

GAME-CHANGING HACKS FOR DIRECT MAIL

PREPARED BY DANIELLE WALLACE @ GROWBETTER

Hi, I'm Danielle @GrowBetter!



I partner with small and midsize nonprofits to significantly improve their fundraising!

Most nonprofits see a 2 - 3X increase in revenue per campaign.

agenda

- Why Formatting is a *Make or Break*
- The Reading Curve
- Signposts
- Typography Basics
- Common Pitfalls

**why is formatting a
make or break?**



“Good creative can’t save bad fundraising. But bad creative kills good fundraising.” - Me



What is the 40-40-20 Rule?

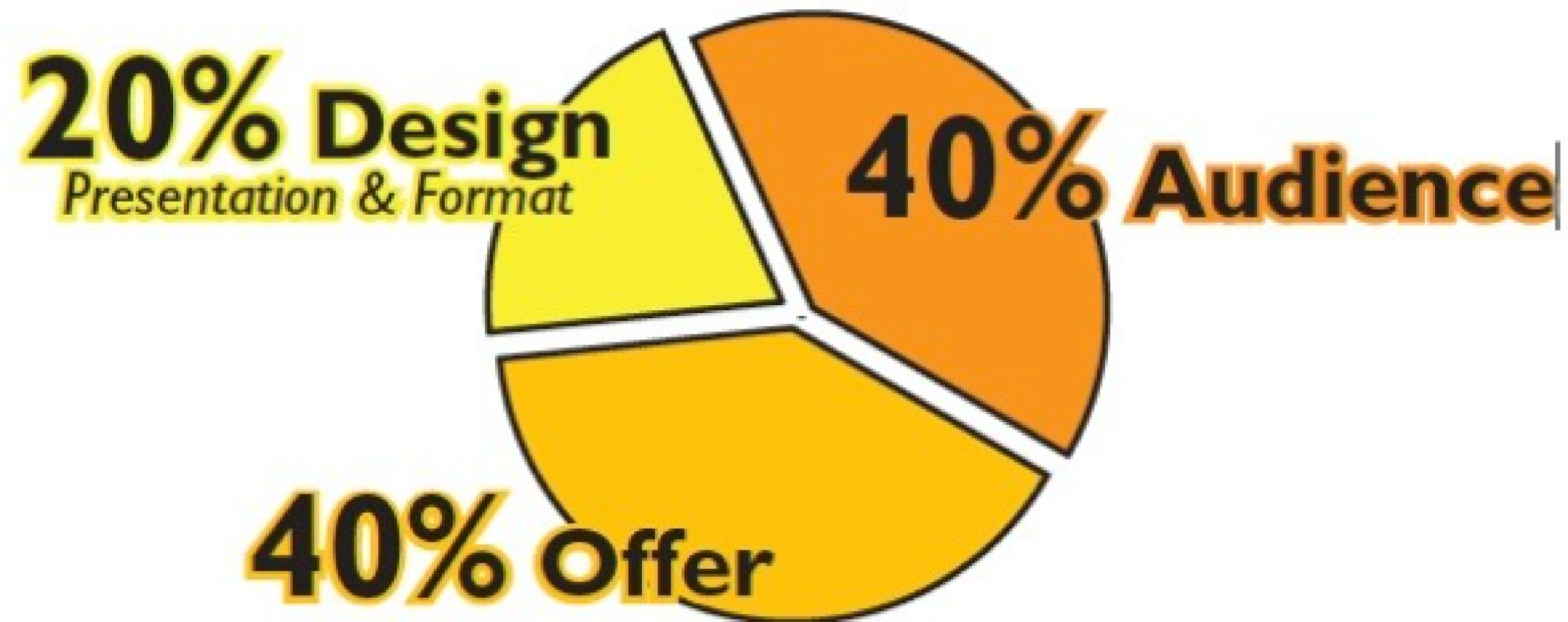


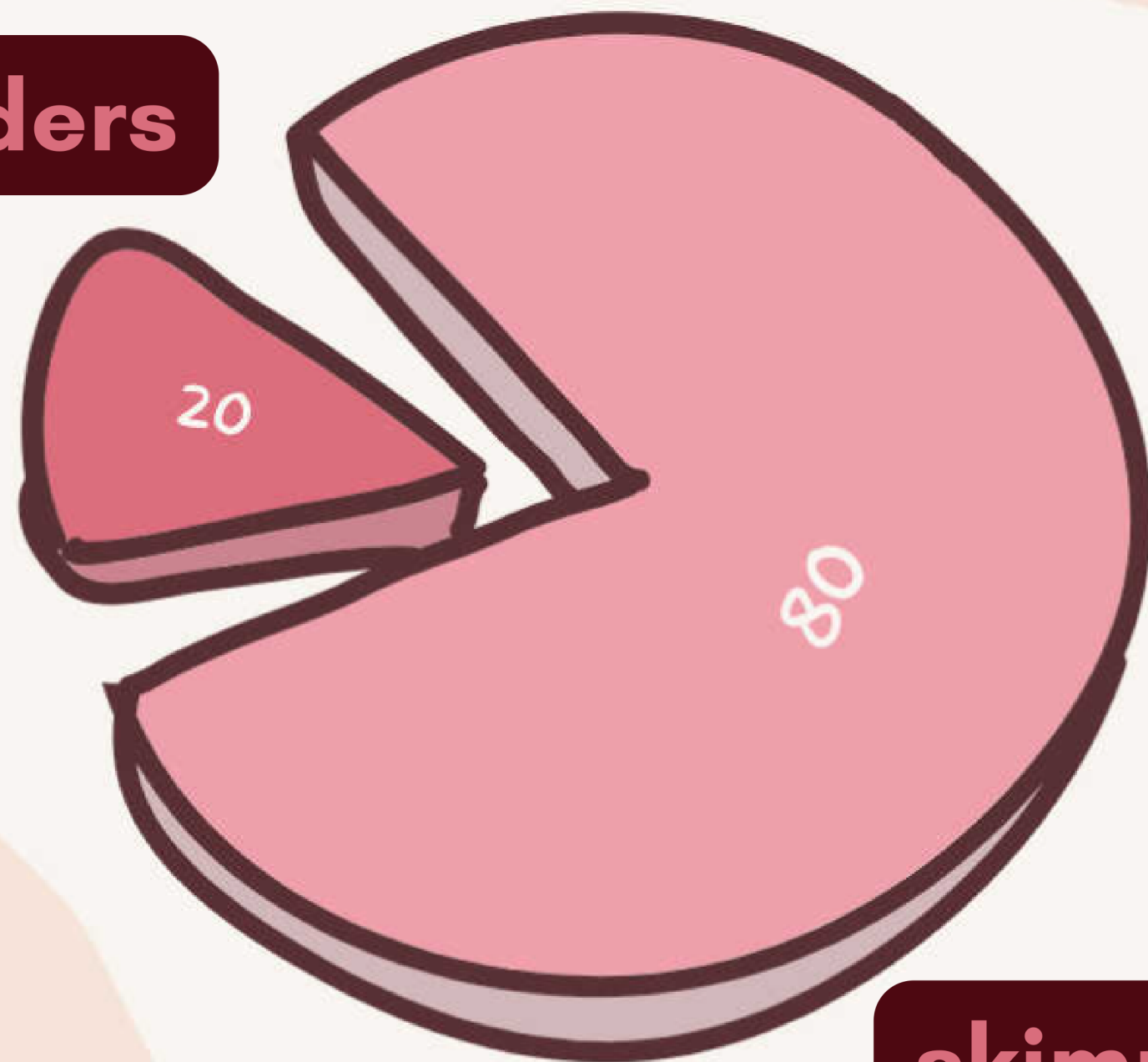
Image: Michael Leander



*"Easier to read,
more likely to raise money."*

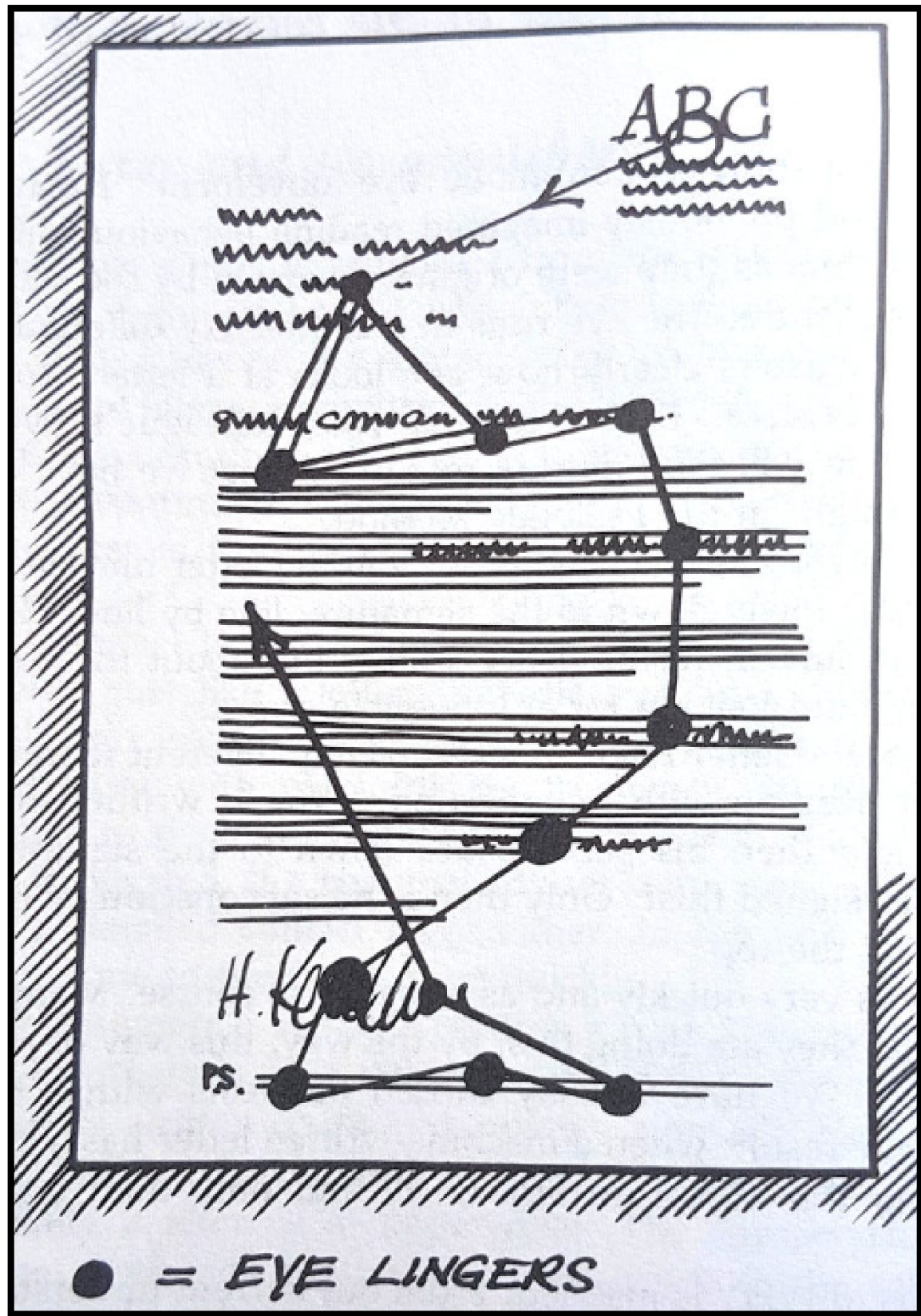
-Jeff Brooks

readers



skimmers

the reading curve



"Reading Curve," Siegfried Vögele

4-8

of every 10 people will trash your letter

[Source: Moceanic](#)

15-20

seconds to skim your appeal

[Source: Moceanic](#)

