

One- Line Design

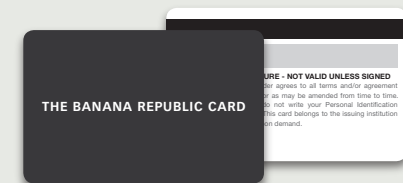
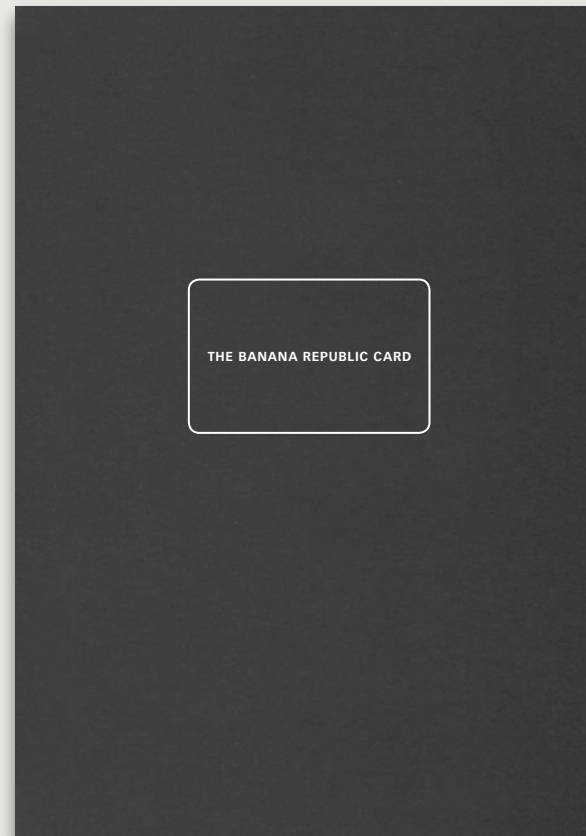


Make expressive designs easily and quickly with just a line. *Continued* ▶

One-line design

It can look classy, it can look festive, and it's always inexpensive. Here are nine easy ways to make good designs with just a line.

There you are, shopping again at Banana Republic, when beside the cash register this credit-card application catches your eye. How did it do it?—it's basically just a black page. Its strength is in its simplicity—one powerful color, one line of text, one familiar shape. That's all it takes; anything more—photos, graphics, borders and so on—would weaken it. What's nice for the designer is that this technique is so easy. Have a look.



Simple, low key, effective

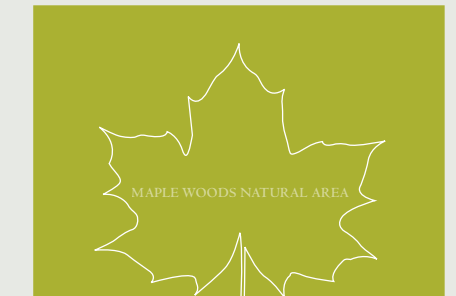
A credit-card-size rectangle is all it takes to convey exactly what's inside (if you miss it, the word *card* backs it up). Black card color extends to fill the cover powerfully.



1 Start by tracing Many images can be traced with the pen tool; all you need is a clear outline, which you'll find in stand-alone objects (above) or as part of larger images.

Emphasize leaf or name

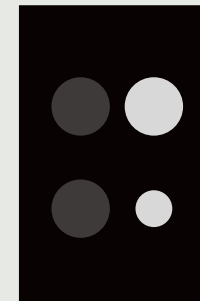
(Above) On a middle-value background like the green, both white and black type show equally well; the leaf, with reduced opacity, recedes. (Right) Translucent name recedes; white leaf comes forward.



2 Use a dingbat Not handy with the pen tool? Dingbat fonts are full of interesting images; just convert to outlines, and adjust the line weight.

