**Digital Literacy Skills:**

Training Program for Volunteer Managers

*Course Outline:*

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**Design Basics**

*Objective: To identify design best practices and the tools used to create digital designs.*

**Video Script:**

“Welcome, Volunteer Managers! The topic we are going to discuss here is one of the more creative and exciting topics in the digital universe. It brings into play a blank canvas and allows you to express your ideas visually. Today, we’re going to explore one principle that ties many other digital skills together: design.

You might think that design basics are only important for artists and creatives, but it's quite the contrary. Design is at the heart of the digital world.

Think of it like this: [Experts](https://online.utpb.edu/about-us/articles/communication/how-much-of-communication-is-nonverbal/) suggest that the majority of our in-person communication is nonverbal. In fact, they estimate that we get 55 per cent of our messages across through nonverbal cues like body language, 38 per cent through our vocal tone, and only 7 per cent through our words…

This means that our visual communication outweighs our verbal communication every time. But how does this apply to the way we communicate online? Besides video, we aren't always using our voices or seeing each other when we connect digitally. In this case, our visual communication steps up to the plate. This means the photos, videos, and visuals we share online can deliver greater, more profound meaning than our words.

Visuals and designs can take our messages to a whole new level. They create that extra layer of meaning and connection. They provide context, tone, and direction. [Studies](https://www.techsmith.com/blog/why-visual-communication-matters/#:~:text=Visual%20communication%20results%20in%20better,brain%2C%2090%25%20is%20visual.) show that visuals are processed up to 60,000 times faster than reading text. It saves time and cuts past the clutter. They show that pairing strong visuals with information helps people remember and retain it better. It's not just art or design –– it's communication.

In the modern world, this is accomplished through digital design. Digital design includes graphics, photos, and videos. Graphics might include pie charts, infographics, or logos. It's any design combining visuals and text used to portray a message. Perhaps you see informational graphics with tips, how-tos, or statistics. Graphics are used to create logos and other branding elements for businesses to communicate visually with their audience. Basic graphic design is an essential skill for modern-day marketers, creatives, social media users, and online communicators.

Photos and videos take the power of visual communication to the next level, implementing reality into the digital world. We're able to capture moments and share them online. We can see each other's faces, gain trust, and witness updates on projects and glimpses of memories.

Videos take this to a new level, bridging the gap between in-person and online communication. It's the closest thing to talking face to face from a distance. Nonverbal and verbal communication comes into play, making it powerful for individuals and professionals. By the end of 2022, it's [estimated](https://invideo.io/blog/video-marketing-statistics/) that over 82 per cent of internet traffic worldwide will be video. This means most of the time, we're online, we're watching videos. These numbers are growing increasingly as social media apps, marketing materials, and even news articles focus on videos. This makes recording, editing, and publishing video one of the most essential digital skills in the modern world.

A recent [study](https://www.qut.edu.au/study/business/insights/3.2-billion-images-and-720000-hours-of-video-are-shared-online-daily.-can-you-sort-real-from-fake#:~:text=3.2%20billion%20images%20and%20720%2C000%20hours%20of%20video%20are%20shared%20online%20daily.,-Can%20you%20sort) by the Queensland University of Technology found a total of 3.2 billion images and 720,000 hours of video are shared online each day. These are a mixture of personal and professional photos –– users sharing their memories, brands promoting their causes, and journalists spreading the news. Design is central to how we communicate.

The digital world is a visual world. And understanding design basics ensures we can communicate effectively in business and life. That's why we'll be exploring design best practices, branding basics, and the unique platforms used to create designs in this chapter. From Adobe Creative Suite to Canva to iMovie to QuickTime, we'll learn the fundamentals of digital design, how to communicate effectively with them, and what tools you can use to do just that. We'll get started in the reading portion of this Module.

**Reading Portion:**

**Design Basics**

Welcome to Design Basics. In this Module, we’ll learn the fundamentals of digital design, why it’s important, and what tools you can use to create it.

Ready? Let’s get started.