1

2

3

2organize

1

2

3

4

5

6

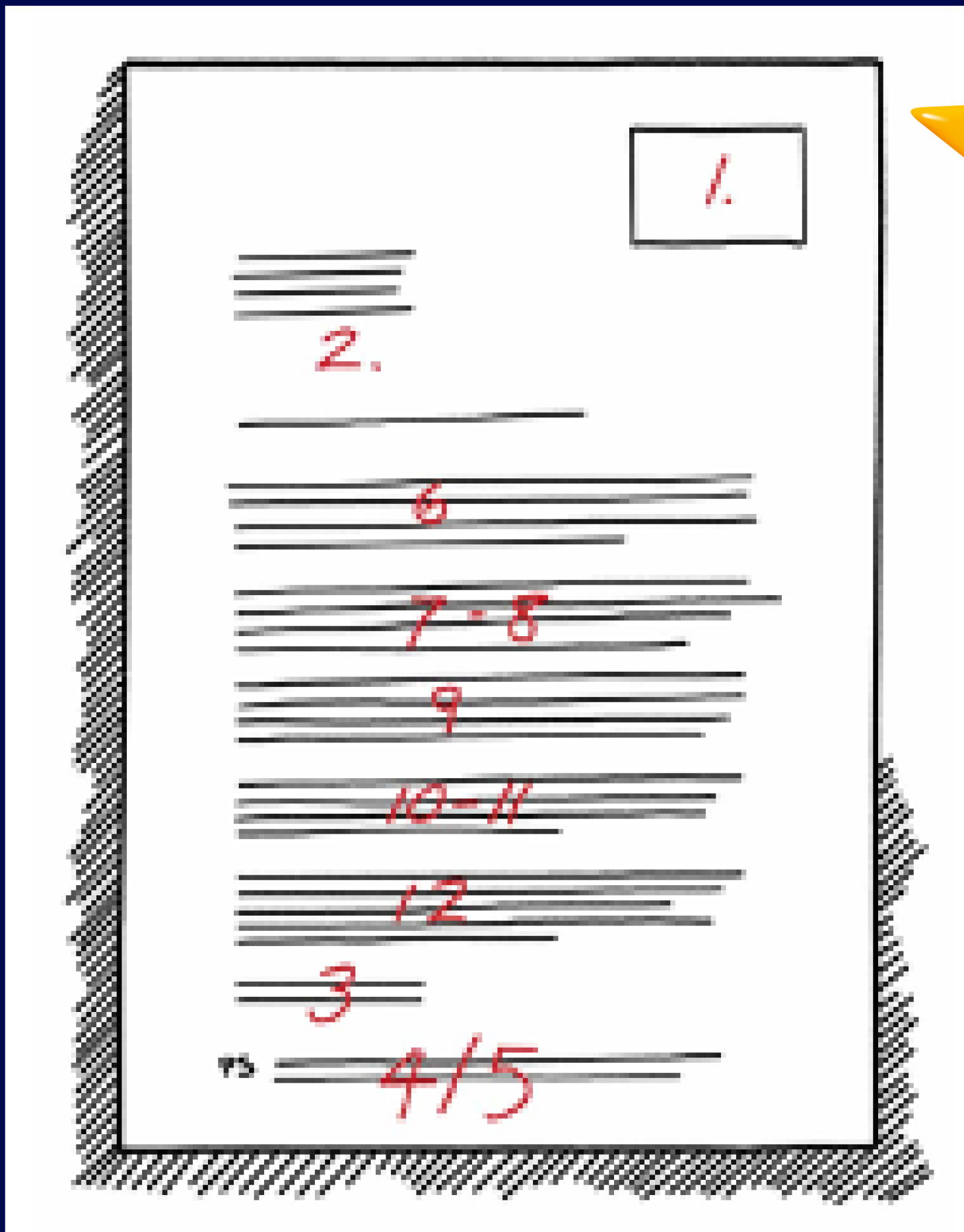
7

8

9

10

Source: [Better Fundraising Company](#)



Source: Siegfried Vögele,
Handbook of Direct Mail, p 202



90% of people read the P.S. before the letter

- Siegfried Vögele



