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POUSH 23, 1423 BS

e-mail: nextstep@thedailystar.net

# NEXT STEP

## LEARNING THE G OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

Graphic design is a skill that has been gaining immense popularity over the last few years due to the technological surge, in spite of its existence as a discipline ever since the advent of printing. Keep reading to understand what graphic design really is and how to get started in this field, be it as a hobby or a career.

### WHAT IS GRAPHIC DESIGN?

In its most basic form, graphic design is visual communication. It involves the art of photography, illustration and typography to communicate a message, idea or identity. Everything starting from a logo to the format of this newspaper page you're reading involves graphic design.

### WHAT EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND DOES ONE REQUIRE TO LEARN THIS SKILL?

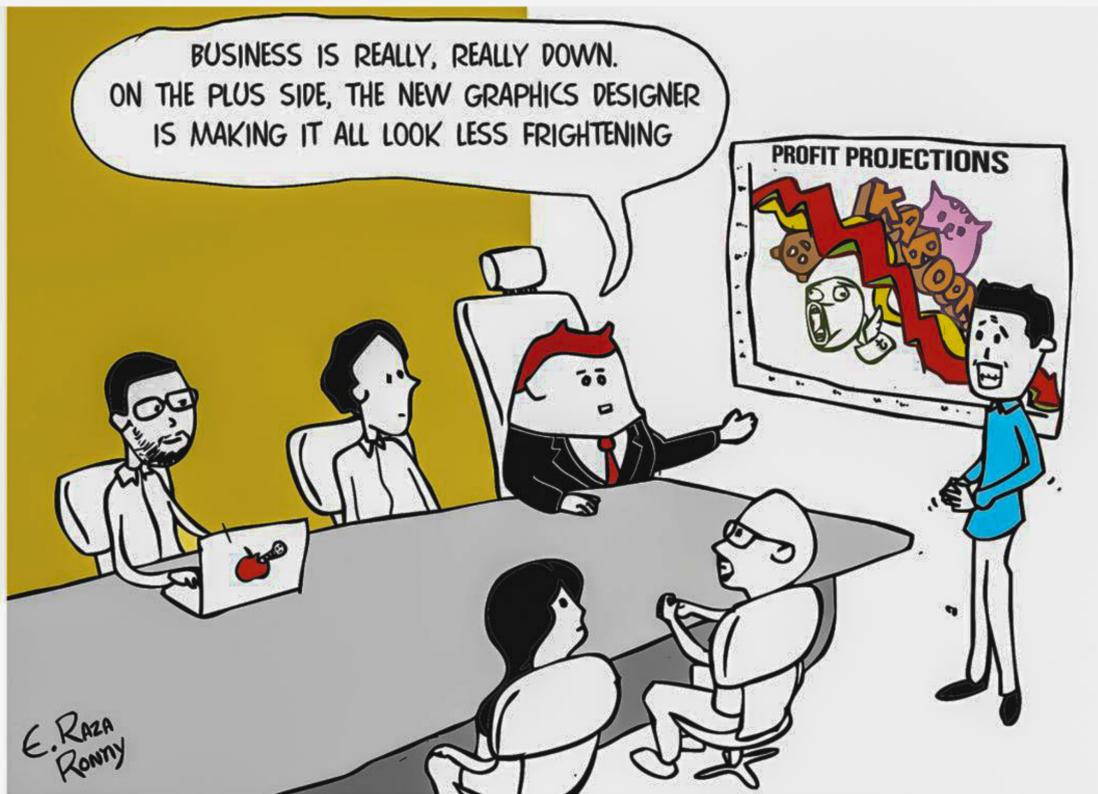
As long as you have a basic understanding of computer graphics and design software, along with problem solving and communication skills, graphic design is not rocket science. But of course, the unique element that degrees cannot teach you is creativity, which is perhaps the most crucial ladder that helps you climb up the levels of graphic design.

