Focus on Careers: Graphic Designer

A graphic designer is a person who uses words and images to communicate a message in print or on Web pages. The goal of the designer’s work is more than simply to make the material look pretty; it is also to present it in a smart and logical manner. In addition to artistic skill, the job requires problem-solving ability and attention to detail.

Whether designing for printed works or for on-line Web pages, a graphic designer uses the same elements. For the words, the designer chooses one or more typefaces, or letter styles, from the thousands that are available. Typographic elements help produce the mood, from serious to comic and from simple to dramatic. The designer also chooses both the size (height) and weight (darkness) of the words set in each typeface.

The pictorial part may consist of photographic images or illustrations, and both of these may be either realistic or abstract. A realistic image would be something like a photograph or drawing of a horse, while an abstract image might be shapes that don’t depict a specific object. Color—or the lack of it in a black-and-white piece—is another part of design that contributes to the overall effect.

The designer must combine these elements in an original way to make the message effective. Whether creating a small logo, a book, or a Web site, the designer’s job is the same: to communicate in a way that makes people notice.