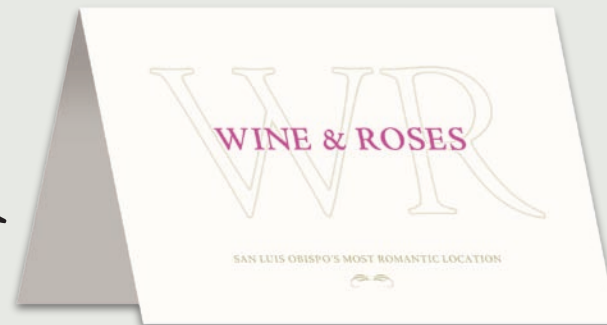
Value difference creates depth

(Right) On a dark field, the lightest object will always come forward even when it's smaller in size, (lower right).





WR



- 3 Use letterforms as art** Letters can do more than just make words—at large sizes, they can be used as artwork. Find a beautiful typeface, set it BIG, and convert to outlines.

Eliminate conflict

To keep overlapping lines from clashing (right, top), reduce the opacity of the less detailed one, in this case the outline (bottom).



- 4 Trace part of an image** When working with a more detailed image, find its most descriptive edge; here, it's the skyline. The line technique is a great way to get value from blurry or otherwise unusable photos.

Draw a single line

(Above) A single line sends a clear message; tracing the other lines (right) adds complexity and turns design into a mere *effect*.





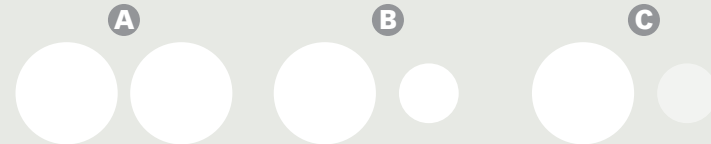
5 Crop an image It's not necessary to show a whole image to convey what it is, especially if it's an iconic shape like Gateway Arch in St. Louis. Examine your image, determine its most descriptive line, and crop out the rest.

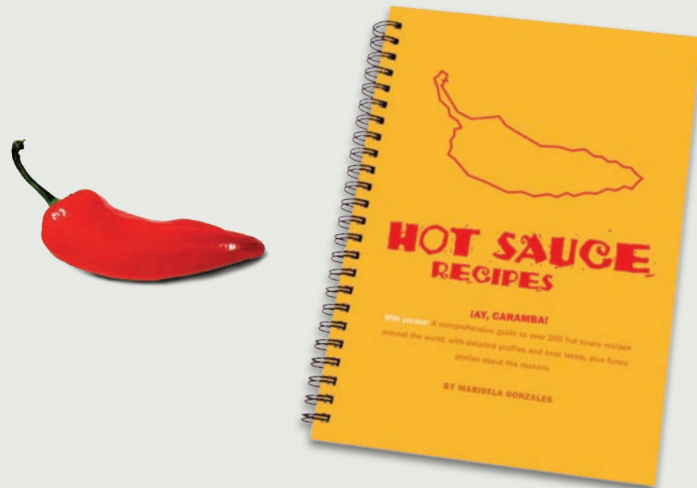
Crop for clarity Because the one-line technique eliminates details such as color and texture, concentrate on contours. In this simple example (right), it's the curve that tells the reader this is an arch.



6 Repeat an object Get more out of your image by repeating it several times. Create difference and depth by rotating, changing size, or applying a unique color to each.

Create distance (A) Same-size and value objects have no depth. (B) Shrink one, and it appears to be further away. (C) Reduce its opacity, and it recedes even further.

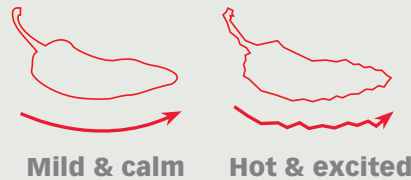




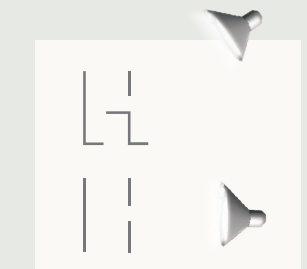
7 Embellish a line Every line, whether fat or thin, curved or jagged, communicates a feeling. Here, exaggerate the smooth line to convey hotness and excitement.

