

Evaluating Design

Audience, Purpose, Genre, and Medium

- Who is the intended audience? Will the overall look of the design appeal to them? How does the design serve their needs? Electronic texts should suit the needs of the user (for example, a Web site that requires high bandwidth is not going to work for readers who connect to the Internet with a telephone modem).
- What is the primary purpose of the text—to entertain? provide information? persuade readers to take some action? Does the design suit the purpose?
- What is the genre? Does the design serve the conventions of that genre? A brochure, for example, needs an attention-getting title.
- What is the medium? Does the design accommodate its requirements? Images that will be posted on the Web, for example, should not be too big or they could take too long to open.

Organization

- Does the design serve the organization? Does it make the main parts visible and the main points clear?
- Are headings inserted in the right places? If there is more than one level of headings, will readers be able to see and understand the difference between first- and second-level headings?
- Is there any information that should be set off as a list?

Readability

- Is the typeface attractive and readable? Is the font appropriate for the medium?
- Are the margins sufficient?
- Are there any statistics or other data that would be easier to read in a chart, graph, or table?
- Is high-contrast text, including boldface and all caps, brief enough to be legible? If not, either revise the text or change the font.

Images and Other Graphics

- What do images and other graphics contribute? Do they illustrate a concept? highlight an important point? show something that is difficult to describe in words alone? If the images and other graphics are only decorative, consider removing them.
- Are images and other graphics the right size—big enough to read or to see the important detail?
- Do images have an obvious focus? Will readers see the part that matters? If not, consider if you can crop the image.
- Are the charts, graphs, maps, or other graphics clear and informative? Do they have titles and captions? Are they referred to in the main text?

Layout

- Is the basic layout effective? Is the overall look appropriate to the genre, purpose, and audience?
- Is there adequate white space around headings, images, and other key elements?
- If color is used, is it appropriate to the audience and purpose? Does color direct emphasis where it belongs? Are too many colors used?