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# Package Design Basics

## Package Design Basics

### Research

Regardless of if this is your first or hundredth package design, the best place to start is by doing some research. Here are a few key questions to get you started:

**What is the retail environment like?** Consider point of purchase and keep merchandising displays in mind. The package needs to stimulate a purchase and sometimes stand in for a salesperson. It should also increase product recognition. Most importantly is this must all be achieved quickly and efficiently.

**What do your competitor's do with their packaging?** This is especially important if your product will be on a shelf full of competition. It is okay to pull inspiration from competitors. Look around and incorporate elements you like into your design.

**How can the packaging reflect the uniqueness of the product? How can you differentiate your design?** Your product is different than the others, if it wasn't there would be no reason to have both. Let these differences shine through in your package design. Treat the packaging as if it were the only element influencing the purchase of your product over your competitor's.

It all basically boils down to one thing: how can you make it jump off the shelf into the consumer's hands?

Consider looking at some package designs for different product categories as well. Sometimes the freshest inspiration comes from unexpected places. Remember to keep in mind consumption trends: eco-friendly packaging, reusable packaging, etc. As you get started, remember any regulatory compliance applicable to your product category and UPC treatments. While these may seem like creative restraints, by understanding and applying these limitations from the beginning it can actually help you target your creative efforts.

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## **Prototype**

There are two big reasons to prototype your package design. Transitioning a product from 2-D to 3-D can be a challenge, especially if your not used to it. By creating prototypes you can make sure the package structure is viable and looks how you imagined.

The second big advantage to prototyping is it gives you an opportunity to see how your design falls along fold lines and curves. An image that you think might work to wrap around a corner could end up looking awkward once you see it in action.

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## **Boxes: Set Up versus Folding Cartons**

Before tackling box design, it's important to know that boxes are constructed primarily in one of two ways, either as set-up boxes or folding cartons.

Set-up boxes are pre-constructed, more expensive to produce and are typically used for more upscale packaging such as perfume or gift boxes. Set-up boxes are constructed from industrial stock which is scored at the fold lines. Corners are cut away so that only bottom and side panels remain. The side panels are then bent up and fastened at the corners with tape. Paper is then wrapped and glued around the outside and the inside edges of the assembled box. Bottoms and lids are often constructed separately for set-up boxes.

Folding cartons are less expensive to produce. Although they can be pre-assembled and glued, they have the added advantage of being able to be stored flat and assembled when needed. Folding cartons are used for a wide range of consumer goods including fast food (such as pizza boxes) as well as many supermarket products (detergents, cereals, baked goods and milk cartons). Folding cartons are printed before they are assembled on heavy stock which is then trimmed with a die, scored and folded. Folding cartons often include a self lid that tucks in or is otherwise sealed after assembly.

## **Barcodes**

When applying bar codes to your packaging these best practices will help you understand the limitations of barcode design.

Bar codes should be positioned in a spot that is highly visible and easy to scan.

A bar code must be printed at a scale between 85% and 120% of its original size.

Bar codes must be printed in a dark color against a solid light colored background. The contrast between a bar code and its background must be high enough to allow the bar code to be scanned.

Bar codes against a colored field must have a color-free area that extends no less than 3/32 inch beyond the printed bar code.

If possible, have it tested before it goes to press.

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