

# Top 10 Design Tips You Don't Learn in Graphic Design School

You don't learn everything you need to know in graphic design school. Here are Web design and print design tips from the real world. They're the sort of design tips you learn from the school of hard knocks.

## 1. Know Both Print and Web Design

While Web design may seem very sexy, you'll be more marketable if you have a thorough understanding of both print and Web design. Contrary to popular opinion, print isn't going away any time soon. Even if you decide you only want to do Web design, someone, someday, will ask you to do print work.

## 2. Work with Printers

It's okay to admit you don't know how to do something. When it comes to print design, the best thing to do is run your ideas by your printer. Most printers are happy to answer you questions; if they're not, you should find a new printer.

## 3. Intern, Co-op

Right now the graphic design market is very, very tough. Who knows what it will be like when you graduate? Students with experience and a good portfolio will have an edge.

## 4. Learn Marketing

Whether you plan on working in-house, for an agency, or for yourself, you better know something about marketing. It's not about how pretty your designs are, it's about the results your designs get.

## 5. The Customer's Always Right

Most schools don't teach you how to deal with customers. The customer -- whether that's your boss or the person who hired you -- is always right. If they're wrong (if they pick the ugliest design, for instance...which of course you should never design something you don't like), it's your job to educate them. Be prepared with concrete reasons why the design you like is the one that works.

## 6. You're Too Busy

If you're just starting a design company, no matter how much work you actually have: to your customers you're buried in work. No one wants to hire someone with lots of free time on their hands. They can't be very good if they don't have any work, right?

## 7. Design Logos in Black and White

Even in today's technicolor world, companies need black and white versions of their logo. At some point, they will need to fax and copy their logo. It's easy to design in black and white, then colorize a logo. It's not always so easy to make a color logo black and white.

## 8. Always Have a Contract

I don't care how well you know the person, you should always have a contract. The contract tells the customer what to expect from you, and what you expect from them.

## 9. You Own the Files

If you've read tip number eight, then you know you shouldn't begin a job without a contract. That contract spells out who owns the file, which normally is you. If the contract doesn't spell this out, your customer can get the files from you and turn them over to another designer.

## 10. Networking Never Ends

You might think that you want to guard all your customer and design secrets, but the truth is you'll be a better designer if you network with other designers. You'll have people to bounce ideas off of, vent to and learn from. You might even be able to pick up extra work occasionally.