8 Draw only the shadow side Another way to convey dimension is to outline only an object's shadow, which creates the illusion of light.

Exaggerate the line
Both silhouettes (right) say *pepper*. However, to convey the feeling of what it's like to eat one of these, a more animated, jagged line is an appropriate choice.



Lighting angle is key
The key in determining the ideal shadow is when it becomes very descriptive. Note, right, how the light source from 45° above describes the **H** better than straight from the side.





Article resources



Typefaces

- 1 [Centaur MT](#) | 12 pt
- 2 (a-b) [Vectora Roman](#) | a) 9 pt
b) 8.5 pt
- 3 [Baileywick Happy Grams](#) | 82 pt
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a) 16 pt, b) 9.5 pt
- 8 [Adobe Wood Type Ornaments 1](#) | 22 pt
- 9 [Coronet Bold](#) | 13 pt
- 10 [Broadway D](#) | 11 pt

Colors

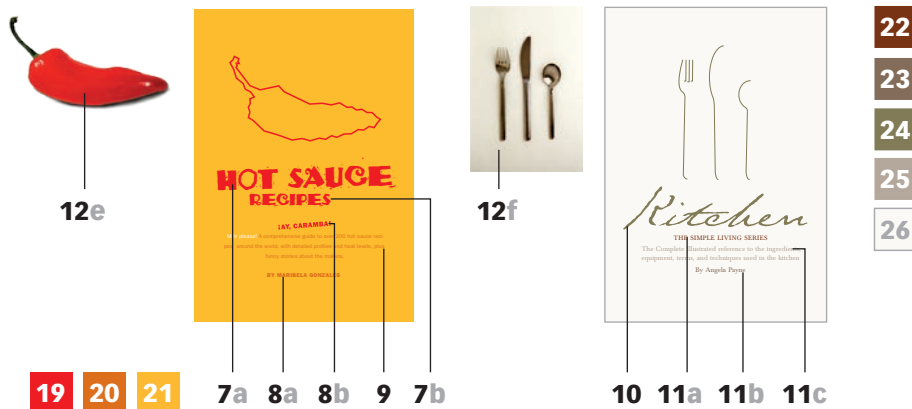
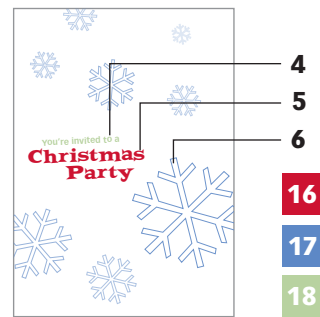
- 13 C30 M15 Y100 K60
- 14 C30 M15 Y100 K40
- 15 C30 M15 Y100 K5
- 16 C0 M0 Y0 K100
- 17 C0 M0 Y0 K22
- 18 C15 M80 Y0 K5
- 19 C30 M20 Y50 K0
- 20 C25 M90 Y95 K25
- 21 C0 M35 Y100 K7

Images

- 11 [Photos.com](#)
- 12 [iStockphoto.com](#)



Article resources



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a) 9 pt, b) 11 pt
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- 10 [Texas Hero](#) | 148 pt
- 11 (a-c) [Baskerville](#) | a) 16 pt
b) 17.5/9 pt, c) 17.5 pt

Images

- 12 (a-f) [iStockphoto.com](#) | [a](#) [b](#) [c](#) [d](#)
[e](#) [f](#)

Colors

- 13 C70 M38 Y5 K12
- 14 C3 M3 Y40 K0
- 15 C0 M0 Y0 K60
- 16 C0 M100 Y80 K15
- 17 C65 M40 Y0 K0
- 18 C50 M0 Y90 K20
- 19 C0 M100 Y100 K0
- 20 C0 M65 Y100 K0
- 21 C0 M30 Y90 K0
- 22 C25 M80 Y95 K45
- 23 C0 M20 Y30 K60
- 24 C40 M35 Y65 K25
- 25 C0 M20 Y32 K58
- 26 C1 M2 Y3 K0



