

Christopher E. Bayne
514 Sunridge Dr., Apt. 102
Blacksburg, VA 24060
Tel.: (571) 594-4015
Email: cbayne@vt.edu

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Dr. Jim Dubinsky, Director of Professional Writing
429 Shanks Hall
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Dear Dr. Dubinsky:

I am submitting for your consideration a portion of "Creating a Sunflair Graphic" for the Dedman Prize competition. I am a junior English major in the professional writing track. My submission is a ten-page excerpt of a thirty-two-step instruction set that I believe meets the professional standards of this university and global industry.

My instruction set is a graphic design tutorial that helps intermediate Adobe Photoshop 5.5 users design a sunflair graphic. The graphic will work well as a company logo or letterhead.

Creating this document involved planning, writing, and usability testing tasks. In planning task, I set two goals for the document: persuasiveness and usability. I met my first goal in two ways. First, I designed an inviting title page with vibrant color, large font, and a figure of the final product. Second, I wrote a short introduction on the title page that explicitly explains the purpose of the document. To meet my second goal of usability, I developed a design scheme adhering to the contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity principles of good design. The design scheme helps users quickly locate individual steps and identify actions and buttons within the program. I grouped individual steps into larger processes, which helps users learn the instructions and replicate the steps on their own. Finally, I chose to print the document with spiral binding, so the document will conveniently lie flat on a workspace.

Making the instructions usable also required clear, concise language and an intelligent use of graphics. I divided each step into specific actions that users should perform (in 12-point, orange Arial type) and supplemental information that helps users understand each step (in 12-point, black Times New Roman type). In addition to the text, nearly every step is complemented by an actual screenshot of the Adobe Photoshop 5.5 interface, which increases usability by giving users a visual explanation of the step.

The final task of creating the document involved three separate stages of usability testing. In each stage, an intermediate Adobe Photoshop user completed the tutorial and reviewed the document's overall ease of use. I compared each test user's final graphic to the tutorial's final graphic, and then I modified the document to increase its usability and improve the accuracy of each test user's final graphic.

The enclosed ten-page excerpt includes a title page and five groups of individual steps. I selected these groups because they represent five distinct actions the tutorial helps users complete. The variety of pages I have selected for this excerpt will help you envision the whole document. Pound (#) symbols replace the document's original page numbers.

Thank you for considering my submission for the Dedman Prize. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Christopher Bayne