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# PRINTtips



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## Brochure Content & Design Fundamentals

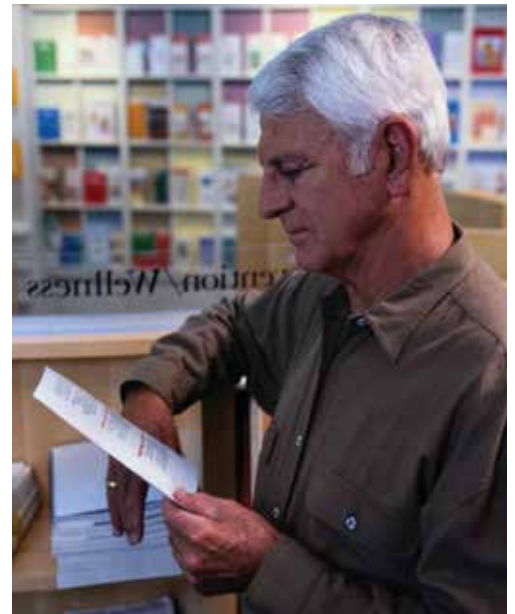
*"The greatest strength of brochures is their ability to convey enough information for a prospect to buy."*

Jay Conrad Levinson  
Guerrilla Marketing Attack

A brochure is a descriptive piece of literature used for promoting your business or organization. It is one of the most important and fundamental components of marketing literature for businesses and organizations. Typically the first item produced after the letterhead, envelopes, and business cards, its purpose is to put a targeted message in the hands of prospects that is portable, easy to store, and easily passed on to others.

A printed brochure is an integral part of the sales process. It serves as a leave-behind after a sales call or meeting with prospective customers. It is also used as a way to respond to inquiries or to introduce new products or services when cold calling. As part of a direct mail campaign, it can be sent with a sales letter or used as a self-mailer. And finally, a brochure can be a point-of-purchase display to interest customers in additional products or services or to provide information.

An additional advantage is that a brochure can be tailored to any printing budget. Whether it is a simple one color bi-fold, a two color tri-fold, or an elaborate full color die cut folder, a brochure effectively serves the organization's marketing objectives.



### The Elements of a Brochure

Most all brochures share certain characteristics. They have:

- written copy
- graphics in the form of photographs, illustrations, diagrams, charts, or graphs
- an underlying organization
- and the company or organization's identity and contact information

### Writing the Copy

To write effective copy for your brochure, you need to know your audience, know your product or service, and be able to translate the product or service features into recognizable

## Brochure Content and Design Fundamentals (cont.)

*“An effective brochure uses concise writing that leads the reader to the important points.”*

benefits for the audience. A good way to translate features into benefits is to think, “What’s in it for me?” For example, if your product is made of a different type of material than your competitor’s, the benefit could be that it will last longer or maintain its appearance. A single feature may have more than one benefit, so be sure to mention them all.

An effective brochure uses concise writing that leads the reader to the important points. Rather than a straight text narrative, brochures use bulleted lists, headlines and subheads, reverse type, captions, and pull quotes to emphasize the message.

### Creating Visual Interest

Visual images help readers understand complicated concepts, retain more of what they are reading, and keep them interested in the text. Images are what typically catch the reader’s attention and often generate an emotion that leads to a sale.

The internet is a good source for professional-quality collections of images, particularly illustrations, drawings, and stock photography that can be licensed for a small fee. You may also be able to obtain images from your trade association, product manufacturer, or a professional organization within your industry. If you are able to create your own professional looking photos and/or images, these work best.

There are many ways to design the cover of a brochure. One simple option is to use your company’s name and logo as the cover design. This is a versatile option and may be quite effective if your company logo is unusual or generates interest.

A second option is to think of the outside panel of your brochure as the front cover of a book. Be sure the design informs the reader of the content, indicates the intended audience, and sufficiently engages the readers in order to catch their interest. Sometimes this can be done by using a photograph that shows people representing

the target audience engaged in an activity that is related to the topic of the brochure.

If you are designing a brochure that will be displayed in a rack or other type of holder, be aware of how much of the cover will be visible when on display and plan your design accordingly. A good rule of thumb is that the top one-third of the brochure will be visible. Plan the design to be equally effective with just the top third showing as when the entire cover is visible.

### The Underlying Organization

An effective brochure is like a book—it has a beginning, middle, and ending and tells a story. The story is developed logically, and by the end, the reader understands the purpose of the brochure.