**What is Design?**

[*Design*](https://www.strate.education/gallery/news/design-definition) is an art and a science. It’s a general term for the process and result of communicating and expressing an idea or plan through abstract and concrete forms. There are several types of design, but we most often think about visual design, such as paintings, drawings, sculptures, or architecture.

**What is Digital Design?**

[*Digital design*](https://99designs.com/blog/web-digital/digital-design/)is a form of visual communication. It aims to share an idea, message, or service through digital software. Digital design can be graphic design, photos, and video.

**Graphics**

*Examples of graphic design: infographics, logos, and quotes.*

[Insert example(s)]

[*Graphic design*](https://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/design/blog/what-is-graphic-design/) takes an idea and communicates it through visuals and text. These designs can be shared online through social media posts, websites, and mobile apps. They can also be printed and translated to the physical world through posters, signs, business cards, and more.

Graphic design takes an idea and adds meaning, context, and power to it. Imagine if the internet and social media didn’t have any designs or graphics; if it was all just text without varying colours, font sizes, organisation, or icons. It would be confusing and boring.

Design is what allows us to engage and communicate effectively online. It also makes it easier for us to consume and comprehend information.

**Photos**

In the past, photographers held control of the camera. If we wanted to capture a moment, processing and developing images took time. But with the development of smartphones and social media, everyone is a photographer at some level. We can instantly take pictures and share them with the world online.

Quality images are needed for business websites, social media pages, and branding. Images are often used to showcase a product and establish trust, with brands and with individuals.

**Videos**

Videos are gradually taking over the digital space, from YouTube to TikTok and Instagram. As discussed in our introduction, video is one of the most prevalent ways users spend their time on the internet.

Right now, brands are emphasising video to create authentic connections and gain trust with their customers and clients, whether it’s a 10-second or 10-minute video.

**How is Digital Design Important in the Modern World and Workplace?**

Digital design affects how a brand or individual communicates with others. Digital design can make or break how someone presents their resumé when applying for a job. Or it can make their website and social media more appealing to customers. It can establish trust and communicate a particular message.

Any profession centred around online communication, marketing, or creativity requires basic digital design skills. Modern-day design roles allow creative individuals and artists to make a living doing what they love. If they grow and develop their digital design skills, they can open up [job opportunities](https://au.talent.com/salary) such as a:

* **Graphic designer**
  + Average Australian salary: $82,852/year
  + Entry-level salary: $69,177/year
* **Social media specialist**
  + Average Australian salary: $90,000/year
  + Entry-level salary: $70,000/year
* **Web designer** 
  + Average Australian salary: $91,019/year
  + Entry-level salary: $78,500/year
* **User experience (UX) or user interface (UI) designer**
  + Average Australian salary: $110,000/year
  + Entry-level salary: $90,000/year
* **Digital marketing specialist** 
  + Average and entry-level salary: $75,000/year
* **Photographer** 
  + Average Australian salary: $82,875/year
  + Entry-level salary: $66,188/year ​
* **Videographer**
  + Average Australian salary: $92,017/year
  + Entry-level salary: $81,873/year ​

**Elements of Visual Branding**

Organisations combine these elements to establish their brand. In Part I of Social Media Strategy, we discussed how brands use social media to build their presence and connect with their audience. One of the most powerful ways they do this is through visual branding and design.

Elements of a brand’s visual design identity include:

**Fonts**

Let’s take a look at the power of fonts. Notice how the word “**bold”** looks bolded. This makes it stand out. This is important if you want to draw attention to a word or phrase.

*But what if we changed the font entirely?*

* **Bold** vs. **Bold**

See the difference? Some fonts can give the same messages an entirely different meaning. Brands will consistently use 1-2 fonts to convey their desired meaning and make it recognisable in their unique style.

**Colours**

It works the same with colours. If we were to create content about nature and use designs with blues, greens, and browns, you’d think about the ocean or forest –– even if there weren’t any *images* of an ocean or forest.

But if we were to use designs with reds, oranges, and yellows, you might think more about the sun, desert, or bright flowers. These each evoke a different message and emotion. By carefully choosing and using a consistent palette of colours, brands can communicate intentionally and powerfully with others.

