

Design a label-style title



Words in a shape convey a pleasing blend of informality and permanence. *Continued* ▶

Design a label-style title

Words in a shape make a simple and attractive point of interest



Add a little fun to your next cover by giving it a label-style title. The simplicity, depth and real-object feel of a label yields great results on a wide variety of backgrounds. A label draws the reader's eye immediately, it conveys a pleasing blend of informality and permanence, and it's especially useful when you have no other artwork. Attention to placement and contrasts are the keys to producing good designs.

Activate your design

A label-style title conveys a sense of *deliberate design*. It pulls the eye across empty space like a painting on an empty wall and engages the reader with its shape and presence.

You have a blank page and a title to put on it. Where do you start?

(A) One approach is to *fill up the space with type*. The result is readable and stands out on a shelf, but it's static and has no artistry or grace.

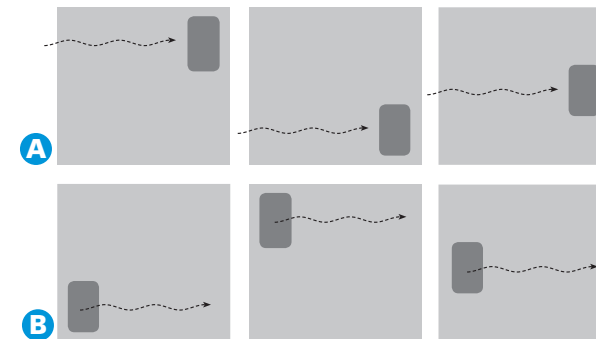
(B) A label turns the empty space into a visual force that pushes the eye rightward, energizing the design. The label-style treatment creates a focal point and mimics reality, too. That's design.



Off center creates motion—but which side?

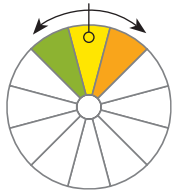
Because we read left to right, our eyes naturally drift to the right—we refer to this as riding the “read breeze”—which affects our design. **(A)** A label on the right is a *destination*—our eyes move *across* empty space *toward* the label. This is strong design.

(B) Conversely, a label on the left is read first, then the eye drifts rightward into empty and unrewarding space. Acceptable design but not as strong.



