

Design Process

Define the Problem | **Learn** | Generate Ideas | Design Development | Implementation

National Visual Art Standards

VA:Cr2.3.IIa: Redesign an object, system, place, or design in response to contemporary issues.

VA:Re.7.2.IIa: Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of...

VA:Re8.1.IIa: Identify types of contextual information useful in the process of constructing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works.

VA:Cn10.1.IIa: Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through art making.

Guiding Questions

- Why are learning and research important to the design process?
- Knowledge is power. How does this hold true with design?
- How should the research process inform design?

Objectives

Students will...

- utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through the design process;
- identify and evaluate types of contextual information useful in solving a particular design problem;
- create a mood board exemplifying a hypothetical company's potential clientele.

Vocabulary

Aphorism: a concise observation that contains a general truth (e.g. a penny saved is a penny earned; a jack of all trades is master of none).

Clientele: clients collectively, customers, all using the services of a professional person or company.

Culminate: reach a point of highest development.

Hypothetical: supposed but not necessarily real or true (e.g. that option is merely hypothetical at this point in time; teleportation is the theoretical transfer of matter from one point to another).

Learning: the acquisition of knowledge or skills through experience, study, or by being taught.

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

Lesson Introduction: Learning

Learning is understanding, a deliberate systematic search for knowledge and advancement. Most people do this subconsciously in almost everything they do. When they shop for the best new cell phone, video game, or even food—they learn about the product(s). Learning informs our decisions. It is no different in the graphic design process. Learning takes on many forms from simply Googling (see Figure 1) something, asking a friend's opinion, or watching peoples' behavior on a street corner. If something is learned, it can be used to better inform design decisions. Often, designers use the term research as a **synonym** for learning.

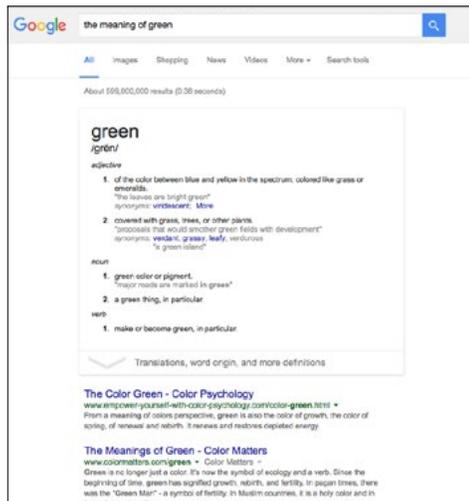


FIGURE 1: Google search screen shot. This can be the simplest form of research but don't fall into the trap of only Googling as a sole research tool. This is one method in many.

The term research tends to scare students. They think it means boring. One of the goals of this lesson is to dispel the misconceptions behind research and learning. It can be as fun as they make it. There are far more uses for research than what students are probably familiar with. Unfortunately (or fortunately depending on which side of the fence you're on), we unknowingly (and unwillingly) participate in **market research**. Market research is the gathering and use of our consumer habits. It's how and why companies can keep producing products we buy. We participate every time we fill out a form (see Figure 2), warranty, login, or just simply browse the Internet.

Students should have tried out the first step in the design process in Unit 3B—Define the Problem. The second step in the design process is Learn. Simply put, learning about stuff is research or becoming informed. For example, if a student wants to find the best sushi

Market research: is any organized effort to gather information about target audiences or customers which includes analyzing data to help understand which products and services are in demand, and how to be competitive.

Mood board: an arrangement of images, materials, pieces of text, etc., intended to evoke or project a particular style or concept.

Orient: adjust to specified circumstances or needs.

Research: the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. Also means engaged in or intended for use in investigation and discovery.

Synonym: a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another word or phrase in the same language.

Target audience: a particular or identified group of people a specific advertising or marketing message is aimed at or meant to communicate with.

Materials

- Books
- Found materials such as advertisements, fliers, marketing materials, product packaging
- Glue
- Magazines
- Markers
- Newspapers
- Pencil
- Photos
- Photo copies
- Poster board
- Scissors
- Sketch book
- Technical Pen (used to make lines of constant width)

Figures

1. Google search screen shot
2. Product registration card
3. Pantone Matching System color swatches
4. *Fountain*, 1917, Marcel Duchamp
5. *Guernica*, 1937, Pablo Picasso
6. Forever 21 mood board

Art Context, Cultural Connections and Relevancy

Knowledge is power. Students hold a vast amount of potential that has proven to be socially powerful. Research exemplifies the power of learning—why students are in school in the first place and why people all over the world fight for education. In this section, students conduct research to address design problems, yet, couldn't all problems or issues be resolved or solved in this way (design thinking)?

