



with the names on the mail list. For these reasons, a house list always performs better, as measured by response rate to a mailing, than a rented list.

### Compiling a mailing list

Compiling a mail list means gathering information from various sources, then standardizing the format of the list. For example, you may gather information about your customers from a variety of sources – your company’s billing department or your organization’s membership records, your customer’s website, and from individuals within your company or organization who have information you desire.

A common result of gathering information from different sources is that individual data elements are not consistent among the sources. For instance, the billing department may list one individual as the contact person while the customer service department may have other individuals as contacts. Even when the individual contacts are the same, the amount of information may be different. Membership records may include a title (Mr., Mrs., Dr.) and a spouse name that is not kept in the newsletter mailing list.

### Creating standards for a mailing list

Because of the variation in information obtained by various sources, it is important to establish a structure for the mailing list that is adequate to hold all the data. Each element in the mailing list needs its own separate field, sized appropriately for the data. Thus, a basic structure for a mail list is first name, last name, street address, city, state and ZIP code.

When determining the structure of your mail list, think about how you might use the list in the future.

- Will you ever send invitations to events that require a social form of address (Mr. and Mrs. Brian Taylor; The Honorable Patricia Nelson, Mayor; Pastor Jimmy Stewart)? If so, you’ll need a field for *title*.
- Will you ever want to use an inside address with the first name of an individual and the spouse (Dear Brian and Leticia, Dear Patsy, Dear Jimmy)? You’ll need additional data fields for *alternate first name* and *spouse name*.

- Will your list contain a mix of individuals and businesses? Then you’ll need a *company* field to enter the names of businesses.
- Will you need to mail to Canada, Mexico or another foreign country? You’ll need a *country* field and may have to include additional fields to accommodate foreign address formats.

The main benefit of having a separate field for each data element is the ability to sort on a data field. While at first, it may seem unnecessary to separate a name into *first* and *last* fields, having just a single name field means that a sort on the name field will alphabetize by the first character encountered – in this case, the first character of the first name. This is a much less useful sort than being able to alphabetize by last name – which requires a *last name* field.

By design, a field should contain only one type of information, and *one type* is strictly defined to mean one thing only. *First name* means the first name of an individual; *last name* means the last name of an individual. A separate field, *company name*, is required to hold the names of businesses and organizations.

If you fill a name field with a mix of the names of individuals and the names of businesses, you will create an undesirable situation for when you want to print information, such as this one where a business contact has been entered into the *first name* field and the name of a business has been entered into the *last name* field:

First Name Field	Last Name Field
Bill	Bradley
Sam and Arlene	Johnson
Carol Taylor	Taylor Manufacturing Co.

When the instructions are given to print the data on the envelope, here is what will result:

- First line of envelope 1: Bill Bradley
- First line of envelope 2: Sam and Arlene Johnson
- First line of envelope 3: Carol Taylor Taylor Manufacturing Co.

If the mail list is re-structured with a separate field for business name, then Carol Taylor’s name will print on the first line and the name of her company, Taylor Manufacturing, will print on the second line – exactly as it should.

### Maintain your mail list in a database manager

Since a mail list is a form of a database, the best software to use is a relational database manager like Access. A relational database uses a table of rows and columns to store information. The rows are called *records*; the columns are called *fields*. In a mail list, the fields contain information such as first name, last name, street address, city, state, ZIP code. Taken together, the fields make up a single record, and all the records, taken together, make up the database or *file*.

Storing information in tables rather than one long data file has several advantages: you can sort based on any field, easily access information, generate reports containing only selected fields from each record, and reorganize the information by creating new tables using data from other tables.

Having your mail list in a relational database format allows for quick searches and sorts using either a *filter* or a *query*. Both these functions apply *selection criteria* to determine what records meet the criteria, then create a new table of records that meet the criteria. A filter is a temporary tool used one time in the context of a particular table and disappears when the table is closed. In contrast, a query can be stored for reuse.

### Use our suggestions for structuring your mail list

If you’d like to see an example of a mail list structure, just let us know. We have prepared our recommendations for what fields to include, as well as suggestions for the length of each field and its characteristics (alpha, numeric or alphanumeric). To get your copy, contact **David Hull** at **763.425.4251**. We can send you a digital or hard copy.