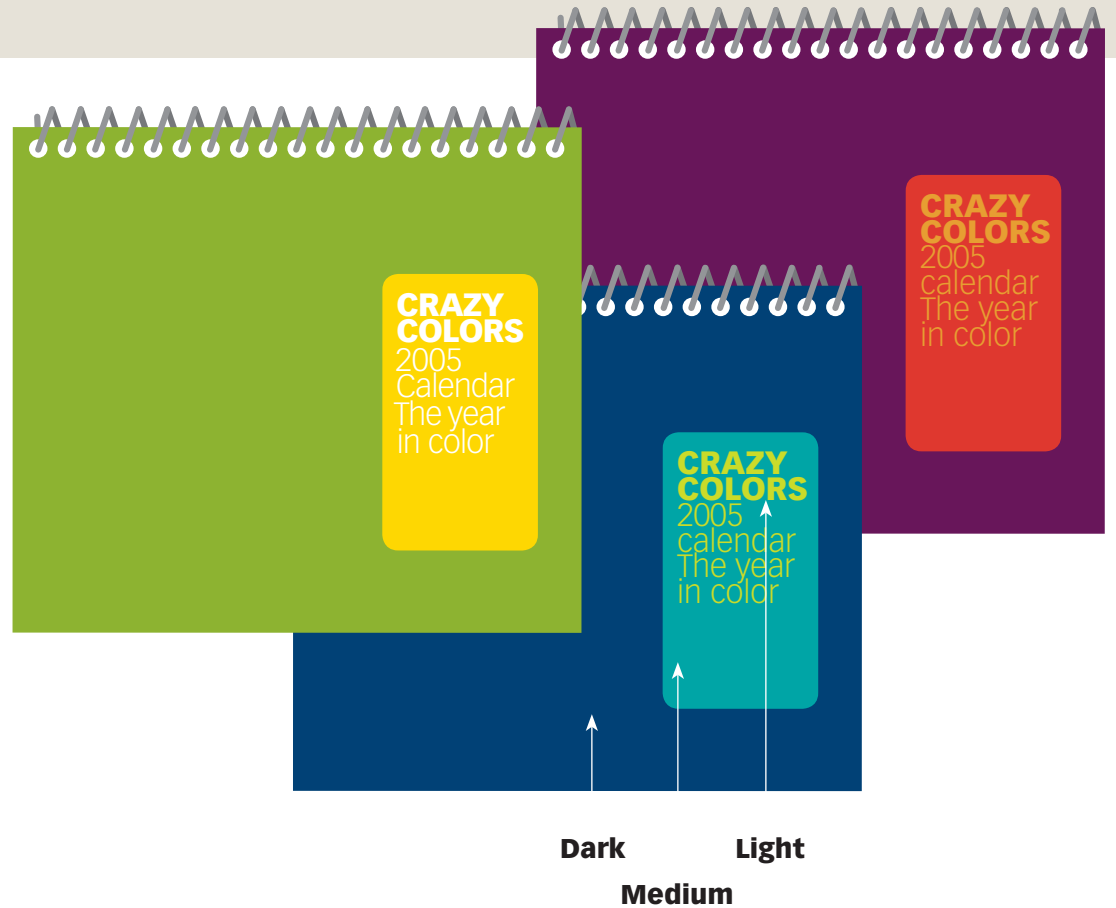
Color

For a fresh, inviting look, use adjacent (analogous) colors, which always work well together. Use dark, medium and light values for a vibrant contrast.



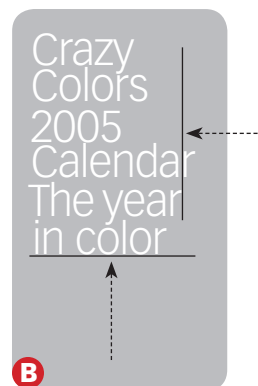
Analogous colors are easy to use—pick a color on the wheel, and then pick the color next to it.

Analogous colors make harmonious palettes because they have a color in common. Orange, red and violet, for example, all contain red (below).

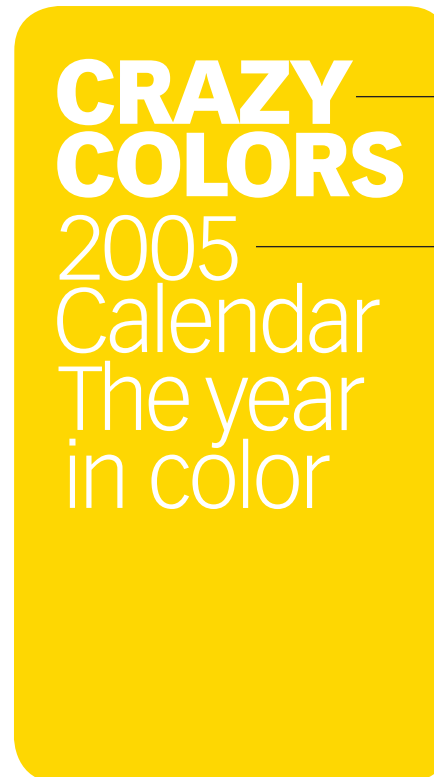


Type

The main visual interest on the small field is its typography. Here, a dense block of simple, bold type complements the simple, bold rectangle.



Default leading (spacing) that's correct at text size is too airy at headline size. Squeeze the air out of your headline with negative leading and tight letterspacing. (A) 16.5/19.5 pt, letterspacing 0, (B) 16.5/13.5 pt, letterspacing -30. The result is a bold block of type inside the bold rectangle.



Title

Uppercase and bold

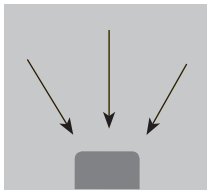
Support copy

Lowercase and light

Type is one size and color, differentiated only by contrasts of weight and case. You'll need a type family that contains both light and heavy weights to ensure type harmony.

Title tab

Here's the label as a 3-D tab. Fun and realistic, too, a tab shrinks your title field to a manageable size, and it works great atop photos.



A tab does more than provide space for type. It reduces your field to a manageable size and creates an all-eyes-on-me focal point that you can't miss on an open field.



The best background photos have fairly uniform texture and value. What do you do if you have a busy photo (above, left)? One solution is to enlarge a detail (above, right) until it smooths out.

