

What's Your Graphic Design IQ?

Can you recognize the differences between “good” and “bad” graphic design?

Here's a little “IQ test” to determine if you are a savvy connoisseur of the graphic arts.

Some of these items address solid principles of design, and some are a bit more subjective. I will point out the differences to you in the “Answers” section at the end.

For the purpose of this exercise, I've created a product, QuiggleBites Cereal (manufactured by Shermantown Grains, of course), and incorporated a hypothetical ad campaign.

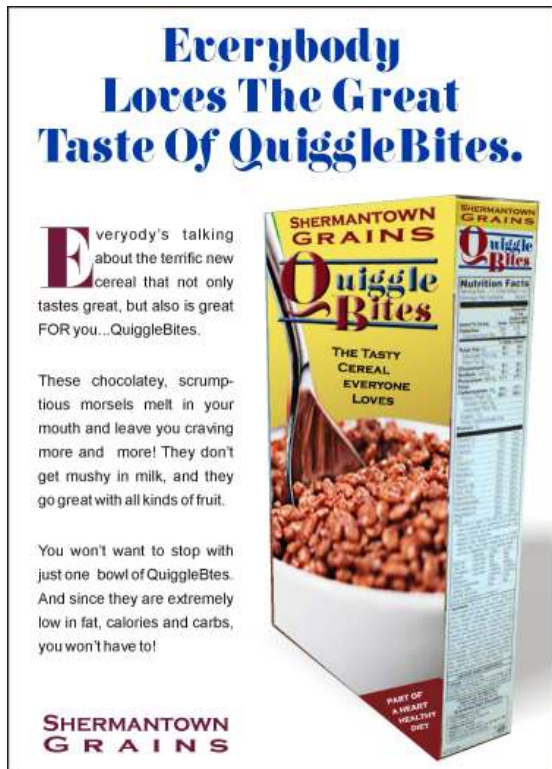
(the headlines and text are pretty bland, but since this quiz is only focused on the design, I didn't put much thought at all into the verbiage).

Each question in the test has two ad designs: one represents “bad” design, and one is “good” or “acceptable” design. The ad layout components for each question are identical as far as elements in them (same photos, text, logo, etc.), so that the item or items that make them “good” or “bad” will be clear.

Have fun...and try not to peak at the answers!

INSTRUCTIONS: Simply circle the letter of the ad that you believe is the better design in each of the ten different sections:

1.



A



B


2.

Everybody Loves The Great Taste Of QuiggleBites.

Everyody's talking about the terrific new cereal that not only tastes great, but also is great FOR you...QuiggleBites.

These chocolatey, scrumptious morsels melt in your mouth and leave you craving more and more! They don't get mushy in milk, and they go great with all kinds of fruit.

You won't want to stop with just one bowl of QuiggleBites. And since they are extremely low in fat, calories and carbs, you won't have to!



**SHERMANTOWN
GRAINS**


A

Everybody Loves The Great Taste Of QuiggleBites.

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**SHERMANTOWN
GRAINS**

B

3.


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**SHERMANTOWN
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B

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SHERMANTOWN
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SHERMANTOWN
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B

5.

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SHERMANTOWN
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SHERMANTOWN
GRAINS

B

6.

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SHERMANTOWN
GRAINS

B

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Special Offer!

**Save 50%
NOW!**

With this Coupon
Offer good on one box of
QuiggleBites only. Must have
coupon to redeem.
Offer expires 7/30/09



SHERMANTOWN
GRAINS

A

**Everybody Loves
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SHERMANTOWN
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B

8.

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SHERMANTOWN
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SHERMANTOWN
GRAINS

B

9.

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SHERMANTOWN
GRAINS

Save 50% NOW!

With this Coupon

Offer good on one box of QuiggleBites only. Must have coupon to redeem. Offer expires 7/03/09.




A



**Everybody Loves
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Save 50% NOW!

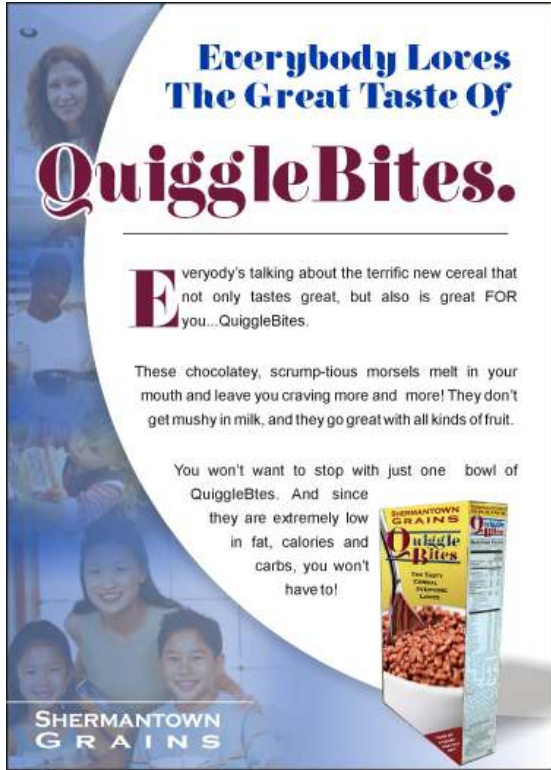
With this Coupon
Offer good on one box of QuiggleBites only. Must have coupon to redeem. Offer expires 7/03/09.



SHERMANTOWN
GRAINS

B

10.