**Logos**

Logos combine fonts, colours, and shapes to create an identifier for a brand. You’ll recognise some major brands just by seeing their logo, whether the Nike’ swoop’ or the Amazon’ smile.’ The goal is for a logo to confirm a brand’s identity and become memorable.

**Imagery**

What kind of images a brand uses depends on their target audience. For example, should a jewellery company selling gold and diamond jewellery have the same imagery as a jewellery company promoting colourful beaded necklaces? Probably not.

The *first* might attract a wealthier, more mature audience. Imagery with middle-aged women, soft silvers and golds, and other luxury photos will connect with their audience.

The *second* might attract a younger, vibrant audience. They might include imagery of younger individuals wearing bright colours in exciting places.

**Design Best Practices**

If you have access to the internet, you can learn to be a digital designer. There are many free and entry-level tools designed to help anyone get started.

Before we dive into these tools, let’s review 5 core design principles to help you communicate with power:

1. **Consistency**

With any type of design, it’s essential to be consistent. This is what allows you to solidify your message and brand identity.

Suppose you’re always using different colours, fonts, and styles. In that case, it will be difficult for your audience to understand what message you’re trying to convey.

The best brands use the same 1-2 fonts, 3-5 colours, and imagery style in their digital design to get their message across and become recognisable to their audience.

1. **Readability > Style**

Readability is far more important than style. If someone can’t easily read what your design says or what your image includes, they aren’t going to receive the message, even if the design is stunning.

Opt for contrasting backgrounds and text colours if you’re creating a text-based graphic. For example, dark colours on a light background or vice versa. Also, ensure the text is big enough for users to read with ease.

1. **Typography**

Typography refers to the art and strategy of fonts. We discussed the power of fonts earlier. Here are a few reminders:

* When writing important text, **bold**, *italicise*, or make it bigger.
* Opt for easy-to-read fonts over cursive or eccentric fonts. Ex: This is easy to read, and this isn’t as easy to read.
* Serifs are any font with decorative lines and structures on the ends. Sans serifs are any fonts without these decorative elements.
* Typically, serifs are viewed as more formal and luxurious. Sans serif fonts are viewed as more modern and minimalist.

1. **Focal Points**

A *focal point* is the subject that draws your attention within a design. Most often, it’s whatever’s centred, emphasised, or contrasting in a frame.

If you want a specific focal point in an image, video, or graphic, you can bold it, place it in the centre, or find a way to make it stand out from the background.

1. **Keep it Simple**

When it comes to design, less is more. Too much text or decorative elements can make it challenging to know what to focus on. By keeping designs simple, you can communicate your message with power and clarity.

**Design Tools**

Now, let’s put these principles into practice. Let’s go over beginner and advanced tools for creating graphics, editing images, and composing videos.

You can capture and create designs simply by having a smartphone with a camera and a computer with the following software:

**Graphic Design**

**Beginner: Canva (free)**

Canva is one of the most popular tools for beginner designers. They have easy templates you can customise to create your own social media posts, slideshows, resumés, advertisements, brochures, logos, and more. Professionals in basic design roles like social media managers or digital marketing specialists often use Canva for their jobs.

There are free and paid versions of Canva. You can access most of the features with the free version.

**How to use Canva:**

1. Create and log into your [Canva](https://www.canva.com/) account.
2. Select “Templates” on the left-hand menu bar.
3. Click on the type of design you want to create. You’ll see options like Videos, Presentations, Logos, and Instagram Posts.
4. Choose your template design and select “Customise this template.”
5. Click on the text and other design elements to customise them. Explore the other features in the left-hand menu bar.

**Advanced: Adobe Illustrator and InDesign (paid)**

[Adobe Creative Cloud](https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud.html) is the leading digital design software for graphic designers, illustrators, and animators. If a designer is applying for a job, they’ll most likely need a complete comprehension of these. There are several Adobe tools, similar to how there are several unique Google tools. Adobe Creative Suite costs, but there are free trials.