PRODUCT REGISTRATION CARD

Thank you for buying from Software Toolworks/Mindscape. To receive Technical Support and product upgrade information please complete this Registration card and return it to us - you don't even need a stamp. Product purchased: **ALFRED CHICKEN**

Format: **CD32** Date of Purchase

Title Surname

Address

Post Code

Tel

Fax

Where did you purchase this product?

Store name Town

How did you hear about this product?

Advertisement Review Television programme Saw it in shop Another user

Other (please specify) _____

Which other computers do you use?

IBM PC 286 386 486 DOS Windows CD-ROM

Apple Macintosh CD-ROM Amiga A1200/4000

NES SNES Game Boy Megadrive Mega-CD GameGear

Other (please specify) _____

From time to time your name and address may be provided to carefully screened companies. If you would prefer not to participate please tick this box.

FIGURE 2: Product registration card. Ever wonder why this information is needed? It's a great way for companies to track information, masked as a service-warranty card. Basically, the promise is they'll take care of you (within certain restrictions) in exchange for your information, which in turn will be used to make business decisions—a market research tool. What a deal.

restaurant, they must do research. This may include a Google search, look up reviews on a phone app, asking friend's opinions, etc. We learn without even thinking about it.

So how does this apply to graphic design? Through learning, designers figure out what is needed. As graphic design is visual problem solving, the more a designer knows about a product, service, company, etc., the better prepared they'll be to come up with a useful solution to the problems they're presented with. **Learning (research)** should influence design decisions from simple color choices to the form of a final solution—all decisions. Through learning, designers **orient** themselves to better understand everything—the assignment, the client's needs and requirements, products, services, the organization, audience(s), competition, etc. This analysis allows the designer to better prepare and interpret the presented problem—the real problem, as discussed in the previous lesson. Learning leads to better understanding and if a designer truly understands the problem, they are more likely to solve it effectively.

Learning and research should happen throughout the design process, not just in one place. Yes, learning is listed as second in the design process but actually happens throughout and should influence all aspects of a design. The more questions are investigated the more informed the end design will be. This is also a fall back when educating a client about the work a designer is producing.

For example, a client wants a logo for a new hiking shoe brand and asks why the color green was chosen (their favorite color is pink). A prepared designer who did their research could respond that green was chosen because it represents nature, freshness, renewal, and energy—all reasonable qualities that support hiking in the woods (see Figure 3). Again, research is learning.



FIGURE 4: *Fountain*, 1917, Marcel Duchamp. This porcelain urinal was his way of making fun of elitist American avant-garde art, which ended up changing the notion of what art was and could be. He believed art should be conceptual and driven by ideas. He refused to follow conventional artistic paths and defied the artistic norm of the day. He believed art could be anything and everything if presented in a new perspective.



FIGURE 5: *Guernica*, 1937, Pablo Picasso. This mural-sized oil on canvas painting depicts the suffering of people, animals, and buildings wrenched by violence and chaos believed to have happened during the bombing of the Basque Country village of Guernica in northern Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Its often referred to as the most moving and powerful anti-war paintings in history.

Artists throughout time have used the power of art and design to exemplify humanity and communicate injustice. Marcel Duchamp spearheaded the Dada movement in the early 20th century as a response to the brutality and inhumanity of World Wars I and its perpetrators by breaking convention and challenging the very notion of what art was (see Figure 4). Picasso also used art to express his anti-war sentiments in what is considered to be one of the most moving and powerful anti-war paintings in history (see Figure 5). The 60's Vietnam war era brought about even more anti-war sentiments with supporting artwork. It also brought about other messages and ideas, such as peace, love, and extreme deviation from social norms. The list of artists who made strong artistic statements is vast. Their messages span the gamut of movements including many issues still raging today—race, social systems, the environment, injustice, etc.

Art and design continue to be good methods of communication in exemplifying the very real situations students find themselves directly involved in—identity,

