

To customize the names, each of these logos uses an inexpensive piece of clip art or a character from a picture font.



Communication Consultants

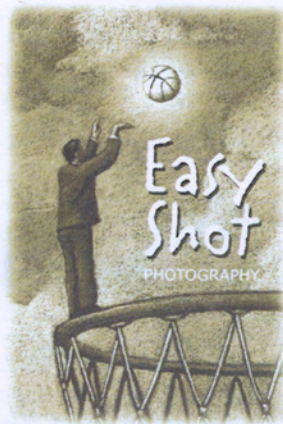


Postcard Machine

logo by Landon Dowlen



logo by Landon Dowlen



the Soup Kitchen
fine dining • fine wine



Don't forget the illustrative sort of clip art as a design option. Just remember that the logo should also work in black-and-white, so experiment with making the different files you need for various media before you finalize one solution.

Add illustrations

If you are a clever illustrator, like John, or if you can afford to hire an illustrator to help complete the logo, then you can truly customize your ideas in very unique ways. But don't let the lack of a professional illustrator stop you—a primitive illustration can have as much (or more) charm than a polished, professional one. In fact, often illustrators strive for that “unpolished” look.

There are a wide range of illustrations that work in logos. Just remember to keep it simple, and remember that any illustration must also render well in black-and-white.



This is a simple illustration, not much more complex than any of the elements we added to the variety of logos earlier in this chapter.



Tobacco Addicts Anonymous

This is also a simple illustration, using more creativity than high-end illustrative skill. Even if you're not technically an illustrator, it's amazing what you can do with an illustration program—push yourself.



Another simple illustration that takes more creative thinking than illustrative skills.

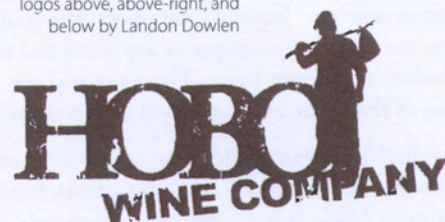


MetaNeo Gallery

This logo uses an illustration as the main element, since the image represents the gallery's focus so well.



logos above, above-right, and below by Landon Dowlen



Each of these clever logos uses a custom illustration. Although this can be lots of fun, remember that every logo must still be able to be read and used in black-and-white, so make sure any illustration is flexible enough for all media before you commit to it.



Thunder on the Left is a video production company. (When you hear thunder on the left, it means the gods have an important message for you.)

Handlettering is a form of illustration that works wonders in logos, but for most pieces it requires a experienced and skill to be truly successful. A logo represents your entire business; it's worth it to hire an excellent letterer if you want that look. This logo was designed by Brian Forsta of AgilityGraphics.com.

Having said that, go ahead and experiment with writing the company name dozens of times with different writing tools; chances are you'll find the beginnings of an interesting and unique logo. Some of the most wonderful handlettered pieces have been very "unsophisticated" letterforms taken from scrawls on walls, napkins, etc.

Look around

Logos are everywhere, literally everywhere. We guarantee you cannot open your eyes in any room and not see a number of different logos. The more you are conscious of them, the better you will design them.

Designer Exercise: Collect logos. Cut them out of the newspaper, phone book, brochures, bread wrappers, labels, boxes, print them from web pages, etc. Collect good ones and bad ones. Write the product or service on the back.

Separate the logos that have a corporate look. Even though you might not be able to define exactly what creates a corporate look, you probably know it when you see it. Once you have them assembled in front of you, put into words what they all have in common that makes them look corporate. Is it the style of logo (often all text)? Is it the size of type? The lack of an illustration? A fairly conservative symbol?

Separate the logos that look professional but high-tech trendy, the dot.com sort of logos. What exactly is it that helps you recognize this sort of company? What do the logos have in common? What is it that gives you that trendy yet professional sort of look? Is it a different style of typeface than a more corporate logo uses? Does it have energy built into it, and how does it manage to do that? Do any of the logos in this category use Helvetica/Arial, Times, or Palatino/Book Antiqua?

Separate the logos you consider to be not-so-good. Exactly what is it that makes them not-so-good? Is it the typeface or the combination of faces, the letterspacing, the size, the symbol, the relationship between the symbol and the type, the rendering of any image or handlettering, is it too busy or hard to read? The more you can state in words what makes a logo *not* work, the less likely you will build any of those features into your own creations.

Find the web sites that use some of the logos you've collected. Is the web logo different on the screen than it is in print? If you found a full-color logo on a package, see if you can find it in black-and-white, like in the phone book. How is it different? What did the designer do (if anything) to make it work both in full-color and in black-and-white?

Keep a file folder stuffed with logos, and buy books that showcase award-winning logos. Look through them before starting to design your own!