



## Top 10 Tips: Designing an Effective Newsletter

The design of your newsletter is critical. It will either enhance your message, helping people get the point faster, or detract from it, leading people to disregard it or and throw it away. You can use these tried-and-true design principles to bolster your newsletter's chances for success.

1. **Use an appealing design.** While it's true that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, in general, less is more when it comes to design. Choose typefaces, colors, the number of columns, pictures and graphics with care. Each element needs to complement the others and result in a pleasing whole. To take the pain out of design, some computer programs such as Microsoft Publisher offer design templates that are ready-to-go.
2. **Create a nameplate.** This design element appears on the newsletter's front page and contains the name of your newsletter, the organization that issues it, the publication date, and volume and issue number. Sometimes a short mission statement or phrase is included here as well.
3. **Include a masthead.** This information, usually contained in a box or in the same location in your newsletter each time, identifies your group or organization, its contact information (mailing address and phone) and an editor's name and contact information. It can also contain the names of contributors, your editorial policy, article submission guidelines and publication frequency.
4. **Establish a style guide.** These are the "rules" you create that will guide how you lay out your newsletter and aid in your newsletter's graphic appeal. A style guide helps you produce a consistent and professional look each and every time. The rules apply no matter how you produce your newsletter – with a typewriter and scotch tape, a word processor, or a publishing system. You should use them consistently each time.
5. **Limit selection of typefaces to two or three.** Select one typeface (the look or design of the actual letters) for text copy and one for headlines. Ideally they should contrast. Many times designers select a "serif" font, where letters have little hooks or feet on the ends (like Times Roman used here) to aid readability. They then choose a sans serif font without feet (like Verdana) for headlines. You can use variations on the typefaces you select, like italic or bold, to make copy stand out.

6. **Pay attention to readability.** You want people to read your newsletter with ease.
  - Use a serif font like Times Roman for printed newsletters to enable reading; the little feet connect the letters and ease the eye from one image to the next.
  - Make sure your type size is at least 12 point, large enough for most people to read. For older audiences, you may want to use a larger font size.
  - Use columns, but with care. Using columns shortens line length and speeds reading. Most newsletters use a two or three column format. Columns that are too wide or too narrow can impede readability.
  - Break up text by using bullet points, text boxes or pull quotes (quotes or text excerpted from the story and enlarged to serve as a design element).
  - Allow the text to breathe by including ample white space.
  - Take care in selecting paper and ink colors. Bright colors of ink or paper can be difficult to read; so can an ink/paper combination that doesn't provide enough contrast.
  - Number your pages if the newsletter exceeds two pages.
  
7. **Use graphics with care.** Pictures, clip art, charts, graphs and tables can help people understand the story you're telling and make your newsletter look interesting. However, too many pieces of art can make a newsletter look junky, cluttered, and unprofessional.
  
8. **Use pictures if you can.** Make sure they are of good quality and tell a story. Identify the people pictured and spell names correctly.
  
9. **Pay attention to U.S Postal guidelines.** If you plan to mail your newsletter, learn what the U.S. Postal Service requires on such items as sealing your newsletter, placement of address labels and return address information. (Remember, if you plan to deliver your newsletter house-to-house, do not put the newsletter in the mail box.)
  
10. **Don't be intimidated by technology.** A typewriter and cutting and pasting with the aid of a ruler and transparent tape can still result in an eye-catching and affordable newsletter. So can simple black ink on white paper or the use of a colored paper stock in lieu of multiple ink colors. The key is to pay attention to principles of good design.