Along with a drop shadow, bleeding the tab off the edge fastens it to the page and, in this case, mimics a true sewn-on fabric tab. The depth of the shadow should be similar to the material's depth. Our shadow settings: Opacity: **60%**, X-Offset: **0p0**, Y-Offset: **0p2**, Blur: **0p4**, Mode: **Multiply**





Banners and corners

Sometimes your photo is key; your readers really need to see it. In such a case, set your label as a low-key accent that plays a supporting role.



A label can be any shape. Top-heavy image? Balance it by running a label across the bottom. Have an open corner or free space along the side? Put your label there. Apply a slight drop shadow to complete the look.





Contrast

Give your label a voice—the difference of light and dark determines the “voice” and visibility of your label. High, medium and low contrasts are similar in voice to yell, speak, whisper.

Using only colors from the photo, dark type on a medium-value label (A) yields soft contrast; the type does not jump off the page, but it’s seen and heard in a speaking voice. Light type on dark (B) is a stronger difference and makes a more forceful presentation.



Note: In high contrast, a white line divides the information within the label.



Colors of label and type will say a lot in your design. The most harmonious place to find colors is right in the image; select light, medium and dark values of each.



Article resources



Typefaces

- 1 [Vectora Black](#) | 16.5/13.5 pt
- 2 [Vectora Light](#) | 16.5/13.5 pt
- 3 [Helvetica Neue Light Ext.](#) | 20 pt
- 4 [Helvetica Neue Heavy Cond.](#) | 14/14 pt
- 5 [Helvetica Neue Light Cond.](#) | 14/14 pt
- 6 Didi Regular | 54 pt
- 7 (a-b) [Avenir Light](#) | a) 24/28 pt, b) 10.8/12 pt

Images

- 8 [Phototone Backgrounds, Paper & Textiles CD](#)
- 9 (a-b) [Photos.com](#) | [a](#) [b](#)

Colors

- 10** C0 M15 Y100 K0
- 11** C40 M0 Y100 K15
- 12** C25 M0 Y100 K0
- 13** C90 M5 Y40 K0
- 14** C90 M55 Y0 K45
- 15** C10 M40 Y90 K0
- 16** C15 M100 Y100 K0
- 17** C40 M90 Y10 K45
- 18** C0 M100 Y85 K0
- 19** C95 M60 Y45 K30
- 20** C20 M25 Y35 K0
- 21** C40 M30 Y60 K25
- 22** C25 M90 Y95 K45
- 23** C45 M60 Y65 K55



Subscribe to Before & After

Did you enjoy this article? Subscribe, and become a more capable, confident designer for pennies per article. To learn more, go to <http://www.bamagazine.com/Subscribe>

E-mail this article

To pass along a free copy of this article to others, [click here](#).

Join our e-list

To be notified by e-mail of new articles as they become available, go to <http://www.bamagazine.com/email>

Before & After magazine

Before & After has been sharing its practical approach to graphic design since 1990. Because our modern world has made designers of us all (ready or not), Before & After is dedicated to making graphic design understandable, useful and even fun for everyone.

John McWade Publisher and creative director

Gaye McWade Associate publisher

Vincent Pascual Staff designer

Dexter Mark Abellera Staff designer

Editorial board **Gwen Amos, Carl Winther**

Before & After magazine

323 Lincoln Street, Roseville, CA 95678

Telephone 916-784-3880

Fax 916-784-3995

E-mail mailbox@bamagazine.com

www <http://www.bamagazine.com>

Copyright ©2005 Before & After magazine, ISSN 1049-0035. All rights reserved

You may pass this article around, but you may not alter it, and you may not charge for it. You may quote brief sections for review. If you do this, please credit Before & After magazine, and [let us know](#). To feature free Before & After articles on your Web site, [please contact us](#). For permission to include all or part of this article in another work, [please contact us](#).

Before & After is made to fit your binder

Before & After articles are intended for permanent reference. All are titled and numbered.

For the current table of contents, [click here](#). To save time and paper, a paper-saver format of this article, suitable for one- or two-sided printing, is provided on the following pages.