Source: Handbook Of Direct Mail: The Dialogue Method Of Direct Communication (1992)

signposts

Headings

Subheadings

 *Pull quotes* 

Emphasized text

If you *emphasize*

EVERYTHING,

you *emphasize*

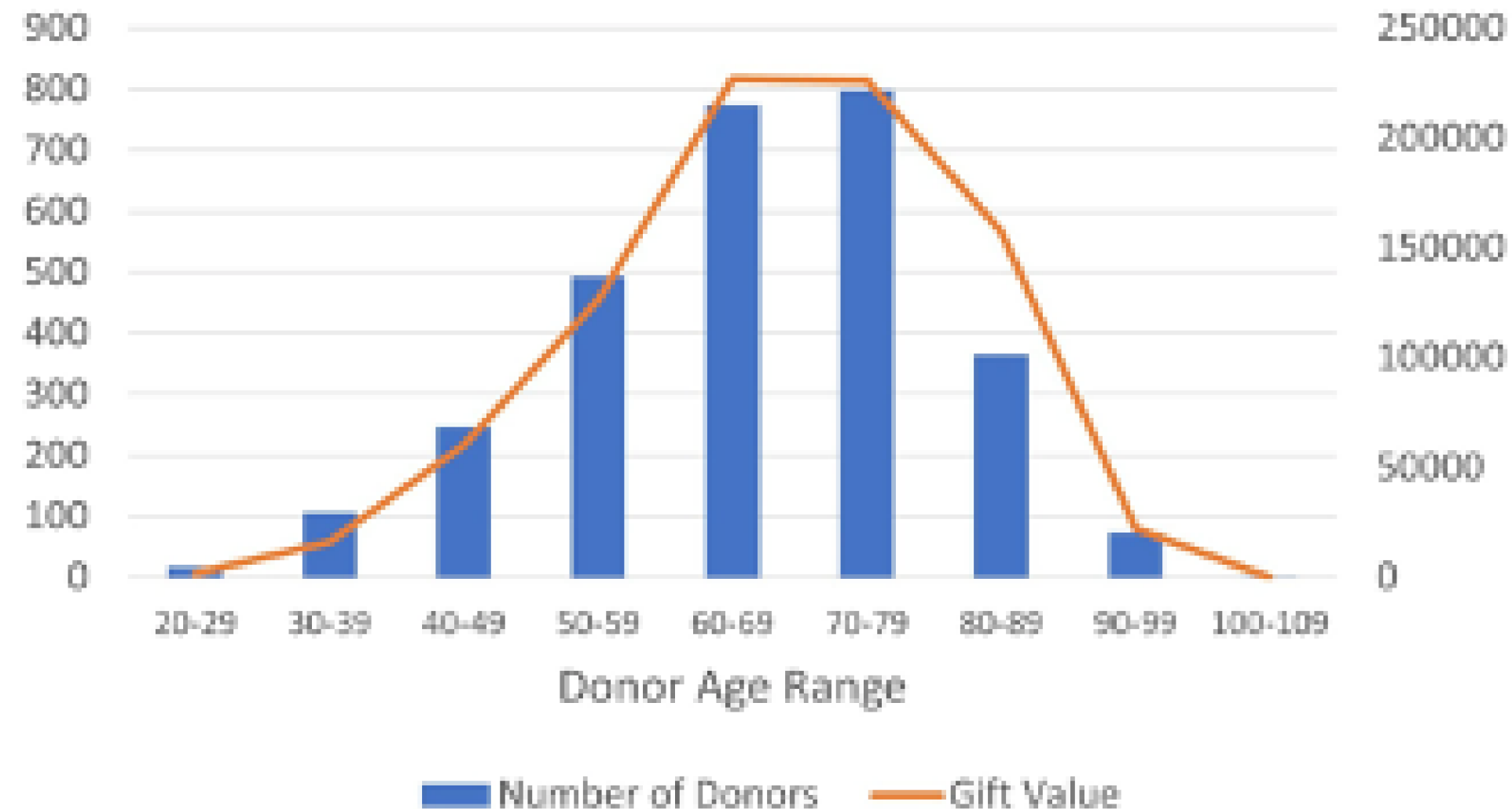
nothing.



