

Guidelines for Designing Effective Marketing Materials¹

Although social media has eclipsed much of our print materials in marketing, it does not mean our print materials are not important. Marketing experts explain that print is still an important medium as part of the overall marketing plan. They help to promote the website and social media presence on the web. These print materials act as the word of mouth for new customers. Here are some tips when creating brochures, newsletters, rack cards and more:

1. WORDS IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS LOSE THEIR SHAPE. PLEASE DO NOT USE ALL CAPS. THIS IS NOT THE NORMAL WAY WE INTERPRET LETTERS WITH OUR BRAINS. LARGE FONTS AND BOLD DOES NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM.
2. Times New Roman is a highly legible typeface. Use something like this, which is easy to read.
3. Arial is even a better font for quick reading because it is a “sans-serif” font. That is, Arial does not have the little “flags” on the tops of letters like “t,” “b,” “h,” and so on. Compare this “Times New Roman” with the one in #2.
4. *Italics can be difficult to read and should be used sparingly.*
5. Do not mix too many different type styles. (Also, all of these are 13-point fonts – remember that 13-point in Times New Roman is not the same as 13-point in other type styles.)
6. Jagged right edges are much easier to read than fully justified lines. Be cautious of the readability of your document when utilizing full justification in your materials.
7. Write for quick reading. If you cannot read it aloud without taking a breath, your sentence is probably too long. Short testimonials, brief statements, etc., will get people interested. The longest sentences in a brochure will probably be in the registration form.
8. Photos grab attention quickly and keep interest, and deliver your message in a more memorable manner than words. Choose a picture with impact and with people in the picture! Pictures. Pictures. Pictures. People just don’t read any more. 60% read everything like a billboard – headline, logo; 30% read bit – but quickly; only 10% read most.
9. “Black ink on white paper is the most readable combination of colors.” So, try to stay as close to black as possible, i.e. – dark blue, and as close to white as possible, i.e. – pastels or light colored specialty paper without too much “action” going on. Also, a spot color for your title, or

¹ By Eric Barrett, Agriculture Extension Educator • Ohio State University Extension • Washington County • 202 Davis Avenue • Marietta, OH 45750 • barrett.90@osu.edu • 740.376.7431 • f.7084

small parts of your brochure can add a great eye catcher. (A spot color is just a second color of ink when you might not be able to afford full color.)

10. Columns are good to shorten the distance the eye has to travel across the page. People are more likely to read things they can get through quickly.

11. In numbered lists, tab the entire paragraph rather than allowing the second and successive lines to extend to the left margin. <<<Do not do this!

12. When updating last year's brochure(s), find out if anyone is reading your brochures. Are they catching the public's attention? Have you heard any comments from customers or employees about your brochure(s)? Get as much feedback as possible. Find out if information is understandable and sufficient.

13. Have someone not involved with your business examine your headlines. Headlines should bring life to your brochure and help the reader relate to the information. See if the headline grabs their attention.

14. Make your brochures a marketing tool. Focus on benefits from shopping at your place rather than somewhere else. What are you "-est" at? People love to hear that Jane Doe, their neighbor, had a great time at her son's, friend's birthday party at your farm.

15. When shading something that will be copied using a basic copy machine (instead of sending to a printer), the rule of thumb is to use no more than 10% shading. Anything higher will not copy and will end up with lines through it.

16. White space is good! Clutter can distract from your message – by sending the wrong message!

17. Find brochures you like and re-create a combination with your information. This is "borrowing" ideas without copying their formats.²

² Resource: *The Communicator's Handbook* (1990), Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE). USDA Extension. Washington, D.C.