Adobe *Illustrator* is the software designed for graphic designers to create original digital designs like logos, graphics, and more. You can create shapes, add text, and edit your visuals with its endless number of tools.

Adobe *InDesign* is used to create designs for print, like magazines, books, and invitations.

**Photo Editing**

**Beginner: Photos App (free)**

Every up-to-date smartphone or computer has a basic photo editing app built into its software. You can use these tools to ‘crop’ or change the size and adjust the lighting and colouring of your image.

**Here’s how you can start using it:**

1. Open your Photos app on your smartphone or computer.
2. Tap on a photo.
3. Select “Edit.”
4. Explore the different effects and tools you can apply in the menu bar.
5. Select “Done” to save your changes.

**Advanced: Adobe Photoshop & Lightroom (paid)**

Adobe *Photoshop* is a professional tool for editing and retouching graphics and images. You can change colours, add textures, and combine photos into one. Some use it to edit out any blemishes or imperfections in an image. Most graphic designers, photographers, and videographers need to know how to use this software.

Adobe *Lightroom* is a tool photographers use to edit and organise their images. It’s less about changing a photo and more about enhancing a photo’s colours, hues, and lighting.

**Video Editing**

**Beginner: iMovie or Windows Video Editor (free)**

Most smartphones and computers also come with pre-installed video editing software. They’re basic and mainly allow users to compile multiple video files into one to create a sort of slideshow or mini movie. You can also use these tools to add music or edit other sounds in the videos.

**How to use** [**iMovie**](https://www.apple.com/imovie/) **(Mac):**

1. Open your iMovie app on your smartphone or computer.
2. Select “Create New.”
3. Tap “Movie.”
4. Select “Import Media” to upload images and videos from your device.
5. Browse the menu bars to add text, audio, or other video effects.

**How to use** [**Windows Video Editor**](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/create-films-with-a-video-editor-94e651f8-a5be-ae03-3c50-e49f013d47f6) **(Windows):**

1. Open the Video Editor app from your Start menu.
2. Select “New video project.”
3. Type in a name for your video and select “OK.”
4. Select “Add” to upload images and videos from your device.
5. Browse the menu bars to add text, audio, or other video effects.

**Advanced: Adobe Premiere Pro (paid)**

Adobe Premiere Pro is a software program specifically designed for video editing. Professionals use it for videos shared on TV and in movies, social media, and advertisements. It can be used to combine video clips, create transitions, and virtually every other video editing feature needed to perfect videos.

**Screen Recording**

One more digital tool, and then we’ll move on to our next Module. As a Volunteer Manager, you may need to record your presentations. This way, lessons can be rewatched and reused to solidify learning.

The best way to do this is to “screen record.” Screen recording is a feature that allows you to record what’s on your computer screen and save it. With certain settings, you can also record the audio of your video simultaneously, so at the end, you’re left with a visual and audio recording of your virtual learning session.

Here’s how to screen record on a Mac vs. Windows computer:

[**Screen Record on a Mac**](https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT208721#:~:text=Open%20QuickTime%20Player%20from%20your,Screen%20Recording%20window%20described%20below.&text=To%20record%20your%20voice%20or,screen%20recording%2C%20choose%20a%20microphone.)**: QuickTime Player**

1. Open QuickTime Player from your Applications folder.
2. Select “File”> “New Screen Recording” from the menu bar.
3. Click the arrow to the right of the Record button. Select the microphone if you also want to record the lesson’s audio.
4. Click the Record button.
5. Click anywhere on the screen to begin recording.
6. Stop recording by clicking the “Stop” button.

[**Screen Record on a Windows**](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/record-the-screen-d70508e8-25a3-4b97-b78a-a467b5372e21)**: QuickTime Player**

1. Open Microsoft Stream from your Applications folder.
2. Select “Create”> “Record screen” from the menu bar.
3. Select “Allow Microsoft Stream to use your camera and microphone.”
4. Click the Record button.
5. Select how much of your screen you want to share.
6. Hit the “Share audio” checkbox to include audio.
7. Select “Next” to stop and view your recording.