typography


The average donor is 64 years old (Blackbaud, 2024)

Donor Age Range vs. Annual Fund Donations for a Non-Profit in a New England Town



Sentence Length & Paragraph Length

Sometimes it hurts to be blind...



Dear Friend,

Lisa wants you to have this shiny penny.

I hope you'll keep it as a very important reminder of her urgent, compelling need.

The penny tells the story of each blind child's hope... the story of every blind person's search for the understanding which leads to freedom.

Because people like you care about us, we've come a long way since the tin cup days. We thank you sincerely for the positive role you play in our lives... and hope, you'll never stop your support.

I think you understand the truth about us:

- ★ BLIND people can waterski, bowl, dance!
- ★ BLIND people can cook, garden, repair their children's toys or the kitchen sink!
- ★ BLIND people can go to college, vote, participate in community affairs!
- ★ BLIND people can be secretaries, lawyers, machinists, farmers, nurses aides!
- ★ BLIND people can do normal, productive, interesting things!
- ★ BLIND PEOPLE CAN SUCCEED IF THEY CAN GET SOMEONE TO GIVE THEM A CHANCE. That's why we still need your continued support.

Sad to say, there's still many miles to go for thousands of blind people who struggle against the current. Our blindness is grossly misunderstood, by friends and neighbors, even family. Sometimes it hurts to be blind.

vs

Claire Axelrad
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] 544243
[Barcode]

HEALTH AND RACIAL JUSTICE

Dear Claire,

Cancer is never fair. But even as science finds new ways to treat and manage the most devastating forms of this disease, growing inequities in our society place the most vulnerable among us at the highest risk for cancer, and with the least access to life-saving care. **In many ways, the unequal impacts of cancer mirror those of COVID-19. Cancer is a pandemic in slow motion.**

The scientists and clinicians of **UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center** are working to outwit cancer on all of these fronts: discoveries in the innovations that help more people access exceptional care, and ambitious public partnerships that weaken cancer's hold on vulnerable communities. We firmly believe that by understanding and embracing the diverse needs of all those impacted by cancer, we improve health for everyone.

As a member of our Cancer Center community, you are part of this effort. We could not be more grateful for your commitment to health justice and equitable access to cancer care. I am writing to thank you, and to ask you to help us do even more.

The historic events of the past few months have brought a new urgency to these issues: A virus that impacts Latinx and Black Californians at three to four times the rate of white Californians. A moment when people of color across the nation are taking to the streets to protest all forms of racial injustice. An economy in which our most essential workers are also its most vulnerable.