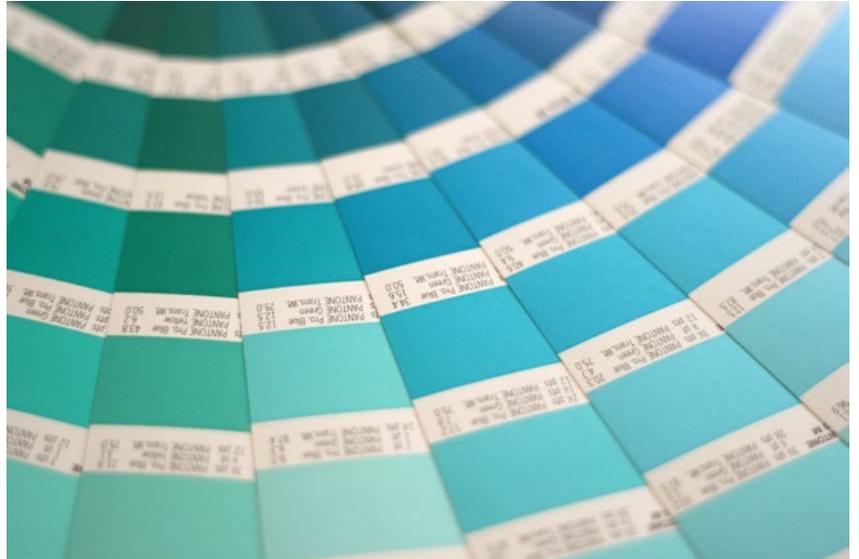


FIGURE 3: Pantone Matching System color swatches. There are thousand of colors to choose from. How can just a few be justified for use? Research can justify design decisions. The more thorough the research process the better prepared the designer is to articulate why they made the decisions they made.

If we refer back to Assignment 1, the client specifically requested a new poster to sell more music. The tendency of new/young designers is to do what they're told. "The client told me to create a poster so I will." This is actually doing the client a disservice if the poster will have no effect in solving their actual problem—a band-aid solution. This mentality also is demeaning to the designer, who is being called upon as a professional with specific expertise to help solve the problem. Learning gives the designer the upper hand and can aid with all these issues because the designer can be more informed. Most have heard the **aphorism**, knowledge is power. This holds true in design. Learning and research can help persuade the most bull-headed boss or client to see reason because design has the potential to affect perception, persuade consumer habits, and influence a company's bottom line (profits).

ACTIVITY PROCESS

Engagement (the hook—motivation and relevancy)

Have students think about something they're good at. This could be a talent, sport, or hobby. Have them think about what it took for them to become good at it. Did they have to learn how to do it? Did they have to practice it? Do they consider themselves accomplished in this? Now ask them how it would make them feel if someone who has never done the thing they're good at told them how to do it? (e.g. a student is accomplished with drawing and an adult who has hardly ever drawn gives drawing advice). Learning and research bring about viable skill sets and confidence.

DAY 1

Introduction

After a thorough introduction to the learning part of the design process, assign Assignment 2. Students should accomplish Step 1 (choose and create a new company) in class. Have students be specific with the details of their new company—where does it reside?

A possible target audience for the longboard company example above (after some research has been completed) may be described as such:

- 17-21 year-old females who gravitate to the grungy side (a sub-genre of alternative/puck rock which emerged in the mid 1980s in Seattle Washington, often described by murky/dirty guitar sound)
- they're tough, feminine, and intelligent
- they enjoy torn and faded jeans, flannel shirts, and ratty t-shirts
- inspired by Pearl Jam, Nirvana, Stone Temple Pilots, and Alice in Chains
- they are cat lovers and are kind to nature, though their boards must be of the finest woods

Students should be able to both visually and verbally describe their specific audience down to what shoes and earrings they may wear. This may appear over the top but will actually help the company (and designer) better understand their clientele, down to the minute details. The more a business understands their customers, the easier it will be to solve specific communication related issues.

OBJECTIVE: Create two mood boards, each supported by research, which represent two potential clientele for a created hypothetical company. Note: Why two? Maybe there are more than one possibly viable target market options. This research process can help narrow down feasible options, bringing the focus where it needs to be. In the end, maybe there are two, or maybe just one. The research process will help resolve this. Remember, research may bring about unexpected results—one of the reasons for thorough research. Cherish unexpected results. They're how great designs are born.

SPECIFICATIONS: Students must accomplish the following:

- Two separate and different mood boards.
- Use at least three different research methods per mood board (e.g. Google, dictionary, library, magazines, interviews, observation, etc.).
- Must keep track of all research (and hand it in). This could be in the form of a journal or sketchbook.
- Must answer who, what, where, when, and how questions (be specific: What do they eat? What do they wear? Who do they hang out with? Where do they live? How much money do they have? etc.) It's not important if students are "right" at this time, but rather, they go through the thought process required to answer the questions they pose and start understanding the possible target market.
- Accompany the mood boards with a written description of the target audience represented (again, be specific)—have them tell the customer's life story. Students will make this up, but it should be supported by their research, and hence, support the objective of learning about their potential client.
- Mood boards must be a mix of found materials, hand drawn, and printed materials.

PROCESS:

1. Choose and create a new company—be specific with the details
2. Research—learn about the industry, competition, products, clients, shopping habits, etc.