When laying out a brochure, keep in mind the order in which the panels of the brochure will become visible as the reader unfolds it, and put the parts of the story on the appropriate panel. A good method to determine when a specific panel will be revealed is to fold a piece of paper into a brochure. Write a number sequentially on each panel as it becomes visible to you, and use the numbers to determine the sequence of the story.

One exception to this method is the back cover. If you are designing a brochure that is to be a self-mailer, then the back cover will be the mail panel where the return address, postage, and addressee information will be placed. If it is not a self-mailer, then the back panel is often used for company contact information and perhaps testimonials from satisfied customers.

### Formats for Brochure Layout

The most familiar brochure style is the standard tri-fold, six-panel layout, usually on an 8.5 x 11 inch sheet of paper. The brochure folds are parallel... the right side folds in toward the center and left side folds over the right to create a brochure that measures 3.625 inches wide x 8.5 inches high. Some variations can be created by changing the sheet size, but the basic format is the same... six panels on which to tell the story.

*“The internet is a good source for professional-quality collections of images...”*

*“The most familiar brochure style is the standard tri-fold, six-panel layout...”*

## Brochure Content and Design Fundamentals (cont.)

To add interest and possibly tell the story more effectively, try a variation on the standard tri-fold brochure. For example, fold an 8.5 by 14 inch sheet like an accordion and you'll have an entirely new way of revealing the panels. In another variation, fold the front cover so it is one-half an inch narrower, revealing a glimpse of what appears inside when folded.

For another variation, fold an 11 x 17 inch sheet in half, then in half again to create an 8.5 x 5.5 inch, 8-panel brochure. Or fold in thirds to create a super sized 6-panel trifold.

The key to all these options is to gather several sheets of paper and start folding unfolding, refolding, and reverse folding until you find a number of panels in the right size and sequence to tell your story, one page at a time.

### Professional Design and Printing

Because a brochure needs copywriting, design,

either photography or stock images, and layout, it can be very complicated and time consuming to create. Additionally, a professional looking brochure requires some complex pre-press skills. The brochure template has to adjust panel widths to accommodate the fold, with the amount of adjustment dependent on what paper is being used for the brochure. Selecting fonts and point sizes to be effective in small panels requires experience in typography. And since the cover of a brochure is so important for attracting reader attention, it requires the training and talent of a graphic designer.

We have been designing and printing brochures for our customers for many years, and we're experts at it. We will be happy to provide you with an estimate for budgeting purposes or a quotation if you are ready to proceed. For more information or to set an appointment, give us a call.

*"The key to all these options is to gather several sheets of paper and start folding..."*

## Brochure Vocabulary

**Accordion Fold:** a series of two or more parallel folds in which each fold opens in the opposite direction of the previous fold, like the pleated bellows of an accordion.

**Basic Fold:** one parallel fold folding a sheet in half producing two panels of four pages.

**Bleed:** the extension of the image beyond the trimmed edge or edges of a page.

**Gate Fold:** two or more panels folding to the center from opposing sides.

**Halftone:** a reproduction of continuous tone artwork such as photographs and paintings that breaks up the image into closely spaced dots. Uneven spacing and variations in dot size give the final image the illusion of dimension and value.

**Line Drawings:** solid black line artwork that does not require halftone reproduction.

**Paper Grain:** the predominant alignment of fibers corresponding to the direction in which the paper flows on the wire screen of the papermaking machine. It is another term for "grain direction".

**Parallel Fold:** two or more folds parallel to each other. A double parallel fold produces four panels of eight pages.

**Roll Fold:** consists of four or more panels that roll in on each other. Each panel is incrementally smaller to allow it to tuck into subsequent panels.

**Royalty-free Images:** refers to a type of license that gives you permission to use a stock image in certain ways.

**Spacing:** the interval between printed or typed lines (vertical spacing) or characters (horizontal spacing).

*"Bleed: the extension of the image beyond the trimmed edge or edges of a page."*



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## Leveraging Small Ads in Publications

*“Provide just the key  
benefits and a graphic  
to generate interest,  
and offer a free  
brochure.”*

A great way to get your brochure in the hands of your prospects is to place small ads in publications that you know your target audience will be reading. These are often small community newspapers, non-profit organization newsletters, or professional trade association magazines.

Provide just the key benefits and a graphic to generate interest, and offer a free brochure. List several ways to request the brochure (phone, email, text, website), and then follow up quickly, including a personal note thanking them for

taking the time to request it. The note is also a good place to reference something specific in the brochure to make sure they see the most important benefits.

Those who request the brochure are serious prospects. Contacting you signifies a very powerful intent on their part. Estimates are that between 25 and 33 percent of people requesting a brochure will eventually make a purchase based on the brochure, providing it is well thought out and contains the key benefits.