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For presentation format

[Print:](#) (Specify pages 1–9)



Print

Format: Landscape
Page Size: Fit to Page

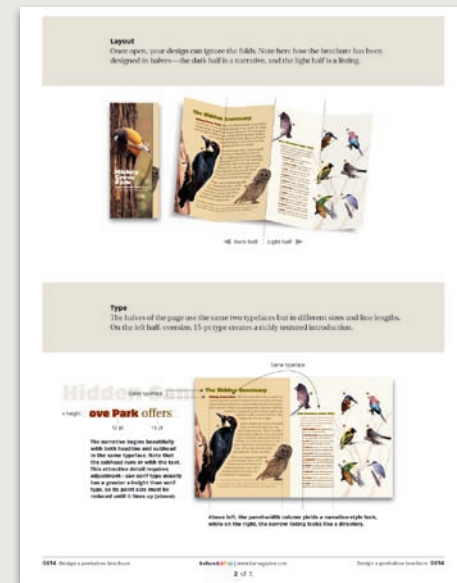


Save

Presentation format or
Paper-saver format

For paper-saver format

[Print:](#) (Specify pages 11–15)



Layout
Once open, your design can ignore the folds. Note here how the brochure has been designed in halves—the dark half is a narrative, and the light half is a listing.

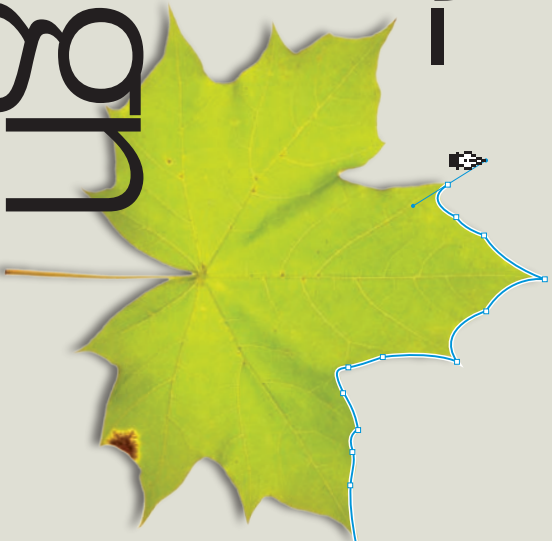


Type
The halves of the page use the same two typefaces but in different sizes and line lengths. On the left half, oversize, 15-pt type creates a richly textured introduction.



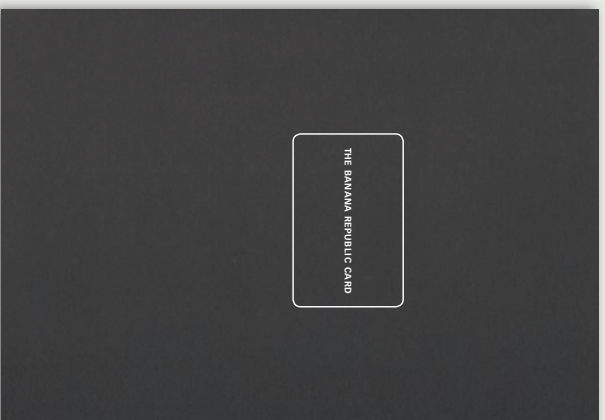
Above left, the panel-width column yields a narrative-style look, while on the right, the narrow listing looks like a directory.

One-Line Design



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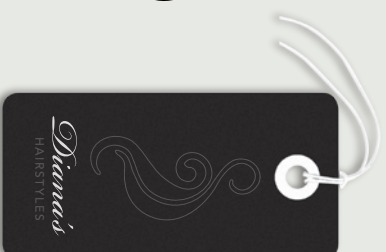
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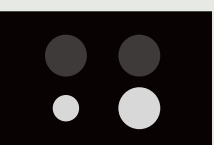
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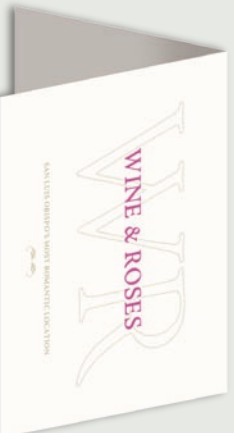


