Resource Centre

The Resource Centre has all the facilities you need to design and print your newsletter

If your newsletter will be printed at the Resource Centre read our FAQ or talk to our staff

Brighton & Hove
City Council supported

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How to make your newsletter look good

This information sheet gives tips and advice on designing a newsletter. It's part of a series of four about producing community newsletters, which can be read together or separately.

The other three information sheets are:

l   **What will you put in your community newsletter?**

l   **Planning and producing a newsletter**

l   **How to write clearly**

Looking good is not the only thing...

It's the content of your newsletter that is most important, and will be the main reason people read it. How it looks also matters, but don't concentrate on this and neglect the content.

Which computer program?

There are lots of computer programs you can use to design your newsletter. This simplest is Microsoft Word or Microsoft Publisher. More complicated (and expensive) programs such as InDesign or Quark are used by professional designers. They give you lots of options and flexibility, but are more complicated to use (and expensive!)

Microsoft Publisher provides ready-made designs you can adapt for your newsletter. These can be useful, but you still need some understanding of how the program works.

To get a good result, you also need to be familiar with some of the basic principles of good design.

Look at other newsletters and magazines to get ideas.

Design Tips

l   **Before you start: think about how you are going to get the newsletter printed. The printed article isn't going to look exactly as it does on your computer screen. It's a good idea to talk to your printer and find out if they have any particular requirements or tips.**

l   **Decide on an overall style: your newsletter will look cleaner and more professional if you have a standard style throughout, using the same columns and fonts on every page.**

l   **Put your text in columns: it's easier to concentrate on shorter lines, and more likely to get read. Look at magazines and newsletters to see how columns are used.**

l   **Don't use lots of different fonts: Use two or three different fonts only. Choose one for the bulk of your text, and another for the headings.**

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Choose a clear, simple font, like Times New Roman **or** Calibri **for the bulk of your text.**

l **Choose a different font for your headings. Use different sizes for main headings and sub-headings. You can keep a consistent style throughout by using different fonts from the same 'family'. For example all of the Franklin Gothic fonts below belong to the same family or style set.**

Franklin Gothic Book

Franklin Gothic demi-condensed

Franklin Gothic heavy

Franklin Gothic medium

There are so many different fonts on your computer, it's tempting to use lots of them. Resist this! People think it will make their newsletter more lively and interesting, but in fact it just makes it look messy and difficult to read.

l **Avoid putting all your text in boxes. It is very tempting to put all of your text into boxes, but your newsletter will look more professional if you avoid doing this.**

You may want to put the occasional item in a box to draw attention to it. If you do, make sure you have a space of at least 3mm between the text and the line of the box.

For example:

| **In this box there is very little space between the text and the line around the box and it makes it very difficult to read.** | **In this box there is an 'internal margin' of 3mm. It looks far better and is easier to read.** |

l **Try not to split words within your text. Some computer programs, such as Publisher, will automatically split a word if it is too long to fit on a line. Sometimes this means you will have lots of words that are split in half at the end of the line, making the text hard to read. This is called 'hyphenation'. You can change the setting on your document to prevent this happening. In Publisher select 'Tools > Language > Hyphenation' then untick the 'automatically hyphenate' box.**

l **Don't put all your text in capital letters. A common mistake is to think that using capital letters will make your newsletter easier for people with poor sight to read. It doesn't! Words set entirely in capitals lack the distinctive outlines created by lower case letters. Readers rely on these shapes to identify each word.**

If you want your text to be easier to read, keep it in lower case, but make it bigger.

How to make your newsletter look good

- **Text size**

  The size of text is measured in points (pt):

  10pt: A lot of professional newspapers use 10pt. You can fit in more and it looks neat. This text is in 10pt.

  12pt: this is slightly bigger and easier to read, and doesn't take up too much space.

  14pt: this is a good size to use if a lot of older people will read your newsletter. But you will fit less on each page.

- Don't get too fancy. Your computer will let you do all sorts of exciting and snazzy things, but they can be very irritating for the reader. For example, text placed on top of images, or white text on a dark background can be very difficult to read.

- Don't print on dark coloured paper. It is hard to read text printed on a dark colour. It is particularly difficult for people with a visual disability. A pale yellow is recommended by the RNIB, and is also easier for people with dyslexia.

- Don't use underlining. Underlining makes words harder to read and reduces their impact. This is because the underlining cuts across the parts of the letters that drop below the base line - for example y, g, p, q. This makes it more difficult to recognise the letter shapes. Use bold or *italics* for emphasis instead, but don't overdo this.

- Don't be afraid of white space. White space is the bits of the page with nothing in them. It's tempting to fill up every corner of a page with text or pictures. Don't! This will look cluttered and be more difficult to read. Space around an article helps to draw attention to it, and gives everything a cleaner, fresh appearance. Professional designers are very keen on white space!

- Make selective use of clip art. A few well-chosen pictures will liven up your newsletter. Using a lot of random clip art will look messy and confusing.

- Some tips for using clip art:

  - Clear, simple images look better than complicated ones.

  - Colour images will look different when printed in black and white - change them to greyscale to get an idea of how they will print out.

  - It's often most effective to use just one well-chosen image.

  - Lines and abstract designs can be very effective.

  - Make sure the picture is relevant to the article and won't confuse (or offend) people.

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l **Use photos. Photographs can really add something to a newsletter, but only if they will reproduce well. You need crisp, good quality images with clear contrast.**

Remember that colour photos will look quite different in black and white. Change them to greyscale in your document, and increase the contrast if necessary.

Don't use photos that have been copied or downloaded from websites. These have not been designed to be printed out, and the quality will not be good enough. They will look blurred and fuzzy.

Where can you get free images?

A good source of free clipart and photos is: _www.office.microsoft.com/clipart_. This site is reasonably easy to use, and you can just drop the images into a Publisher or Word document.

It's possible to get lots of high quality images for free on the internet - try searching for 'vector images' or 'free images'. Vector images will keep their sharpness when they are enlarged and reproduce well. Often these are on sites which also sell images, but have a limited royalty free range.

Downloading and using these isn't always straightforward, though. You need a reasonable confidence with computers, and it's helpful if you've got software like Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop on your computer to work with the images once you've downloaded them.

A note on copyright

There are free clipart and photos on the internet, but some images will be copyrighted, and should not be reproduced without permission. Many organisations and authors are happy for their work to be reproduced by voluntary groups, but it is polite to ask first.

It's also polite to say in the newsletter where the article or picture originally came from. It's not very likely, but in the worst case scenario you could offend someone enough for them to take you to court.

Interested in finding out more?

This information sheet gives a very basic introduction to some of the principles of good design. If you'd like to find out more, we recommend reading _'The non-designer's design book' by Robin Williams._

There is a copy in the Resource Centre library.