“As general literacy has increased, our ability to read and understand long sentences has decreased over the last four centuries.” – Publication Coach



- **Pre-Elizabethan times:** 50 words
- **Elizabethan times:** 45 words
- **Victorian times:** 29 words
- **Early 20th century:** 23 words
- **Today:** 14 to 18 words

Nothing less than 12-point font

The current font size is: 6pt

The current font size is: 8pt

The current font size is: 9pt

The current font size is: 10pt

The current font size is: 10.95pt 

The current font size is: 12pt 

The current font size is: 14.4pt 

The current font size is: 17.28pt

The current font size is: 20.74pt



Reports

Words in larger font are perceived as more important: explaining the belief that font size affects memory

Karlos Luna , Marlene Nogueira & Pedro B. Albuquerque

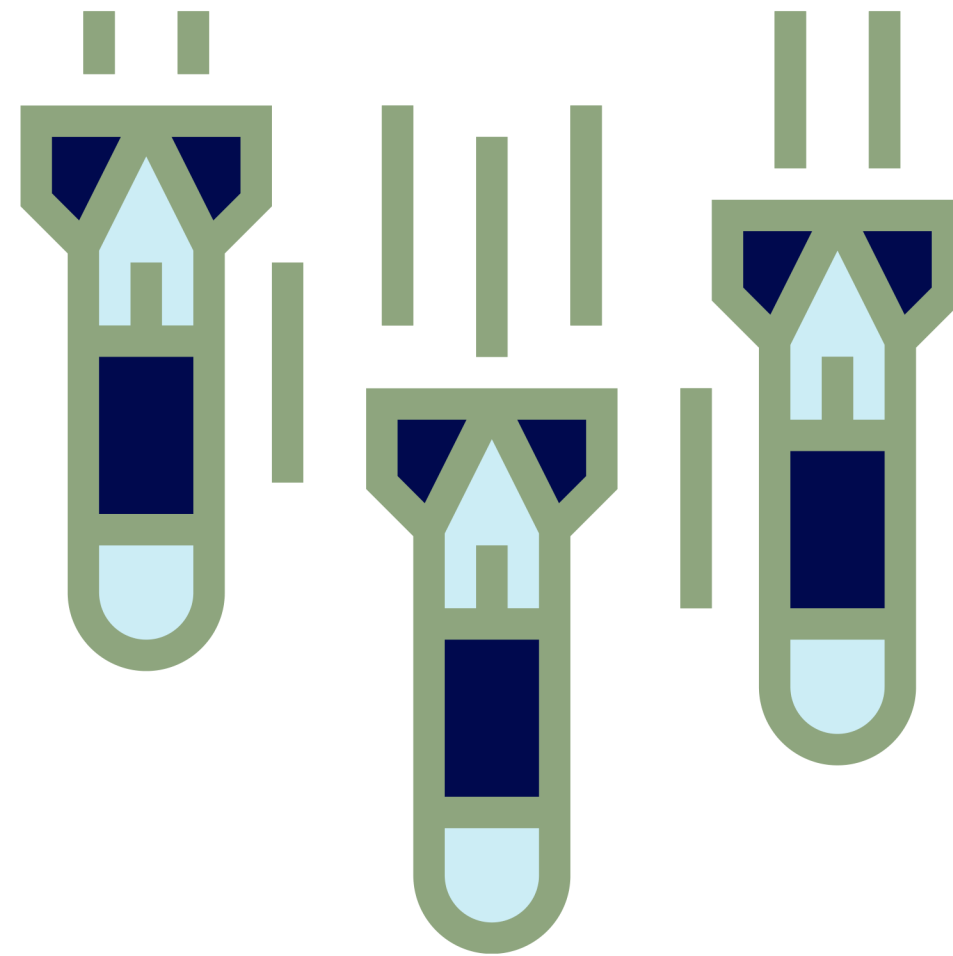
Pages 555-560 | Received 02 Mar 2018, Accepted 24 Sep 2018, Published online: 07 Oct 2018

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658211.2018.1529797>



 Full Article  Figures & data  References  Citations  Metrics  Reprints & Permissions

[Read this article](#)



**The wrong font will “torpedo” your fundraising.
-Jeff Brooks**

[Source: Future Fundraising Now](#)



SANS-SERIF

Abc



SERIF

Abc

Source: NN Group

Leading: 1.5 - 2 points

The space between text lines is called
leading and measured baseline to baseline.

LEADING

NN/g

Paragraph spacing: at least 1.5x larger than leading



Dorothy came to meet them and thanked the little mice warmly for saving her companion from death. She had grown so fond of the big Lion she was glad he had been rescued.

Then the mice were unharnessed from the truck and scampered away through the grass to their homes. The Queen of the Mice was the last to leave.

"If ever you need us again," she said, "come out into the field and call, and we shall hear you and come to your assistance. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" they all answered, and away the Queen ran, while Dorothy held Toto tightly lest he should run after her and frighten her.