### HOW DOES ONE GET STARTED?

There are numerous websites, tutorials and books one can access, not only to learn the basics, but to gain expertise as well. There are many YouTube channels and playlists for beginner level Photoshop, Illustrator, and in fact any other software related to graphic design. Some even come with practice templates, for example TastyTuts Creative Tutorials by Gareth David.

If one is more interested in certified online courses, Udacity, Pluralsight, Lynda and Coursera offer theoretical as well as practical project-based courses. Even though all of these are not available for free, one can always apply for financial aid (if available) to study the paid ones. However, learning the tools and skills is not the same as being a good graphic designer. Tabriz Haidary, who is a self-taught photographer and graphic designer currently working at Business Development and Communication, MIB Spirit Ltd, remarks, "There is this creative gap people tend to ignore. Just because you have watched and mastered numerous tutorials, it does not make you a very creative person—although it might make you very skilled. So practicing creativity is the key here."

### WHAT TOOLS/SOFTWARE DO YOU NEED TO GET STARTED AND HOW



### LONG DOES IT TAKE TO MASTER THE BASICS?

There is a massive range of software out there that one can use to learn graphic design. Paid packages include software like Photoshop and Illustrator from Adobe and CorelDRAW from Corel. On the free end, there is Gimp and Inkscape. However, Photoshop and Illustrator are often mandatory skills required if one is to get hired for agencies or companies, so it is suggested one master these at one point.

The learning curve tends to vary based on the technical familiarity, curiosity, and capability but a beginner can take around 15 days to understand the complete basics. However, becoming an expert requires

months of practice, observation and resilience. Just like art, one can never know enough when it comes to graphic design!

### WHAT ARE THE CAREER PROSPECTS AND DEMAND OF GRAPHIC DESIGNERS IN THE JOB MARKET?

Graphic design will forever be in high global demand for marketing, interactive media, newspapers, promotional displays, and so on. Based on one's skills, there is a range of options one can pursue in this field. Editorial design, web/mobile design, illustration, 3D design/animation, corporate design (the official graphical design of a company's logo), and blogging are only a few branches.

There are freelance contracts, paid contracts and all sorts of opportunities. Akif Mustafa Khan, Content Manager of Analyzen Bangladesh states, "Sometimes it is as easy as tapping a button, sometimes it takes a little more effort. But an average designer earns the more they work, so it is more about the level of commitment than fixed salaries."

For those who enjoy it, graphic design is an art form. So what are you waiting for? Get started on your creative magic!

WORDS: SABRINA RAHMAN  
ILLUSTRATION: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

The writer is a sophomore at the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka

## 4 tips for teaching yourself GRAPHIC DESIGN

SABRINA RAHMAN

### 1. COLLECT INSPIRATIONAL WORK AND TRY REPRODUCING IT

Be it starting a Pinterest board or a desktop folder, collect pieces that you like and try reproducing them yourself, without a tutorial on the first try. This helps you build analytical skills in terms of design, as well as understand processes and concepts better.

### 2. GET FEEDBACK

Design is subjective in nature, which is why considering different opinions is vital if one is to sharpen the designer's intuitions. Learning to accept constructive criticism is no easy task, but it is vital to becoming a better designer.

### 3. JOIN DESIGN COMMUNITIES

Following up on the previous point, joining online communities and groups is one of the best ways to receive feedback from beginners as well as experts. This helps you connect, socialize, and share your skills and knowledge with other designers. Being active in these communities also helps you market yourself for free, just by participating in discussions and showcasing your own designs. Besides Facebook groups, DeviantArt, Behance, Coroflot and Flickr are other popular platforms for such communities.

### 4. JOIN DESIGN CONTESTS

Nowadays there are often various graphic design competitions hosted by universities as well as government facilitators. Online communities host monthly contests and challenges as well, often with prize money or other incentives. It's important to participate in these because if done seriously, they will help you learn from the research based on the design briefs and boost your creativity at the same time. If you're persistent, you might even end up winning one (or more!) of these.

