



Tips and tools
FOR THE WRITING WORLD

Proposal Design and Layout

Good proposal design differentiates your business capabilities over your competitor's. There are several steps you can take to make the process go more smoothly and to help you create an impressive document that makes your company stand out.

KNOW THE SPECS

Proposals often come with strict guidelines: miss one and your proposal could be rejected before it's even read. Create a checklist so you know all the rules at the outset. Here are some things to include:

Page count. You will likely have to plan the number and size of graphics or tables to keep the page count from spilling over.

Fonts. Find out the fonts and sizes for both text and graphics.

Margins. Many proposals require 1-inch margins.

Format. Does the proposal have to be submitted in Microsoft Word? If not, consider hiring a professional designer to lay it out in Adobe InDesign.

KNOW YOUR BRAND

Effective branding makes your proposal stand out. Be sure to leverage these elements in your design:

Logo. Feature your logo on the cover, back cover, divider pages, and alongside company contact or "about us" information. No need to put it on every page—but repeating it throughout the document helps reinforce your brand.

Color. Color has impact! Use your brand's color palette in graphics, headlines, subheads, callout boxes, and tables.

Look at your brand with fresh eyes. Check out your competitors' marketing materials and website. If your brand looks dated or shabby in comparison, it's time to hire a professional designer or firm. They'll develop a fresh, contemporary look that will resonate with your audience.

KNOW THE STRATEGIES

Even with strict formatting limitations, there are effective design strategies you can use:

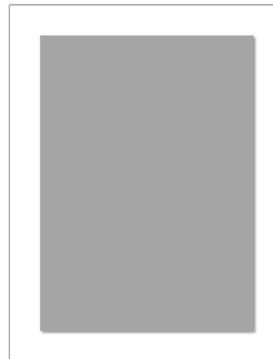
Typography. Vary font size with larger headings and subheads wherever possible, and don't be afraid to make key words and phrases bold. Color is also an effective way to organize your content.

Graphics. Professional and engaging graphics are critical. Consider hiring a designer to create the graphics for your proposal and to choose photography. And be sure your selection of images are gender- and race-inclusive.

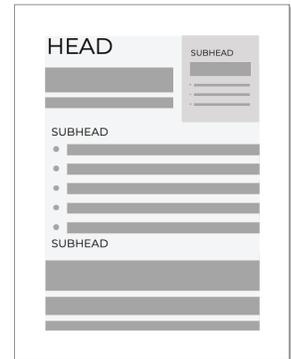
White space: Try to leave extra breathing room on the page: people are more receptive to your content when their eyes have a place to rest. Encourage your writers to cut text using plain language and readability tools.

Separate copy into smaller paragraphs and bulleted lists. The graphic below shows how you can use white space to transform solid pages of text into appealing and easy to read content.

BEFORE



AFTER



Proposal design and layout can be challenging. But using these techniques will help your proposal stand out and give your business an advantage over the competition.

