



tipsheet

August 2006

Document Design Part II

Once you have appropriately designed your layout, you need to consider how you communicate your message. It has been said that a mediocre analysis presented in an excellent way will almost always win out over an excellent analysis presented in a mediocre way. The following items will help you communicate the clearest message possible.

Guidelines for Document Composition

- **Bullets and lists:** Using bullets and/or numbers is an efficient way to summarize information in an easily digested format.
- **Images, charts, and graphics:** Including images and graphics will add richness and interest to your documents. Be sure to adequately label a visual and reference it in the text so that you communicate its intended significance. Also, consider placement of the image. You may need to adjust the standard Word settings and wrap the text around or up to the image.
- **Color:** Adding color may make your document more interesting. Be careful that your colors are appropriate to the audience and subject. Overly vibrant or neon colors don't usually work in professional reports.
- **Exhibits:** Using exhibits can be effective if you need to communicate extensive quantitative information that is too detailed to be included in the body of your document. Make sure that you adequately reference them in your text, that you have an obvious purpose for including them, and that you don't overuse them. Readers don't want to thumb back and forth between pages to get the information they need.
- **Font size and variety:** Choosing a readable font for your document is important. You will be safe with a serif font such as *Times New Roman* for most report writing. However, you might consider other fonts, including sans serifs for headings, titles, and blocked designs. For documents without space constraints, consider a *Garamond* font, which is a preferred font among document designers.
- **Italics and bold:** Using these font variations is an effective way to set off headings, important points, or titles. Typically, you want to avoid bolding words in the middle of paragraphs. Try italics if you find emphasis is necessary.

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