## GREENERY

The most important colour for businesses in 2017



Colour forecasters at the Pantone Colour Institute have declared "greenery" as 2017's colour of the year. Pantone's team typically spends the year studying trends in fashion, consumer products, social media and technology for influences that best describe the current mood of society and picks a colour to reflect those elements.

"We're (even) looking at street art, animation, architecture, movies and headphones," said Laurie Pressman, vice president at Pantone Colour Institute. "We capture a snapshot of what's being expressed through colour."

Pantone is specific about what counts as "greenery." The company describes it as "a fresh and zesty yellow-green shade that evokes the first days of spring when nature's greens revive, restore and renew."

"It's the green that signals vitality, energy and warmth from the sun," adds Pressman. The yellow-green colour was largely picked because it represents rebirth and regeneration.

She added that the hue is symbolic of "where we are in our lives and what we desire."

"We are so submerged in our routines and tethered to devices, but we have a great desire to disconnect and replenish," she said. More recently, green has stood out on fashion runways, in makeup and cars. For example, the "greenery" shade appeared on Mercedes and Skoda car models this year.

The green colour also represents a growing movement around protecting nature. "We're more conscious about the environment and protecting the planet," said Pressman.

With "greenery" as the chosen colour of the year, brands will want to get in on the trend with their packaging and products, from handbags to jewellery and house wares. It happened when Pantone declared Tangerine Tango its 2012 colour of the year. "People said it would never work but we were dead on," she said. "Tangerine is now a mainstream colour."

## 8 FREEBIES TO CREATE YOUR OWN VISUALS

Put that kidney away! You don't need to waste a fortune on a design agency to up your social media game. Check out these 8 super easy-to-use design tools before you splurge on a "professional" for your posts and infographics.

### 1-2. VENNGAGE & BEAM

Venngage is a drag-and-drop online design tool with tons of templates for infographics, reports, posters, promotional materials, and social media posts. The sheer wealth and variety of free recyclable graphics along with its user-friendly interface makes it a must for anyone looking to jazz up their online platforms.

Beam is Venngage's 100 percent free online chart maker. Design cute, humorous, nonsensical graphs like BuzzFeed's Cheese Lovers' series, or pick a chic colour palette, insert your data straight from Excel and let Beam work its magic.

### 3. RECITE

Visual quotations that incorporate beautiful design/photography and typography work great as motivation boosters on Facebook, Instagram and Tumblr. Recite does just that. Simply type in your quotation and see it generated on a range of templates. Pick the one that suits you best and share it on social media directly from the website.

### 4. PABLO

Pablo by Buffer is ideal for that blog header or Twitter post. Upload your own image or pick one from their vast library of high quality photos, add some text, customise your font, and voila,

the perfect social media image is at your disposal.

### 5. DESIGNBOLD

Designbold has great freebies for social media posts, document and

thing you can think of. Elegant and classy, Designbold takes an editorial approach to design, leaving you with professional-looking visuals suitable for any business presentation or luxury

image creation for social media marketers, bloggers and small businesses." Similar to Canva, the website focuses mainly on posts for social media, with a cool quote integration function for inspirational posts. While Stencil's templates boast bold typography and eye-catching, unique designs, they're part of their paid plan. However, they're great for inspiration for your own designs. With 10 free high-res images per month and plenty of classic photo filters, you will not be disappointed with the final results.

### 7-8. FIGMA & VECTR

Figma and Vectr both allow you to design your own vectors and both have desktop apps. Figma is the very "first interface design tool with real-time collaboration", which means you and your teammate can work on the same design at the same time. Both tools let you download PNGs, which means they're very cross-platform friendly. While intuitive, they're pretty technical and require a good deal of experimenting. These ones are for the true enthusiasts.

WORDS & ILLUSTRATION:  
AMIYA HALDER

The writer is In-charge of the career publication of The Daily Star and a senior at the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka



letter templates, blog and ebook designs, infographics, posters, stickers, brochures, events and invitation cards, online and Facebook ads, and almost any-

magazine page.

### 6. STENCIL

In the company's own words, Stencil is a "ridiculously simple