



*Flyer  
Design  
Basics*

*by Cheryl Rogers*

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# *Introduction*

This book is about helping you meet a new challenge: Flyer design.

If you work as an office manager, administrative assistant or secretary, the boss may ask you to do an occasional flyer. Without prior experience or training, what the boss thought was a small task could become a very time consuming one.

This book is intended to help you meet the challenge, produce professional-looking results and finish on time.

You'll find these basic design skills can be applied to other assignments as well, such as programs, reports, and covers.

# *Elements of Design*

Designing a sharp-looking flyer doesn't have to be hard -- not when you know the secrets of basic design! To make your flyer visually appealing, you must guide the viewers' eyes. Your flyer needs to have your main message as its focal point!

Go for a bold, attention-grabbing phrase. Add emphasis with color or art. See that any art you use contributes to the effectiveness of your message, rather than distracting viewers from your basic content.

For example, let's say you are asked to design a flyer for your next employee picnic. Capture the viewers' attention with a phrase like "You're Invited" or "Employee Picnic, Come one come all." You need to build your flyer around this attention grabber, supporting your message and holding your readers' attention. This usually calls for some art, either a photo or clip art of a hamburger, barbecue, pop bottle, or even an outdoor scene like the seashore, riverbank, or picnic pavillion. Your art can be large, serving as a background for the entire sheet, or small -- adding visual appeal to certain parts of your flyer. Let's look at some samples.

The first sample consists of the "You're Invited" message with an appealing beach background photo. The photo adds to the overall effectiveness of the flyer, without sidetracking the viewer. Notice how the telephone number for more information is bolded and positioned prominently to the right of the paper.

In the second sample, we're opted instead for a small photo which reinforces the picnic theme and helps focus viewers' eyes.

# You're Invited

**Come one come all**  
to  
**XYZ Corp.'s Employee Picnic!!!**

**When:** *Saturday, any month and year*

**Time:** *all day*

**Where:** *xxxxxxx Park, Anywhere USA*

**What to Bring:** *covered dish*

**What to Wear:** *casual clothes, beachwear*

**RSVP:** *anyname at 123-4567*

**For more information, call 765-4321**

## *Sample 1*

Of the two, the large photo background is the quickest and easiest to use if you have a suitable photo. The second option is more appropriate should you wish to display your company's logo or if you have a photo which is unsuitable for the entire background. Perhaps you are featuring music by a particular band. You may want to drop in a photo of the band. Or if one of the employees is known for his ribs, you can slide in a photo of him holding tongs gripping ribs he just removed from the grill.

In the third example, the flyer uses a decorative border

to enhance its visual appeal. A good border can be quite effective, but generic borders may not compare favorably with photos or clip art which support or enhance your message.

These samples show you can have an effective flyer without lots of clip art or photos. Now let's look at what to do when you need to include more graphics.

# You're Invited



**Come one come all**

to



**Corp.'s Employee Picnic!!!**

**When:** *Saturday, any month and year*

**Time:** *all day*

**Where:** *xxxxxxx Park, Anywhere USA*

**What to Bring:** *covered dish*

**What to Wear:** *casual clothes, beachwear*

**RSVP:** *anyone at 123-4567*

**For more information, call 765-4321**

*Sample 2*

# You're Invited

Come one come all

to



**Corp.'s Employee Picnic!!!**

**When:** *Saturday, any month and year*

**Time:** *all day*

**Where:** *xxxxxxx Park, Anywhere USA*

**What to Bring:** *covered dish*

**What to Wear:** *casual clothes, beachwear*

**RSVP:** *anyname at 123-4567*

**For more information, call 785-4321**

**Sample 3**

When you are using two, three or four graphics on your page, you will want to position them strategically so they will give your flyer a balanced look. You likely will want to vary their sizes to create interest and to allow one graphic to predominate. Let's take a look at the same flyer with three graphics in addition to the logo. Notice how they are positioned. The largest graphic is used to draw the viewers' eyes and support your main message, "You're Invited." From there the graphics serve to draw the

eye around the flyer and call attention to details. The graphics themselves are positioned to form a triangle so proper balance is maintained. They don't compete with each other because each is sized according to its purpose. They also can be placed to form a rectangle rotated so it forms a long diamond, but it might be pretty boring if you did a square.

# You're Invited



**Come one come all**

to



**Corp.'s Employee Picnic!!!**

**When:** *Saturday, any month and year*

**Time:** *all day*

**Where:** *xxxxxxx Park, Anywhere USA*

**What to Bring:** *covered dish*

**What to Wear:** *casual clothes, beachwear*

**RSVP:** *anyname at 123-4567*



**For more information, call 765-4321**

*Sample 4*

Whatever you do, don't think you have to use all your space. Too much art and type makes your flyer look busy and distracts viewers. If their eyes don't know where to look, you've got trouble! Think of white space almost as a graphic element -- it draws attention to the "You're Invited" message in Sample 3.

Graphics are important to make your flyer attractive, but where would you be without the message? Make sure you have your main message as your main focal point. Then spell out everything the reader needs to know. In the case of a picnic, they need all the basic details like what, when, where, what to bring, what to wear, and who to call to RSVP or get more information. No matter how pretty your art, if you forget a pertinent detail your flyer will fail to do its job. Be sure your main message is an attention getter. Choose bold type, a large point size and/or bright type to emphasize it.

You'll do better to vary the typestyles on the page to add visual interest. Don't overdo it though. You can play it safe and use variations from one font family, like Times Roman, Times Roman Bold and Times Roman Italic. But you may get a more dramatic feel if you use a typestyle like the Bourdeaux Roman Bold header in the sample flyers, paired with a second typestyle like Optima Bold and Italic, as in the samples.