For presentation format

[Print: \(Specify pages 1–10\)](#)



Print

Format: Landscape
Page Size: Fit to Page

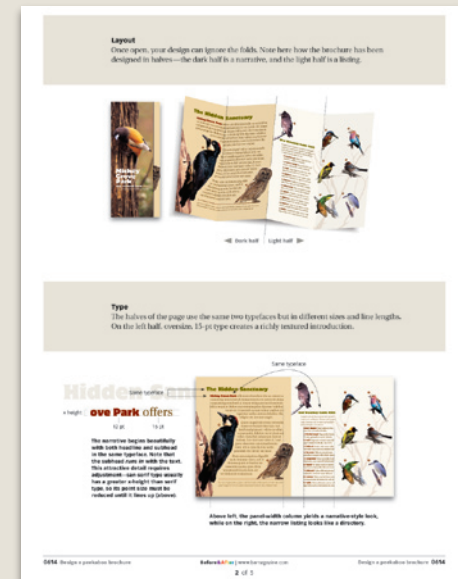


Save

Presentation format or
Paper-saver format

For paper-saver format

[Print: \(Specify pages 12–16\)](#)



Design a label-style title

Words in a shape convey a pleasing blend of informality and permanence.



Add a little fun to your next cover by giving it a label-style title. The simplicity, depth and real-object feel of a label yields great results on a wide variety of backgrounds. A label draws the reader's eye immediately, it conveys a pleasing blend of informality and permanence, and it's especially useful when you have no other artwork. Attention to placement and contrasts are the keys to producing good designs.

Activate your design

A label-style title conveys a sense of *deliberate design*. It pulls the eye across empty space like a painting on an empty wall and engages the reader with its shape and presence.

You have a blank page and a title to put on it. Where do you start?

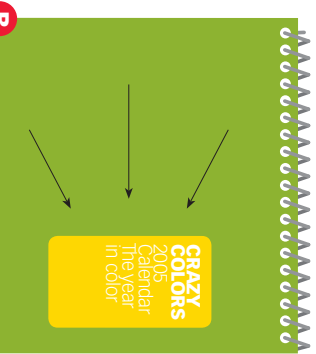
(A) One approach is to fill up the space with type. The result is readable and stands out on a shelf, but it's static and has no artistry or grace.



A



B

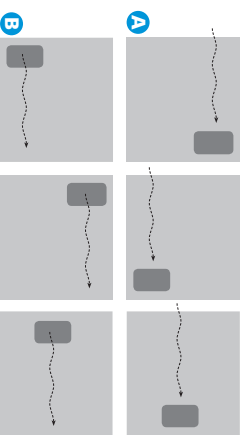


(B) A label turns the empty space into a visual force that pushes the eye rightward, energizing the design. The label-style treatment creates a focal point and mimics reality, too. That's design.

Off center creates motion—but which side?

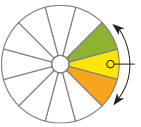
Because we read left to right, our eyes naturally drift to the right—we refer to this as riding the “read breeze”—which affects our design. **(A)** A label on the right is a *destination*—our eyes move across empty space toward the label. This is strong design.

(B) Conversely, a label on the left is read first, then the eye drifts rightward into empty and unrewarding space. Acceptable design but not as strong.



Color

For a fresh, inviting look, use adjacent (analogous) colors, which always work well together. Use dark, medium and light values for a vibrant contrast.



Analogous colors are easy to use—pick a color on the wheel, and then pick the color next to it.

Analogous colors make harmonious palettes because they have a color in common. Orange, red and violet, for example, all contain red (below).



Blue

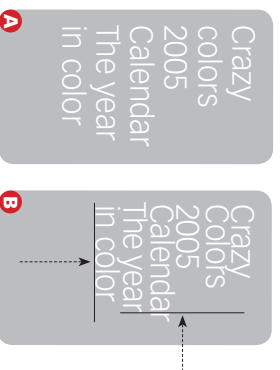
Red



Dark Medium Light

Type

The main visual interest on the small field is its typography. Here, a dense block of simple, bold type complements the simple, bold rectangle.



Default leading (spacing) that's correct at text size is too airy at headline size. Squeeze the air out of your headline with negative leading and tight letterspacing. (A) 16.5/19.5 pt, letterspacing 0, (B) 16.5/13.5 pt, letterspacing -30. The result is a bold block of type inside the bold rectangle.



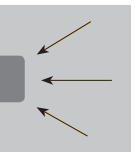
Title
Uppercase and bold

Support copy
Lowercase and light

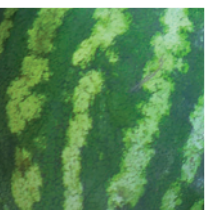
Type is one size and color, differentiated only by contrasts of weight and case. You'll need a type family that contains both light and heavy weights to ensure type harmony.

