What is a design process?

We trust that this book has provided you with plenty of inspirational ideas, useful techniques and thought provoking design theory. Yet, to make the most of these you need know how to apply them using a process. A design process is a structured method that you can follow so that you know where to start and how to go about building a successful design solution.

Here is a suggested process to follow when designing with Photoshop.

Write/interpret the design brief

You must clearly define what is required to be designed.

What requirements/problems must the design solve?
— inform, promote, sell, define a mood, etc.

Who is that target audience?

Are there any specifications or constraints?
— size, format, cost, time, colour, etc.

Generate ideas and do some research

Don't immediately start playing with ideas on the computer, instead use a pen, pencil, colour markers etc. to quickly sketch rough ideas on paper.

Try word maps/spider diagrams to expand your ideas.

Go out and do some research, collect information, ideas, and images for use in your design or simply as inspiration.

Develop and evaluate concepts

After you've sketched several different design concepts on paper, evaluate them.

Identify which of your concepts you like best and why. Try to be objective, and refer back to the design brief requirements.

Develop your best concepts further.

Re-evaluate and decide which one(s) you want to produce.

Define the format

Ensure that you begin working using a suitable size, shape, orientation, colour specification, resolution etc.

Consider whether you can break away from the standard formats, yet still produce a cost effective, practical and achievable design solution.

Presentation

The presentation of your final design solution is an important consideration, especially if you are dealing with a client. Consider printing on high quality paper. Carefully trim your print with a scalpel and ruler. Mounting your print onto card or foam board can also help enhance your work.

A digital presentation is another option that you should consider.

Refinement

Problems identified in the proofing and evaluation stage should be resolved where possible. It is a good idea to do a second proof after you have made any changes.

Proofing and evaluation

Print a draft copy of your design and then check and re-check it for spelling, grammar or capitalisation errors. Also check the visual aspects of the design. Do the colours work well? Is the text readable? Are the elements aligned precisely? Ask someone else to proof-read your work as well.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the design in relation to the brief. Does it meet all the requirements? Can it be improved?

Seek opinions from others.

Structure the design elements

The way that you combine the design elements is very important. Consider the following:

Have you used appropriate emphasis to create a functional eye-flow?

Is the overall layout well balanced?

Are the design elements accurately aligned when necessary or follow an invisible grid structure?

Add design elements

Consider and experiment with design elements to solve the design problems identified in the brief and enhance the design. For example:

Line — directs the eye to important information.

Shape — draws attention to the design.

Texture and Pattern — creates excitement.

Type — conveys the message in an attractive way.