



## Business cards

*J. Spence Holman and Kristen Spilman*

The business card remains an indispensable tool in the digital age. Cards are crucial for, well, business, but they are useful for countless other forms of networking as well. Make one for your freelance lawn ornament business, your goat farm, your band, your new baby, or just being you. Remove “business” from the title, and use your card for anything you want. In this chapter, learn how to make a card for every one of your identities.

**HISTORY** Business and calling cards first appeared in seventeenth-century England. Business cards acted primarily as advertising, while calling cards served as letters of introduction among the middle and upper classes. Etiquette dictated, however, that one type of card could not be substituted for the other. Today, cards are used interchangeably for social and business purposes.

**STANDARD SIZE** Card sizes have varied over the years, but at some point 3 1/2 x 2 inches became the norm. Consider the pros and cons when deciding on whether to deviate from the standard size. Odd shapes and sizes are attractive and memorable; consider, however, the needs of the end user. Many people use Rolodexes, business card holders and plastic sheet protectors for filing and storage, and those accessories all utilize the standard size. An odd-size card has a higher chance of ending up in the trash simply because it is inconvenient. Either way you go, there are dozens of options for creating a card that is uniquely your own. Conforming to the standard size does not have to be a limitation; rather, it is just one less decision to be made. You can also use the standard size in a creative way by orienting your card vertically instead of horizontally.

**STANDARD INFORMATION** Cards typically present a person’s name, company name, address, phone number, e-mail, and Web address. You decide what content is right for you.



### PLANNING YOUR BUSINESS CARD

- Think about how you plan to use your card when determining how much contact information to include.
- Maybe you want to go the mysterious route by leaving your name off and just including your Web site or e-mail address.
- Consider making a two-sided card, splitting your information between the front and back.
- Maybe your cards will serve primarily as examples of your photographs or artwork, with limited contact information.
- Working out of your home? You may want to set up a mailbox at the local post office for privacy.

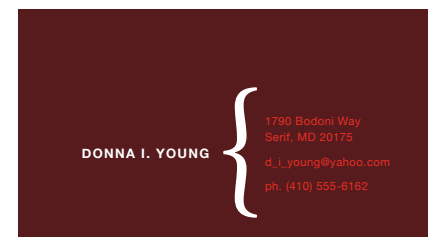
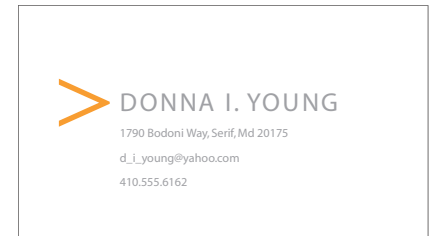
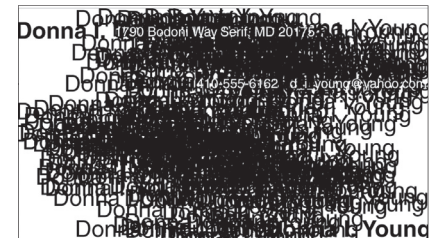
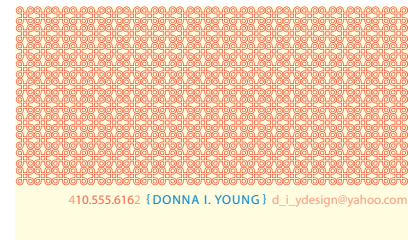
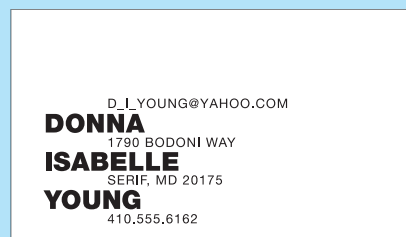
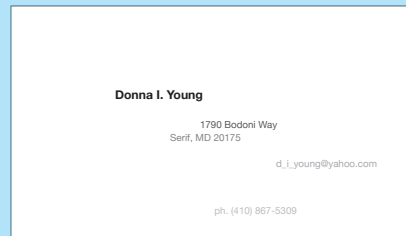
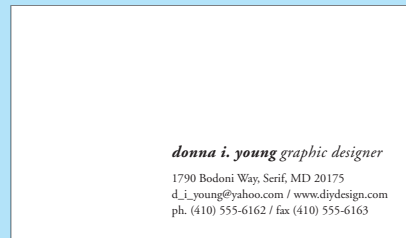
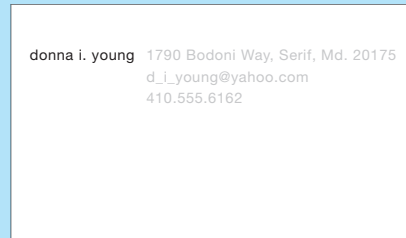
*Photography: Nancy Froehlich*

**TYPOGRAPHY** is the art of choosing letterforms and arranging them on a page. Using type thoughtfully is crucial to the success of your card, which will become a typographic portrait of you. Working with just a single font, you can create endless variations by playing with size, placement, and alignment (flush left, flush right, centered, or justified). The following examples are set in Helvetica and Adobe Garamond, two classic sans serif and serif typefaces.

## donna i. young\*

1790 Bodoni Way, Serif, MD 20175  
d\_i\_young@yahoo.com  
\*ph. (410) 555-6162

- Choose a typeface that is legible at small sizes.
- Use a maximum of two different type families; most likely, you can achieve what you want with only one.
- Keep your type size between 7.5 and 10 points. Anything larger will appear clunky in the small space of the card.
- Punctuation isn't just for grammarians. Think about different ways to highlight your information. Use periods or underscores instead of hyphens and parentheses in phone numbers. Try asterisks, tildes, ampersands, slashes, etc.
- Try asymmetrical as well as symmetrical designs.
- Create a visual hierarchy of information by shifting weight, size, and case (upper and lower).
- Use a minimum of 1/8-inch margins. Anything smaller may be difficult to print correctly.
- Avoid drop shadows and other distracting effects.
- Use line spacing that appears balanced: not too tight, and not too loose.
- Great work can come from flaunting convention, but it's a good idea to know the rules before you break them.