Title tab

Here's the label as a 3-D tab. Fun and realistic, too, a tab shrinks your title field to a manageable size, and it works great atop photos.



A tab does more than provide space for type. It reduces your field to a manageable size and creates an all-eyes-on-me focal point that you can't miss on an open field.



The best background photos have fairly uniform texture and value. What do you do if you have a busy photo (above, left)? One solution is to enlarge a detail (above, right) until it smooths out.

Along with a drop shadow, bleeding the tab off the edge fastens it to the page and, in this case, mimics a true sewn-on fabric tab. The depth of the shadow should be similar to the material's depth. Our shadow settings: Opacity: 60%, X-Offset: 0p0, Y-Offset: 0p2, Blur: 0p4, Mode: Multiply



Banners and corners

Sometimes your photo is key; your readers really need to see it. In such a case, set your label as a low-key accent that plays a supporting role.



A label can be any shape. Top-heavy image?

Balance it by running a label across the bottom. Have an open corner or free space along the side? Put your label there. Apply a slight drop shadow to complete the look.



Contrast

Give your label a voice—the difference of light and dark determines the “voice” and visibility of your label. High, medium and low contrasts are similar in voice to yell, speak, whisper.

Using only colors from the photo, dark type on a medium-value label (A) yields soft contrast; the type does not jump off the page, but it's seen and heard in a speaking voice. Light type on dark (B) is a stronger difference and makes a more forceful presentation.



Note: In high contrast, a white line divides the information within the label.



Colors of label and type will say a lot in your design. The most harmonious place to find colors is right in the image; select light, medium and dark values of each.





Typefaces

- 1 **Vectora Black** | 16.5/13.5 pt
- 2 **Vectora Light** | 16.5/13.5 pt
- 3 **Helvetica Neue Light Ext.** | 20 pt
- 4 **Helvetica Neue Heavy Cond.** | 14/14 pt
- 5 **Helvetica Neue Light Cond.** | 14/14 pt
- 6 **Didi Regular** | 54 pt
- 7 **(a-b) Avenir Light** | a) 24/28 pt, b) 10.8/12 pt

Colors

- 10 C0 M15 Y100 K0
- 11 C40 M0 Y100 K15
- 12 C25 M0 Y100 K0
- 13 C90 M5 Y40 K0
- 14 C90 M55 Y0 K45
- 15 C10 M40 Y90 K0
- 16 C15 M100 Y100 K0
- 17 C40 M90 Y10 K45
- 18 C0 M100 Y85 K0
- 19 C95 M60 Y45 K30
- 20 C20 M25 Y35 K0
- 21 C40 M30 Y60 K25
- 22 C25 M90 Y95 K45
- 23 C45 M60 Y65 K55

Images

- 8 **Phototone Backgrounds, Paper & Textiles CD**
- 9 **(a-b) Photos.com** | a) b)

Subscribe to Before & After

Did you enjoy this article? Subscribe, and become a more capable, confident designer for pennies per article. To learn more, go to <http://www.bamagazine.com/Subscribe>

E-mail this article

To pass along a free copy of this article to others, [click here](#).

Join our e-list

To be notified by e-mail of new articles as they become available, go to <http://www.bamagazine.com/email>

Before & After magazine

Before & After has been sharing its practical approach to graphic design since 1990. Because our modern world has made designers of us all (ready or not), Before & After is dedicated to making graphic design understandable, useful and even fun for everyone.

John McWade Publisher and creative director
Gaye McWade Associate publisher
Vincent Pascual Staff designer
Dexter Mark Abellera Staff designer
 Editorial board **Gwen Amos, Carl Winther**

Before & After magazine
 323 Lincoln Street, Roseville, CA 95678
 Telephone 916-784-3880
 Fax 916-784-3995
 E-mail mailbox@bamagazine.com
[www http://www.bamagazine.com](http://www.bamagazine.com)

Copyright ©2005 Before & After magazine. ISSN 1049-0035. All rights reserved

You may pass this article around, but you may not alter it, and you may not charge for it. You may quote brief sections for review. If you do this, please credit Before & After magazine, and [let us know](#). To feature free Before & After articles on your Web site, [please contact us](#). For permission to include all or part of this article in another work, [please contact us](#).