**Advertising Basics**

**Designing and creating advertising for print requires careful attention to a variety of key elements. This handout will examine the key elements of print ad design and the steps to follow when designing your own ad. Understanding these basics will help you to more effectively communicate your intended message in your own advertisement.**

**Steps to follow:**

**1. Decide on your communication objective (also called subtext)**

The communications objective is the essence of your message. If you want to tell people not to eat rutabagas because it’s cruel, then that’s your communications objective. If you want to tell people that drinking “Grabawaba” will make them popular, then that’s your communication objective. A word of caution: though perhaps the most important of your 8 steps, this is also the one that beginners tend most to neglect. A precise and well-defined objective is crucial to a good ad. If your objective isn’t right on, then everything that follows will be off as well.

**2. Decide on your target audience**

Who is your message intended for? If you’re speaking to kids, then your language and arguments will have to understandable to kids. On the other hand, if you’re speaking to rich people (for example, if you’re writing an ad to dissuade people from wearing fur coats), then your language will have to be more sophisticated. So define who your target audience is, because that will decide how your message is conveyed.

**3. Decide on your format**

Is it going to be a poster, a magazine ad, a bus advert, or a billboard? Make this decision based on the target audience you’re trying to reach. If you’re talking to kids, a poster in one high school will not only cost less, it will actually reach more of your target audience than a full-page ad in the biggest paper in town.

**4. Develop your concept**

The concept is the underlying creative idea that drives your message. Even in a big ad campaign, the concept will typically remain the same from one ad to another, and from one medium to another. Only the execution of that concept will change. So by developing a concept that is effective and powerful, you open the door to a number of very compelling ads. So take your time developing a concept that is strong.

Typically, an ad is made up of a photograph or a drawing (the “visual”), a headline, and writing (the “copy”). Whether you think of your visual or your headline first makes little difference. However, here are a few
guidelines worth following.

**5. The visual**

Visuals are important as they help to draw attention to your ad. Research indicates that 70% of people will only look at the visual in an ad, whereas only 30% will read the headline. So if you use a visual, then you’re already talking to twice as many people as you otherwise might. Another suggestion is to use photographs instead of illustrations whenever possible. People tend to relate to realistic photographs more easily than unrealistic ones. But whether you choose a photograph or an illustration, the most important criteria is that image be the most interesting one possible and at least half your ad whenever possible.

**6. The headline**

The most important thing to remember here is that your headline must be short, snappy and must touch the people that read it. Your headline must affect the reader emotionally, either by making them laugh, making
them angry, making them curious or making them think. If you can’t think of a headline that does one of these four things, then keep thinking. Whenever possible, avoid a headline longer than fifteen words. People just don’t read as much as they used to.

**7. The copy**

Here’s where you make the case. If you have compelling arguments, make them. If you have persuasive facts, state them. But don’t overwhelm with information. Two strong arguments will make more of an impression than a dozen weaker ones. Finally, be clear and be precise. Position your copy beneath the headline, laid out in two blocks two or three inches in length. Only about 5% of people will read your copy, whereas 30% will read your headline. By positioning your copy near your heading, you create a visual continuity which will draw more people to the information you want to convey.

**Subheads**

If you have lots of copy, break it up with interesting subheads, as we’ve done in the graphic above. This will make your ad more inviting, more organized, and easier to read.

**The signature**

This is where the name of the organization belongs, along with the address and phone number. If you don’t have an organization, then think of a name that will help reinforce the message you’re trying to convey.

**8. Some mistakes to avoid**

The single most common mistake is visual clutter. Less is always better than more. So if you’re not certain whether something is worth including, then leave it out. If your ad is chaotic, people will simply turn the page, and your message will never be read. The second most common mistake is to have an ad that’s unclear or not easily understood (haven’t you ever looked at an ad and wondered what it was for?). The best way to safeguard against this is to do some rough sketches of your visual with the headline and show it around. If people aren’t clear about your message, then it’s probably because your message is unclear. And however tempting, don’t argue with them or assume that they’re wrong and that your ad is fine. You’ll be in for an unpleasant surprise. Proofread your ad, then give it to others to proofread, then proofread it yet again. Typographical errors diminish your credibility and have an uncanny habit of creeping into ads when you least expect it.

### ADVERTISING ASSIGNMENT

You are working solo on this project.

1. Prepare a print advertisement of your choosing. You may use a computer or use good old fashioned scissors, markers, and glue.

2. **Be sure to include a headline, copy, illustration, and signature.** You may also add a logo to the signature, but it must be original. You are creating, not copying an ad.

3. For the illustration, use either clipart, pictures, or drawings; all other ad items must be your original work/idea.

4. Written Response: Type up a well written response stating the purpose of your ad, who you believe is your target audience, where this ad will appear, the message (subtext) you are trying to get across, the appeal(s)/strategies you are using.

***Due date:* November 6, 2017**

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| Criteria | POINTS POSSIBLE | SCORE | COMMENTS |
| General Format* Organized/ Great care is evident
* Appeal(s) Used
* Ad Layout: Creative; Excellent Use of Colour, Font, Size etc.
 | 15 |  |  |
| Visual* Attracts attention
* Aimed at a target audience
* Message is demonstrated
* Appropriate size/placement
 | 10 |  |  |
| Copy* Complete and specific
* Written in terms of benefits to the customer
* Correct grammar and spelling
 | 5 |  |  |
| Signature* Complete (Name, logo, etc.)
 | 5 |  |  |
| Use of Class Time | 5 |  |  |
| Written Response | 20 |  |  |
| **TOTAL** | 60 |  |  |