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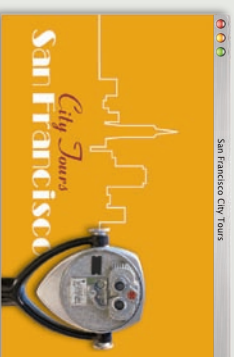
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WVR



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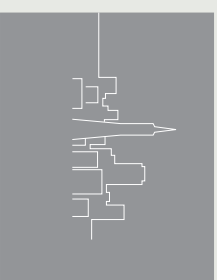
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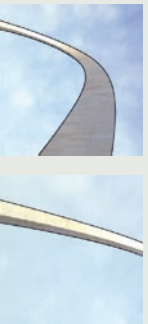
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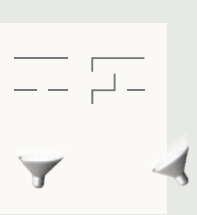
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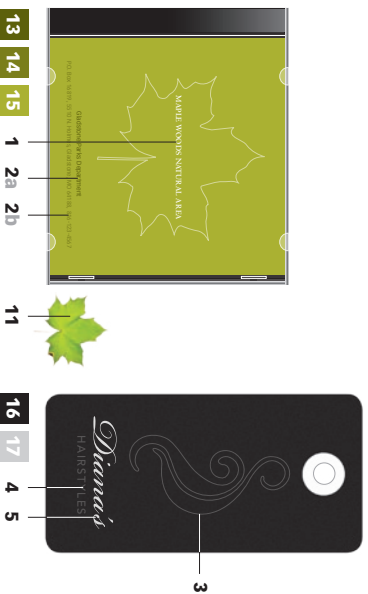


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Article resources



13 14 15

1 2a 2b

11

16 17

4 5

3

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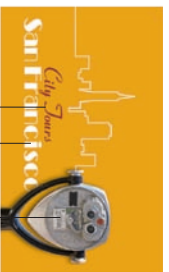
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- 11 [Photos.com](https://www.photos.com)
- 12 [iStockphoto.com](https://www.stockphoto.com)



18 19

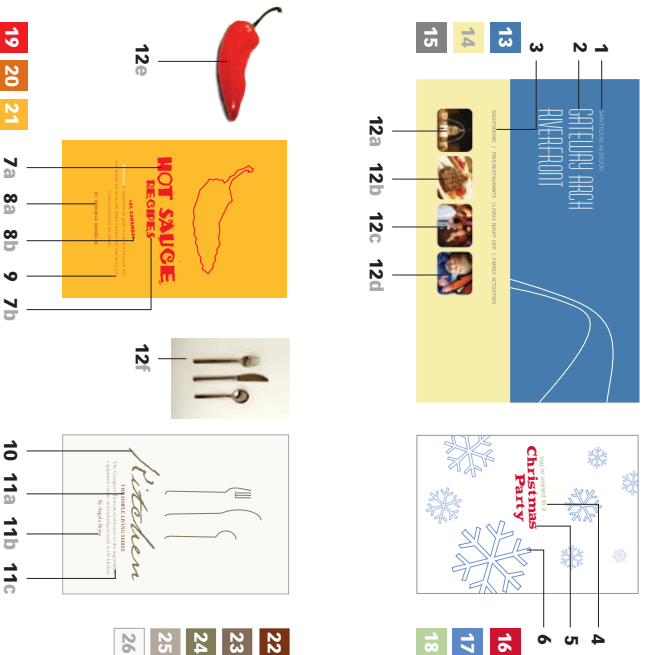
7a 8 7b 6



20 21

9 10 12

Article resources



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12a 12b 12c 12d

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16
17
18

12e

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19 20 21

7a 8a 8b 9 7b

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- 26 C1 M2 Y3 K0

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