3. Describe possible audiences through writing
4. Create mood boards based on description
5. Finalize written descriptions
6. Present to class

Adaptations and Accommodations

For students who require more direction, they can be given a company (whether real or fictitious) and a broad target audience as a starting place. If more direction is needed, provide specific target audience questions students can then research (e.g. What do 20-year-old women wear in summer? What music do they listen to? What are their views concerning nature?)

Extensions

The research process can be as detailed as time allows. Students could be required to develop a research book, which formalizes the research process. More can always be done with the mood boards and ideas better developed. Presentation style (both verbal and visual) could be more specifically developed.

Homework or Independent Work

If materials are not provided, students should be required to find and bring in both research materials and production materials (e.g. magazines and newspapers to cut up, library books to copy, advertising materials to cut up, etc.). This is part of the research process and can reinforce the subject matter at hand.

Homework should be material gathering in preparation to create the mood boards in class. Without found materials, the mood boards cannot be created. Found materials can come from anywhere—magazines, newspapers, junk mail, advertisements, posters, books, samples, swatches, fabric, etc. Emphasize the importance of these materials and assign a specific amount, maybe even more than they'll need so they can trade between each other.

Closure

The Learn step in the design process is wide open to interpretation. This will most likely include some research—learning about stuff. Understanding is learning. The better a designer understands every aspect of the problem the better off they'll be to effectively solve it.

Checks For Understanding

Have students write and hand in a one to three paragraph summary of their research for Assignment 2.

DAY 2

Assignment 2—Mood boards (continued)

Students should research (Step 2) the company they created—learn about the industry, competition, products, clients, shopping habits, etc. At the same time, they should also be working to describe their target audiences through writing and visually by gathering/organizing materials for their mood boards. If there's time, students could plan out their mood boards. All this may potentially take more than one day to accomplish.

Homework or Independent Work

Students should be ready to work on their mood boards in the next class. Materials should be gathered and research completed.

Closure

Research and learning can be interesting and purposeful. If done appropriately, creating the mood boards will not be a task, but rather, be like visualizing a story they have already created, a story that can be understood without having to be told.

Checks For Understanding

Did students make the connection between learning, research, and the end product?

DAY 3

Assignment 2–Mood boards (continued)

Students are now ready to create their mood boards in class. Work on mood boards. Make sure students are using the learning and research to inform their mood boards.

Homework or Independent Work

Write a one-page short story connecting their company, potential clientele, and mood boards. Have some fun with this. Stories don't have to be realistic, but rather, forming connections and bringing all the pieces together.

Closure

The Learn (and research) step in the design process should inform their execution. For example, if their research identified the color red as a viable color choice, the color red should be prominent in the mood board.

Checks For Understanding

There should be an obvious connection between what they learned and what they placed on their mood boards (e.g. if their target audience is 40-50 year-olds, this is who we should expect to see on the mood board). Have students articulate the connections between their research and mood boards to see how they understand their own learning.

DAY 4

Assignment 2–Mood boards (continued)

The assignment should be complete. Students should now present their short story and mood boards to the class. There should be a direct one-to-one relationship between the two. It should be interesting to see the connection between their story and the visuals included in the mood board.

Closure

Learning better prepares designers to solve visual problems, whatever they may be. Putting the design together is a result of learning and research. Design decisions should be based on the

results of learning and research. Many design decisions should already have been made before actually putting the design together (e.g. color choices may have already been decided before even applying color to the design). Good learning habits actually save time in the long run.

Checks For Understanding

Did students make the connection between learning, research, and the end product? The mood boards should tell a story full of meaning and justification because they learned about what was included on the board itself. There should be little randomness. Students should have brought it full circle through their one page short story about their target audience in relationship to the new company they created. This story is a culmination of all the work they did even though they may not realize it. Students should be able to see the story come to life through the mood board. They should work together. Make sure students make this connection. They need to see the benefit of learning and research on the end product.

Lesson Assessment Based On Objectives

Students should be assessed on their ability to demonstrate an awareness and proper use of the Learn step in the design process as it applies to their own work. The correct use of unit vocabulary in class dialog and in written reflection should be accurate and appropriate to the work they make and see. All work produced in and out of class—as well as student writing—should be collected and analyzed. (See *Unit 3D and 3E Rubrics.docx* for assessment and rubric ideas. Customize to meet class specific assessment needs.)



Minnesota
the professional
association for design

AIGA Minnesota Innovate grant funded project

www.aigaminnesota.org

AIGA is the profession's oldest and largest professional membership organization for design—with 70 chapters and more than 25,000 members—they advance design as a professional craft, strategic advantage, and vital cultural force. From content that defines the global practice to events that connect and catalyze, they work to enhance the value and deepen the impact of design across all disciplines on business, society, and our collective future.