We've tried to keep it simple here, but you can create special effects with your type for added interest as well.

When you've completed your design, be sure to check your work carefully for mistakes. An extra pair of eyes can be of immense help.

## *Tools of the Trade*

You very likely already use one of the most valuable tools for flyer design: The computer. While it is possible to design flyers without one, and we'll talk about that in a later chapter, a computer definitely gives you more options. The more software you have to use, the more flexibility you'll have. But let's look at the minimum requirements first.

Of course your most basic tool is word processing software. With pre-printed backgrounds, all you have to do is type your message and print it on pre-printed paper. This can work, but you may need to reposition your text after doing a sample print or two. Some backgrounds will be very forgiving and you may be able to guess quite easily.

If you are responsible for a newsletter, programs, bulletins, reports or similar desktop publishing projects, you also may have page layout software. This coupled with photos and clip art will expand your possibilities.

Your page layout software will enable you to size and position the type with ease around your photos and clip art, which can be imported into your page layout file. It also may come with some simple borders and allow you to create simple graphics with shapes and text.

If you are artistic, you may also want to invest in art software and/or photo editing software to enable even more creativity. But they are not necessary to prepare simple yet effective flyers, as long as you are not taking the photographs and need to edit them!

Art software will allow you to create your own distinctive patterns, borders and graphics, but this will require more time and skill.

# *Improvising*

If you don't have a computer to use, you can improvise. You will be limited to the clip art, photos which reproduce well, type you can purchase at the art supply store, or typewritten material.

Your photos must not be too dark when photocopied, so it is best to do a test copy before designing begins.

Look for letters you can paste on a master flyer which you will reprint on a copier. Choose a bold type for the header and a smaller compatible type for the body of the flyer. These stick-on letters need to be applied carefully. Keep the letters straight by drawing a light pencil line where you'll be putting the type.

If someone else in the office can print up the body of the flyer, you can attach that to your header, combining the type with clip art from clip art books you bought at the store. Be sure the art is pasted well to your master so you will have good copies. If the photocopier shows the edges of the clip art, you can use whiteout to conceal the lines and make copies from the corrected print.

A typewriter can be used for the body of the flyer, if absolutely necessary.

## *Shortcuts*

As you continue to design flyers, it is likely you'll develop more speed with familiarity. But you can save yourself even more time if you use a template, which is basically a mock flyer design you can alter every time.

Templates can be purchased or you can develop your own! If you have extra time, you can prepare some templates based on your anticipated needs.

But perhaps the simplest solution is to save your flyers and revise them to suit your current needs. For example, let's take a look at the employee picnic sample flyers. Just change the details of the event, add a fresh background or photo, use your software's "save as" function to rename it and you are done! You may find your next art requires a little repositioning, but it's likely this will only slow you down a little. It is not necessary to rename the file, but doing so of course preserves your original should that prove helpful to you in the future.

# *In Conclusion*

We've taken an overview of the design basics you'll need to save time when you prepare a flyer. Check the graphic to help you remember what to do and what not to do.

## *Dos*

- Use quality art to emphasize your message.
- Balance your art in an attractive manner, having a predominate piece of art. Art elements may form a triangle, or diamondish shape.
- Use bold headlines and art to emphasize the message.
- Avoid clutter. Use white space as part of your design.
- Proofread your flyer carefully before mass producing it. Ask someone else to check it too, if possible.
- Save your design for future use.

## *Don'ts*

- Don't put everything in bold letters or caps.
- Don't let your flyer become too busy.
- Don't use too much art.
- Don't use too many different tpestyles.

# *Resources*

If your job requires more indepth designing, you may want to check some of my other resources.

<http://www.NaturePhotoDownloads.com> -- Nature photos make great background art. Some were photographed specifically to be used as a photo background, so they contain an area suitable for text. Some have been edited in art or photo software so they will print at less than full ink saturation, making your text prominent. Others have been darkened so light text will be highlighted. Any can be edited to create these effects. Please contact me if you need assistance. If the photo you want is priced for commercial use and you do not intend to resell it as part of your project, please contact me for a discounted price.

<http://www.squidoo.com/flyerdesignmadeeasy> -- This is a webpage otherwise known as a Squidoo lens which looks at how to design flyers easily. Check the book recommendations if you'll be doing a lot of flyer design. The webpage also shows you some photo backgrounds available from [http://www.zazzle.com/cherylarogers\\*](http://www.zazzle.com/cherylarogers*)

<http://www.lulu.com/songsfromtheword> -- My store at Lulu has some of my photos and includes those specially prepared for commercial background use.

# About the Author

Cheryl Rogers learned the basics of flyer design many years ago when she ran a desktop publishing company which supplied typesetting for print shops.



Using art, page layout and photography software, she designed flyers, brochures, business letterhead, business cards, tickets, menus, programs and more.

A writer by trade, Cheryl also enjoys formatting books and newsletters. She holds a B.A. in Journalism and Sociology from Loyola University in New Orleans, where she graduated cum laude.

Cheryl worked for 12 years in the newspaper industry, primarily as a reporter. She also did copy editing, including newspaper page design, editing, proofreading and monitoring the news wires for breaking news. Cheryl packed a 35mm film camera which she used at some of her writing jobs.

The film camera now has been replaced with a digital one and Cheryl specializes in nature photos, which she shoots with her Canon 40D. Her photos are suitable as feature art for newspapers, magazines, websites and other publications. They can be used as backgrounds for flyers, book covers, cards, posters and more.

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