

Basics of Blog Design: Tips, Truths & Taboos

YOUR BRAND

Visuals play a big part in your personal “brand” and that of your blog. All the elements (color, photos/graphics, type, overall design) help reinforce the message you’re trying to communicate or the audience and brands you’re trying to connect with.

The key is to be true to your message and to yourself. Be unique. Stand out. Here are some ways to achieve a meaningful and distinct message through your blog’s design.

IMAGERY

Pull in pieces of your life into your design.

Do you write about craft beer? Use close up photos of hops, a wall of bottles, replace an “O” with a bottle cap.

Into fitness? Scan the bottom of your favorite sneaker and use it as a background pattern. Make a chart out of vitamins.

Dad of twins/multiples? Repeat your blog’s name, use images of “twins” (salt & pepper shakers, two pacifiers, etc)

COLOR

No limits on what colors to use — break outside the “web safe” palette.

Sample something — take a photo, use eye dropper tool to capture that unique shade of your bitching Camaro, your daughter’s eyes, the sunset from the last vacation you remember taking.

Have a plan with your color palette. You can use colors (even more than one!) in your fonts, just keep it consistent: headlines, captions, pull quotes, subheads — should be treated the same for every post

BANNER/MASTHEAD

Kept it relatively simple, perhaps even monochromatic, so that the content (photos and graphics of each post) will stand out. If you don’t plan on having many images, then a more elaborate banner is okay.

DO I NEED A LOGO?

Some blogs lend themselves to a specific brandmark, but in many cases a logo in the traditional sense is unnecessary. Blogs are similar to magazines, so think more in terms of a masthead. Some — like GQ, Life, WIRED — are more contained and also work as logos.

Keep in mind how it will translate onto social media: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, large and small avatars. You can pull elements from your masthead to create a logo of sorts: the “RS” of Rolling Stone, gold rectangle of National Geographic, the Playboy bunny.

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YOUR AUDIENCE

For most bloggers, there are three primary audiences

- readers
- brands
- yourself

For each audience, there are goals to keep in mind with the design and layout of your site.

For your READERS, your site needs to:

be simple & clean; things are easy to find and understand; engaging/interesting; visuals support what you're trying to get across through your words & pictures; consistent style and treatment of fonts, photos, graphics

There should always be:

- legible type
- comfortable margins
- clearly defined separations between posts

View on Mac & PC, laptop & desktop, mobile devices. Check your lowest common denominator (like your mom's crappy, 10 year-old Dell).

For BRANDS, your site needs to:

look professional; showcase your influence (social media reach/followers); include branding language; respect their logo/brand guidelines; be creative, don't just cut and paste the copy or photos provided

There should always be:

- visible social media sharing & following links
- clear photos of products
- easy to find category of product-related posts

For YOURSELF, your site needs to:

be something you want to look at/read. If you don't like looking at your own site, others won't. You should be your harshest critic, or find someone else who will be. This often takes a low priority, but the more you plan ahead and do it right the first time, the less "fixing" you'll have to do later. Adding and changing things later often leads to a site that looks cobbled together, disorganized and unprofessional.

TABOOS

OVERDONE TRENDS & ABSOLUTE NO-NO'S

- centered type, tiny type
- collages (been done, been done better)
- fridge magnet letters (ditto)
- alcohol-related imagery (what are you, a mom blogger?)
- kitchen sinking (including every ad, badge & widget known to man)
- funky type for the sake of funky type
- stretched out, bit mapped photos
- faked photos presented as real

TIPS

RECOMMENDED APPS & WEB SITES

Color: [Palettes](#)

Fonts: [What the Font](#), [Dafont](#), [FontBook](#)

Type on photo apps: [Piction](#)

Photo apps: [Afterlight](#), [Halftone](#), [Hipstamatic](#)

Video: [Horizon](#)

Inspiration: [Wreck This App](#), [Pinterest](#), [Paper by FiftyThree](#), [Toca Boca](#)