

Agricultural Experiment Station • Cooperative Extension Service

Graphic Design Basics: Legibility & Contrast

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Common mistakes



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Good solutions



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If you can't read it, what's the point? When designing a print project, legibility should be your priority!

Legibility is affected by font choice, color, and size. It is also affected by the contrast between the background color or image and the fonts. People often want to use a background photo that is too dynamic, and they don't realize that it makes reading text virtually impossible. If you convert the photo into a grayscale, that can help. Keep in mind that it works best if the photo is less busy. Make it an image that will not

distract the reader. Lack of contrast is one of the most common mistakes people make, and it can come from having the font color too similar to the background color. It also occurs if the fonts are too thin or if they are too small. Using contrast correctly helps show hierarchy more clearly, like when formatting titles or subheadings.

I used the same story about hurricane Ophelia in both the blue and yellow boxes above. Which one would you rather read?