# TIPS & TRICKS

We've all had this unpleasant experience: something goes wrong during a sales transaction, the relationship with the customer is irreparably harmed, and it is clear that continuing to contact the customer with direct mail will be counterproductive. The logical action to take is to delete the customer from the mail list.

## Don't.

Instead, set a flag in the mailing list to suppress mailing to this customer temporarily (even if "temporary" is many months). Here's why: things change. The person within your customer's company may leave or move on to another assignment. Your company may invest resources in solving the problem that caused the relationship to fail. The issue may cease to be important to your customer's company. Whatever the reason, the circumstances that contributed to the problem may cease to exist.

Periodically review the people or companies on the suppression list. If you've improved your services, instituted product changes, made it easier to do business or any other change that benefits the previously-wronged customers, let them know with a phone call or a special mailing. Communicate changes for the better and keep in touch.



*I am fairly proficient at Excel.  
Can I use it for my mail list?*



**Yes** - provided you understand that even though Excel displays the information in rows and columns, it is not creating the tables of a relational database and so has limitations when it comes to finding and sorting data (compared to a database program like Access).

There are two things we would like to warn you about Excel: The first is that you can change the sort order of a single column while leaving all the other columns in their existing order, leading to a mismatch of the address elements in each row. The second is that when you "hide" rows or columns to change how the mail list displays, you are not eliminating the hidden data. It is still there, and so will be included in a file you provide to us for mailing.



### Sample List

First Name	Last Name	Company	Phone	Address	Address 2	City	State	Zip
David	Hull	Visions	763.425.4251	8801 Wyoming Ave N		Brooklyn Park	MN	55445
Doug	Anderson	Visions	123.456.7890	123 Any Street	Suite 1	Anytown	MN	55445



If your mail list consists of a mix of customers and prospects, set a reminder to periodically review the customer segment – particularly if the mail list is kept separately from a customer list generated by the billing process. Here are the things to look for:

- **Have there been any changes in customer contact information?**  
Your company's billing system will have the most up-to-date mailing address information. This is because invoices must be sent as First-Class Mail, and one service of First-Class Mail is free address updates. If there is a problem with the address (such as a missing suite number) or if the customer has moved, the billing department will get the information from the returned invoice, check what is in the billing file against your prospecting mail list and make changes as needed.
- **Have there been any changes in individuals within the customer's company?**  
Sales people and customer service representatives will know the status of the individuals associated with your customers. Has the individual been promoted or left for another company? Has the responsibility been assigned to someone else? Let your sales people and CSRs review the mail list information for accuracy.
- **Should an old customer be dropped from the mail list or a new customer added?**  
Check with your sales people and CSRs to see whether it still makes sense to keep existing customers on the mail list, and whether there are any new customers that should be added.

# VOCA B OF THE Graphic ARTS

**Compile:** to assemble information collected from a variety of sources. Mail lists offered for rental are compiled from publicly-available sources and need to be varied before use.

**Database:** a comprehensive collection of related data organized for convenient access, generally in a computer. A database is analogous to an electronic filing system.

**Database Management System (DBMS):** the software that enables a computer to perform the database functions of storing, retrieving, adding, deleting and modifying data.

**Database report:** information retrieved from a table and presented in a formatted display that is easy to read and understand.

**dBase:** a relational database management system first marketed by Ashton-Tate Corporation in the early 1980s. The data formatting conventions used by dBase have become industry standards.

**Demographics:** the characteristics of a population, either individual or business. Commonly used demographics include gender, race, age, income, disabilities, education, home ownership. Also called demographic data.

**Demographic trends:** the changes in demographics in a population over time. Changes in both trends and distributions provide valuable information to marketers.

**Field:** in a database, a space allocated for one item of information. Fields are the smallest unit of information that can be accessed. In spreadsheets, fields are called cells.

**House list:** an internally-developed mail list consisting of the customers, members or donors of a business or organization. A house list can also contain contact information for prospects who match the demographic profile of customers.