**TYPE ELEMENTS** Explore your keyboard. A convenient resource for interesting designs can be found, quite literally, at your fingertips. Characters such as <>/{}[]+!@%&\*( ) are great for creating patterns, icons, and emphasis. Turn over every rock you stumble upon: many characters are hidden and must be accessed with alternate keystrokes.

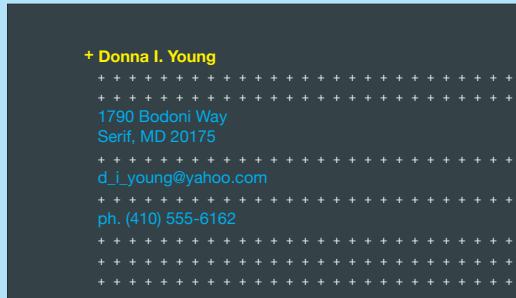
Most computers come equipped with symbol fonts like *Zapf Dingbats* or *Wingdings*, providing another great design resource. Dingbats are picture fonts that come in all shapes and sizes. Characters in Zapf Dingbats include ✦✧✪✫✬✭✮✯✰✱✲✳✴✵✶✷✸✹✺✻✼✽✾✿✰✱✲✳✴✵✶✷✸✹✺✻✼✽✾✿. Also consider using simple shapes like lines, squares, and circles.

**COLOR** can help your design stand out and come to life. At the same time, too many colors can turn into visual overload. Choose colors that represent you and your message. Also, be aware of your budget; when printing commercially, single-color or black-and-white printing is typically cheaper than full color.

Business cards designed by  
J. Spence Holman  
and Kristen Spilman

**MATERIALS** Most cards are made of card stock (go figure), which is more durable than text-weight paper. Card stock withstands bending, tearing and crumpling, and it holds up to the abuse of wallets or back pockets. That being said, there are endless alternatives to standard card stock. Experiment with different materials that can be run through your printer or copy machine. Think about color, pattern, texture, and weight. A beautiful or surprising material becomes part of the content and imagery of your project. Keep your eyes open, and you'll find that just about anything can be transformed into a card.

**METHODS** When deciding whether to print, stamp, stencil, or write your content, remember that you'll need more than just one card, so use a method that is easy to produce in multiples. Use resources that are affordable and convenient as well as visually effective: if your neighbor runs a letterpress shop, by all means, knock on his door.

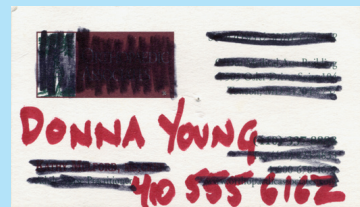


**DESKTOP PRINTING** Printing cards on your home printer is fast, easy, and cheap. Perforated card stock is available at most office supply stores, and usually includes instructions or software for formatting your file to fit the paper's layout. Vellum, transparency film, magnets, stickers, iron-ons, and fabric are just some of the alternate products you can buy. These are made specifically for either inkjet or laser printers, so choose with care.

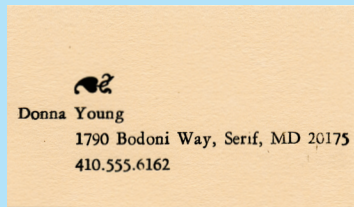
Printing on found and homemade objects, such as magazine pages, subway fare cards, posters, or handmade papers, can yield exciting results. Some of these materials could damage your printer, so be careful; sandpaper, for example, is definitely not recommended.



**UNCONVENTIONAL** Want to push the limits? Want your card to be unforgettable? Think outside all of the boxes and try these on for size. What better way to grow your business and satisfy a sweet tooth than with a brownie card? Or, express your inner termite with wood? Whichever way you go, go for broke and start networking!



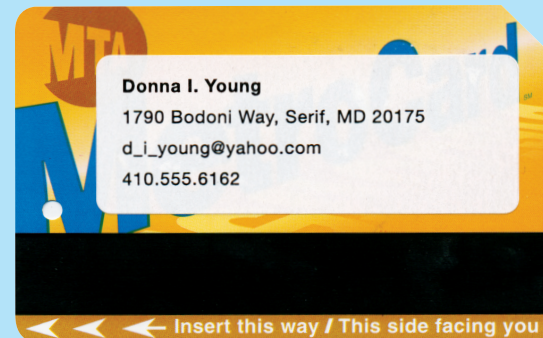
**HANDWRITTEN** Sometimes you just need a card...FAST. What better way to expedite the process and simultaneously express yourself than to do-it-yourself? Cut paper (any will do, though something heavy is preferred) to size, add your relevant information, and Voila! Faster than you can say "Holla back!" you're ready to meet and greet.



**LETTERPRESS** Letterpress, the oldest form of typography, is expensive and time consuming, so design carefully and don't change your address anytime soon. The end result can be quite elegant, and worth the extra effort. Curved or angled text is difficult to set in hand-set metal type, but can be done from digital files. Vendors that specialize in wedding invitations and other short-run projects often provide letterpress services.



**RUBBER STAMP** Custom rubber stamp manufacturers can be found through most office supply stores. Provide your vendor with a high-resolution printout of your design to make the stamp. Thin lines and delicate details do not reproduce well, so stick with bold images and strong letterforms.



*Todd St. John, of Hunter Gatherer in New York City, uses this method to design his business cards.*