**Everybody Loves
The Great Taste Of
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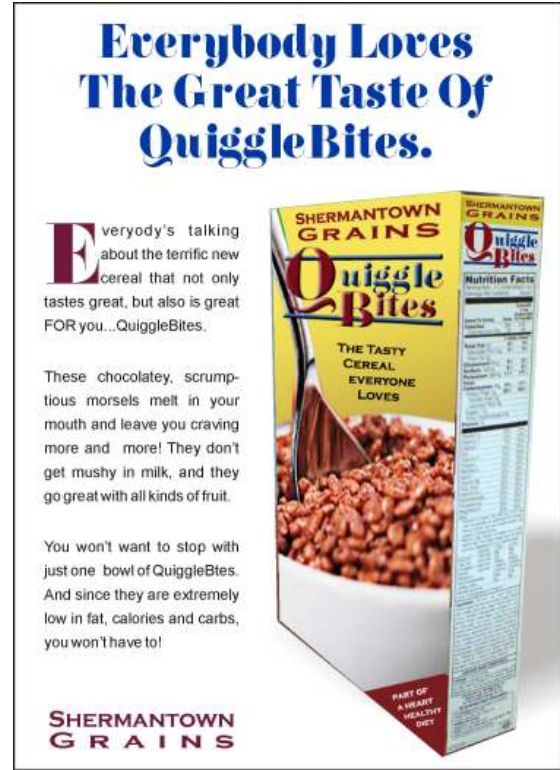
These chocolatey, scrump-tious morsels melt in your mouth and leave you craving more and more! They don't get mushy in milk, and they go great with all kinds of fruit.

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SHERMANTOWN
GRAINS

A




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SHERMANTOWN
GRAINS

B

All done? Check out answers and explanations on the next page...

1. The ad with the good (or acceptable) design is B. One principle of design you should make a note to remember: NEVER PYRAMID text! Particularly headline text! The only time it's okay to pyramid text is if you have some design reason, i.e. perhaps you are doing a Christmas ad, and want to form a Christmas Tree with your words.



A



B

2. The ad with the good (or acceptable) design is B. Another principle of design: Avoid widows...A single word on a typeset line or any objectionably short line at the end of a paragraph or headline. Furthermore, the lines of text in ad A are very ragged... another thing to avoid in the design world.



A



B

3. The ad with the good (or acceptable) design is A. A third principle of design: Avoid holes. Not only does the Shermantown logo look awkward where it is placed in B, but it also leaves a visible "hole" in the ad between the cereal box, the second paragraph and the Shermantown logo.



A



B

4. The ad with the good (or acceptable) design is B. Busy isn't better...BUT it most certainly isn't necessarily bad...you CAN make a busy ad work if you have an eye for design. Ad A and B below both have exactly the same elements in them, only B is much more organized and clean...making not only for a more professional image, but also one that easily guides your eyes through the ad, making it more cohesive and easy to follow.



A



B

5. The ad with the good (or acceptable) design is B. This one is a bit more personal preference than anything else...I tend to despise starbursts. I think they make a company look like it's of the "bargain basement" variety. You might argue that some companies ARE bargain basement companies, and hence, starbursts might be appropriate. But I would tend to argue and say that even if the business has the cheapest bunch of merchandise on the planet, they probably don't want their customers to think that they have junk. So, starbursts aren't good for ANYTHING if you ask me.



A



B

6. The ad with the good (or acceptable) design is A. Ad B not only introduces far too many fonts, but the choice of font in the black reverse box is appalling! Try to keep your designs to only two or three fonts...and you CAN use derivatives of those fonts too, i.e. bold and italics and regular together in the same ad. Also, try to choose fonts that complement each other. For example, you might choose a headline font that is a serif style, and then body copy that is sans serif. If you choose a sans serif headline font, then a totally different looking sans serif body copy font, the layout might look a bit disjointed.



A



B

7. The ad with the good (or acceptable) design is B. We covered busy ads earlier, and how you can make them work. However, there is definitely such a thing as simply having much too much stuff in one little space! This ad pushes it. Ad A is a mess! Photos everywhere, everything is crammed together, and then a coupon on top of it. I used exactly the same elements in ad B, and was able to make it “work,” but if it were up to me, I’d lose the coupon. In the real world, you don’t always have that latitude...if the clients wants a bunch of stuff in their layout, you can try to dissuade them, but the final decision is up to them.



A



B

8. The ad with the good (or acceptable) design is B. This is another instance that is probably more irritating to me than it might be to others. The photo in Ad A is only slightly rotated, and to me, looks like it's a mistake...that someone laid it in crookedly. Perhaps this goes back to the days when I had to use my t-square and triangle to make certain everything lined up perfectly...before computers. But no matter...the photo in A looks awkward to me. In ad B, you can tell that the photo is definitely meant to be rotated.



A



B

9. The ad with the good (or acceptable) design is B. Ad A is a boxy mess...text in box, photos in boxes, logo in boxes, coupon in box...ugh! If you are going to utilize boxes in your design, use them sparingly...and have a good design reason! In Ad B, we have one box, plus the coupon, and the box is placed in a rather artful manor with the accompanying photos. Also, the cereal box photo breaks the border of the box, hence, giving the ad more dimension and appeal. This layout also guides your eye through the ad more effectively than ad A.



A



B

10. This question really doesn't have a right or wrong answer. Ad B was one of our earlier "good" ads, and I'm using it here to make a point. Ad A below has more design elements to it, and a more unique layout than B. While B is okay, it's really pretty bland. Ad A has a bit more "pizzazz," and possibly more appeal to those viewing the two ads, hence it might very well receive more attention. Since the name of the game in advertising and marketing is getting customer attention, ad A probably wins the competition here. The moral of the story: eye catching graphic design can take your company image to the next level and beyond, and help you get more attention from your target market.



A



B

What's Your Score?

If you scored 10, you're quite the graphics aficionado! Congratulations!!

8-9: you know your design. Good job!

5-7: you know a couple things, but don't have an innate eye for design.

4 or less: make sure that your designer of choice comes highly recommended by folks who scored at least 8 on this test.