**Query:** the primary means of retrieving information from a database; the questions presented to the database in a predefined format. Many database management systems use SQL (Structured Query Language) as the standard query format.

**Record:** in a database, a record holds all the information about one item or subject. Records are composed of fields; a set of records constitutes a file.

**Table:** data arranged in rows and columns. A spreadsheet, for example, is a table. In relational database management systems, all information is stored in the form of tables.



# 5 Principles of Good Design

To help you develop your skills as a desktop publisher, we offer these five principles of good design:

**Principle 1:** Good design has a purpose. Consider what the document is to accomplish, who the audience is, what image you want to portray, and what reaction you want to invoke. This will guide all your selections – the typeface, the color palette, the layout itself.

**Principle 2:** Good design makes things simple. A good design will make a difficult concept understandable by guiding the audience through the presentation. Well chosen stock photographs, charts, illustrations or other graphic elements improve audience comprehension.

**Principle 3:** Good design holds the reader's attention. Engage the reader immediately with an eye-catching headline, graphic image, photograph, white space, or unusual layout. Then guide the reader through the important points so nothing important is missed.

**Principle 4:** Good design has an underlying logic. The audience will see not only the text, graphics and photographs on the page; they will react to the underlying organizational structure of the document. Be sure you have one, and be sure it is consistent.

**Principle 5:** Good design doesn't call attention to itself. One measure of a good design is when the reader gets the intended message without being distracted by the design itself.

## Font Selection

Selecting the right font and point size for body copy is a crucial decision affecting readability. Knowing the audience, and especially the average age, will guide you in making a good decision.

- Young readers need large type for comfortable reading. Try 14 point type.
- For older readers or readers with known visual handicaps, use 14 to 18 point type.
- For readers aged 40-65, use 11 or 12 point type.
- For general or unknown audiences, a safe choice is 10 or 11 point type.

Remember that these recommendations are just starting points. Because the actual and apparent size of fonts may differ, you may have to adjust the point size accordingly.

Headlines should normally be larger than body copy—typically between 14 and 30 points. The closer a headline's point size is to the body copy, the harder it is to distinguish it from the text.



# Design Tips for Desktop Publishers

Are you a desktop publisher? If you own a small business, work for a small business or nonprofit organization, or volunteer at a community organization and use a computer to prepare files for print or the web, then you meet the definition. Desktop publishers prepare business stationery (business cards, letterheads and envelopes), forms, sales and marketing materials, newsletters and similar documents and print them on the desktop, have them printed by a commercial printer such as Visions, Inc., distribute them in electronic format, or publish them to a web site.

The term *desktop publishing* was coined in 1985 by Paul Brainerd, founder of Aldus Corporation, to describe the capability of the computer program Aldus PageMaker. PageMaker, which was later purchased by Adobe, was a new kind of software program, distinct from a word processing machine (which was essentially a typewriter with some form of electronic editing and correction capability). PageMaker enabled one person to perform on a computer what had previously been many separate manual functions associated with getting documents ready to print: design, typesetting and assembling all elements into a page layout.

Over time, as features were added to desktop publishing software and easier-to-use consumer versions were developed, what had once been a job (*i.e.*, desktop publisher) evolved into a set of job skills needed for a wide range of positions: office manager, department head, administrative or legal assistant, secretary, real estate agent, even receptionist and volunteer worker.

We, too, are part of the evolution of desktop publishing. Phototypesetting, mechanical camera work and manual paste up gave way to desktop publishing, then evolved to a complete digital prepress process, with output to either offset press plates or our high-speed color

digital printers. For us, desktop publishing means we can produce a first proof faster, make alterations quickly and easily, and significantly improve the quality of the printed image.

## Success in desktop publishing

Today, desktop publishing is a broad term that encompasses the three main activities of document preparation:

- **Preparing text:** The information that is being presented is written, edited, checked for spelling and grammar, and made available as a digital file.
- **Preparing images:** Photographs and images to illustrate the text are selected or created, color corrected, manipulated and sized.
- **Assembling elements:** The prepared text and images are placed and arranged on the page using principles of graphic design.

