Design Elements: A Graphic Style Manual

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The graphic design equivalent to Strunk & White's *The Elements of Style*This book is simply the most compact and lucid handbook available outlining the basic principles of layout, typography, color usage, and space.

Being a creative designer is often about coming up with unique design solutions. Unfortunately, when the basic rules of design are ignored in an effort to be distinctive, design becomes useless. In language, a departure from the rules is only appreciated as great literature if recognition of the rules underlies the text. Graphic design is a "visual language," and brilliance is recognized in designers whose work seems to break all the rules, yet communicates its messages clearly.

This book is a fun and accessible handbook that presents the fundamentals of design in lists, tips, brief text, and examples. Chapters include Graphic Design: What It Is; What Are They and What Do They Do?; 20 Basic Rules of Good Design; Form and Space-The Basics; Color Fundamentals; Choosing and Using Type; The World of Imagery; Putting it All Together?Essential Layout Concepts; The Right Design Choices: 20 Reminders for Working Designers; and Breaking the Rules: When and Why to Challenge all the Rules of this Book.

Design Elements: A Graphic Style Manual Details

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Author : Timothy Samara
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Cara says

Read just enough of this book to feel bad about the overdone design I had just finished for a client book. But it seems like a good book with the potential to make me a better designer if I read it. I'm just out of time right now.

Zacas_puntas says

This book is pretty.

Dandelionwishes says

A design rule book - with perspective.

"Rules can be broken - but never ignored. - David Jury [Typography; author of About Face]"

Karolina says

I am a total novice in the world of design and this book was really good. However, as I don't know many other books, I can't say if it's better than others.

Erika Mulvenna says

I agree with the many other reviewers that mention the layout of this book as problematic. The distracting layout makes it difficult to follow through the text and photos, and I found I could only read a few pages at a time. There are still some bits in this book that I enjoyed reading, especially the parts about text and text layout.

This is more of an overview of styles and layouts than an in-depth manual or textbook. You might enjoy this book if you are interested in learning a bit about the art of design. If you are an art or design student or professional, there's probably nothing new for you here.

Ashleigh 🥀 says

The info was good but my head hurt from trying to read this. The format was the worst.

Saiduck says

It's really good for anyone who's interested in design and art in general
Has really good informations and it's very useful
Uses some already made designs as case studies to further explain thing- which I really liked.
My only bad thing about it is the layout

Tatiana Jimenez says

Good reference book. Don't try to read it cover to cover though. I don't think it was meant to be read that way.

Tammy says

For a design manual, how ironic that it was ridiculously difficult to read [font size, layout]. Not finished.

Steven says

A good reference and idea book for anyone interested in visual design.

Graham Herrli says

If you have nothing new to say, you shouldn't write a book on it.

I'm not sure Samara's saying anything, but I'll give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that he's saying that the key to graphic design is balancing static with dynamic, integration with variation, reliability with surprise. Because his exploration of this balance has given me a little to think about in relation to a current project, I'll give this book two stars. Otherwise it would merit only one.

Samara begins by writing that graphic design is about communicating — not decorating — yet throughout the book, the examples he gives are largely decorative, and his written communication is through tidbits of cramped, dry text that put me to sleep (literally) multiple times. "An image cropped into a rectangle presents three options: the type might be enclosed within the image; the type might be outside, or adjacent to the image; or the type might cross the image."

He writes that the text plays as large a role as the image, but he doesn't listen to his own advice. He advocates for the importance of paying attention to minor graphical details, yet leaves a dozen typos throughout his own published work.

Some things the book says are:

(view spoiler)

Matthew Herring says

This is an excellent overview of Graphic Design, giving a first rate look at the fundamentals that every design student should know. My only complaint is that the layout, while novel at first, is extremely busy and the type small enough that it can hurt the eyes if you try to read too much at one time. The book is designed to be enjoyed in spurts, not read in one session.

Papilina Jefferson says

This is my favorite book eveeer

K says

Every page of this manual is both informative and fun to look at. Checked it out so I could make better flyers and posters, got tons of inspiration from the hundreds of examples and the succinct, suggestive text.

Amanda says

The typography and layout chapters are great!