A



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B

MILAN

Ipsum dolor sit amet
consectetur



NEIL BRADSHAM LUCY LOVELL

Et leo duis ut diam quam nulla porttitor. Ultrices dui sapien eget mi proin sed libero enim sed. Fermentum dui faucibus in ornare. Ullamcorper malesuada proin libero nunc consequat interdum varius. Eget est lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur.

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After (Click/Tap)

MILAN

Ipsum dolor sit amet
consectetur



NEIL BRADSHAM LUCY LOVELL

Et leo duis ut diam quam nulla porttitor. Ultrices dui sapien eget mi proin sed libero enim sed. Fermentum dui faucibus in ornare. Ullamcorper malesuada proin libero nunc consequat interdum varius. Eget est lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur.

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Vivamus non porttitor purus, et condimentum neque. Praesent vitae sagittis odio. Sed varius leo eros, id egestas lorem porttitor non. Morbi gravida tortor lectus, quis bibendum nisi pretium at.

After (Click/Tap)

Reverse type... Disastrous

Consider the background

Consider the background

Consider the background

Consider the background

Colin Wheildon

Type & Layout: are you communicating or just making pretty shapes? (2007)

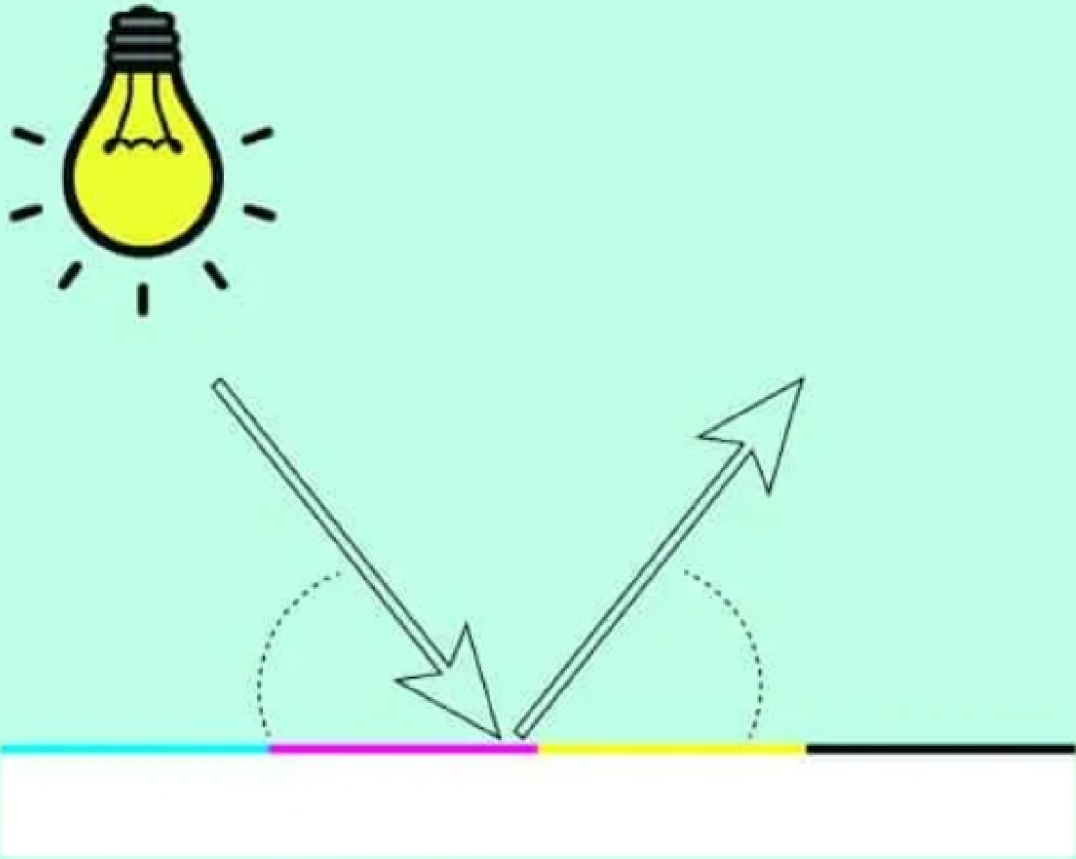
Comprehension Level	Good	Fair	Poor
Text printed black on white	70%	19%	11%
White on black	0%	12%	88%
White on PMS 259, deep purple	2%	16%	88%
White on PMS 286, French blue	0%	4%	96%