Success as a desktop publisher depends partly on selecting and learning to use the correct tools for the three main activities, and partly on mastering the basics of design.

Several different kinds of programs are needed for desktop publishing. They correspond to the activity areas.

- **Word processing:** A word processor is used to compose and edit text and to check spelling and grammar. Two popular word processing programs are Microsoft Word and Corel WordPerfect.
- **Graphics software:** This category includes illustration (drawing) software and image editors. Illustration programs permit great flexibility in sizing illustrations or drawings; image editing software (paint programs or photo editors) are used to manipulate photos and scans. Adobe Illustrator and CorelDRAW are examples of illustration software; Adobe Photoshop and Corel PaintShop Photo Pro are image editors.

- **Page layout:** Page layout software is another way of saying *desktop publishing software*. This software is designed to integrate text and images on the page, anchor page elements in place, create multiple page documents, and provides tools to add artistic details to the layout. Desktop publishing software permits control over type, including character spacing (*i.e.*, kerning and tracking), line spacing, control of hyphenation and line endings. The leading page layout programs are Adobe InDesign and Quark XPress; Microsoft Publisher and Adobe PageMaker are also choices.

A word about using software programs such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Photoshop and Illustrator for page layout: while some people have developed great proficiency with these programs and use them to produce business cards, brochures and other items, we do not recommend this practice. None of these programs were designed for integrating text and images, and none offer the control over page composition that is built into an actual page layout program.

## Desktop publishing is more than software

To produce truly successful designs, more is needed than proficiency with desktop publishing software. A good desktop publisher also much know about color, typography, page composition, images (photos and illustrations), prepress, printing and bindery. Here are a few tips to guide you:

### Color

Black type on a light background is more legible than type reversed out of a colored background. Reversed type is 15% more difficult to read, and should be no smaller than 12 points. 75% of all readers prefer black type on light background.

## Typography

When confronted with good and bad typography, a majority of readers recognize bad typography immediately. Limit the number of fonts in a document to two or three. Because serif typefaces are slightly more legible than sans serif, use a serif font for text-heavy documents. 67% of readers favor serif typefaces. The most legible typefaces for body copy are between 9 and 12 points. Lowercase letters are more legible than uppercase, and there is no difference in legibility between headlines set in all lower case and those set with initial capitals. Words set in all caps are read letter-by-letter and are approximately 15% slower to read than words set in lower case.

## Page composition

Align all elements to each other or to a grid, either vertically or horizontally. Align objects along the same edge or center them. Use one strong visual element; if using multiple images, connect them by keeping them aligned and in proximity. To create a more dynamic layout, use an odd number of visuals or text columns. (Thirds creates a very pleasing composition. Use white space around the edges of the page, text, and graphic elements to create visual breathing room.

## Images

For photographs, use a resolution of 300 dpi in the size the photograph appears in the document. Color correct photographs, change the color of images, size and crop photographs and images in the appropriate

program (illustration/drawing or image editor) before importing the image into the page layout program. For professional-looking document, limit use of clip art.

## Prepress

Create proofs and mock-ups for review prior to printing. After approval, create PDFs to be used for printing. Collect all fonts, linked images, and the fonts within linked images for submission.

## Printing

Use the right color space for the document output.

## Bindery

Be sure the layout allows for post-press operations such as folding, cutting, trimming to the bleed, drilling and mechanical binding. Allow for page creep in multi-page documents that are being saddle stitched.



## Know when to do-it-yourself – and when not to

We encourage our customers to do some desktop publishing projects themselves. That's part of the reason we send this newsletter with helpful information.

But there are certain projects that will be finished faster and at less cost if you provide all the inputs – Word files containing text, digital photo and image files, or photo prints and hard copy images that need to be scanned – and let us complete the layout. We have the tools, skills and experience to get to the finished product on time and within budget.



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# get noticed!

If you are looking for ways to make your next project stand out from the crowd, consider creating a special look with design die cutting. Die-cutting provides an endless assortment of design possibilities for direct mail, point of purchase, collateral, packaging, specialty, greeting cards and more.

Contact **David Hull** at **763.425.4251** for more information on how Visions can assist you with your next die-cutting project.



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