White space is your BFF

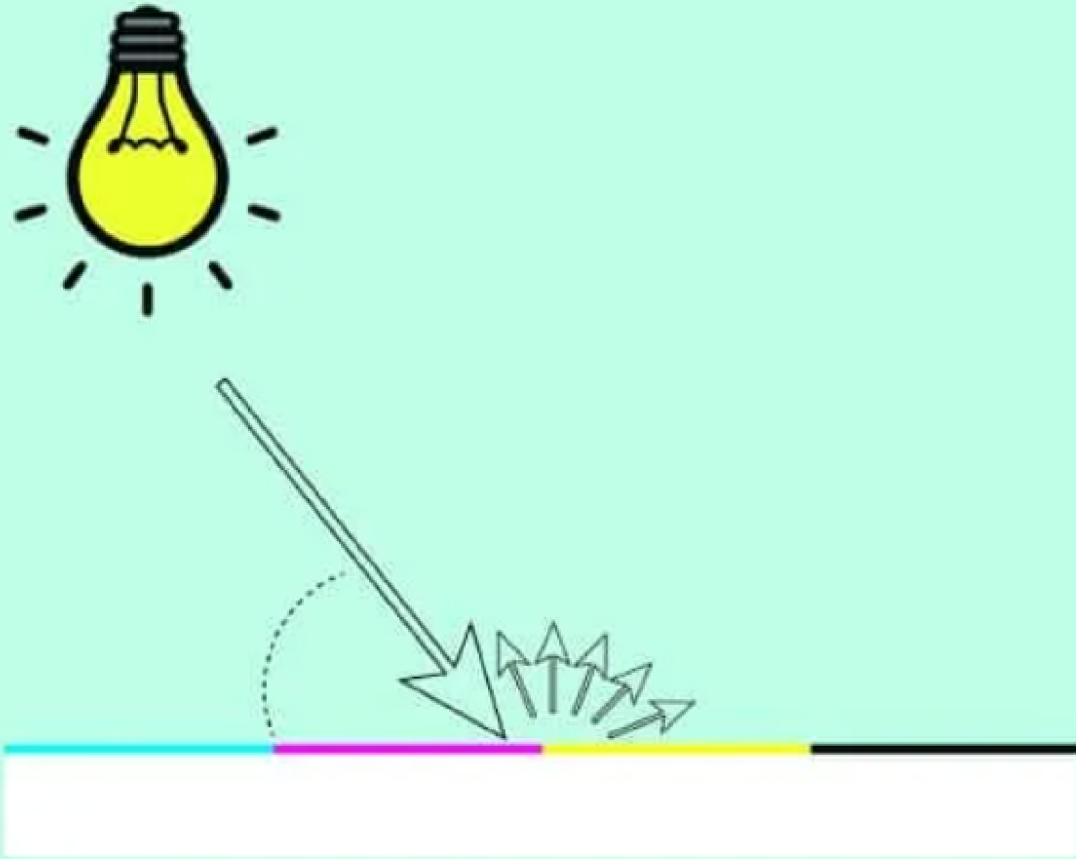
common pitfalls

Glossy vs. Matte Finishes: A Visual Readability Comparison

READABILITY



Glossy Coating



Matte Coating

...suffering with AIDS, we can save lives from a lifetime of suffering.

Tragically, there are thousands of children left physically and emotionally crippled by the ravages of AIDS. Every day more than 70 children and their parents find out the awful truth that they have AIDS.

But today can be used — and these little ones can be spared — if you can give a time and provide ongoing treatment.

That's why I urge you to invest your support for AIDS by mailing your gift to the enclosed postcard today.

Thank you so very much for your gift. It is a wonderful gift to the children who are suffering from AIDS today.


Like you, I rejoice and give thanks to God for your gift.

My heart is heavy when I think of you and the suffering of these children. I am sure that you will be able to help them. I am sure that you will be able to help them. I am sure that you will be able to help them.

Thank you for the compassion you have shown to these innocent children in the past. Now, I look forward to seeing how God will work through you to help these children throughout 2003, as my entire ministry reaches more people — taking them out of suffering and death.

Be certain — we're still here.

God bless you.



For more information, call 1-800-458-3232.

P.S. Support can be used — and children's lives can be saved — if you mail your gift to the enclosed postcard today. Thank you so very much for your gift. It is a wonderful gift to the children who are suffering from AIDS today. Like you, I rejoice and give thanks to God for your gift. My heart is heavy when I think of you and the suffering of these children. I am sure that you will be able to help them. I am sure that you will be able to help them. I am sure that you will be able to help them.

DEAD ZONE

THE DEAD ZONE

The top half of the last page of your letter. Don't put critical copy here.

Source: Future Fundraising Now

Summary

Format for skimmers

Highlight key information in high-traffic areas

Design for older eyes (typography, formatting, finishes)

Let's stay in touch!



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www.growbetterfundraising.com

