

Duplik[ating] Shapes: Using Basic Shapes and Gaming Tactics to Train Logo Creation

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Duplik[ating] Shapes: Using Basic Shapes and Gaming Tactics to Train Logo Creation Need for Innovation

Teaching graphic design is challenging when considering the variety of skill levels, interest levels, and student's self-perceived abilities. Supporting this challenge, Bokhua (2022) stated, "creating something new and meaningful is not a simple skill that can be easily taught" (p. 1). Amplifying this challenge, students completing graphic design courses in colleges of agriculture may enter a classroom without prior exposure to arts and humanities courses when compared to their counterparts in colleges of arts. This limited exposure reduces their potential for learning art techniques which are helpful foundations for learning graphic design.

Bokhua (2022) emphasized the need to simplify design and our teaching of design concepts by fully embracing the "less is more" idea. By simplifying logo creation into a stepwise process using basic, geometric shapes, students can navigate concepts more confidently. Basic shape theories also align with descriptions and teaching tactics used when illustrating graphic design principles in textbooks (Bokhua, 2022; Golombisky & Hagen, 2010; Resnick, 2003). Finally, graphic design using basic shapes emphasizes the importance of understanding the psychological ties humans have with geometric shapes (Wang & Zhang, 2016), furthering students' learning beyond skill development and into theoretical understanding.

Gaming techniques are currently used to reinforce classroom learning. Zirawaga et al. (2017) state games can be used to support traditional teaching while also teaching creativity, critical thinking, and teamwork. By combining theories of logo design with basic shapes and gaming practices, we sought to encourage students to challenge themselves to view logo creation in an achievable form. Additionally, gaming allowed students to work as teams to see how others might perceive a logo different from themselves.

How it Works

Using design blogs and Adobe training examples, we identified geometric shapes, like triangles, circles, and squares, as ideal bases for logos due to their prevalent use in current logos in all industries (Adobe Express, 2022; Adwin, 2022; Perhiniak, 2019). We selected four logos with similar styles, Mitsubishi, HSBC, Jeep, and BMW, to be drawn. We identified Duplik as a game which uses drawing in its gameplay which we adapted for this classroom activity. To play, one player must describe the image while another player must draw what they hear without looking at the other player. We adapted this gameplay to incorporate the selected company logos while still using the activities of verbal descriptions and blind drawing.

The topic of basic shapes as building blocks for logos was introduced to students enrolled in an Introduction to Graphic Design course at New Mexico State University through lecture content. Following the lecture, in a separate course period, we asked students to observe and describe the selected logos in a teammate setting. Teams were designated at random to not favor students' current drawing or design abilities. We described the activity and instructions prior to providing each student group with their logos.

Each team had a "drawer" and a "describer". After one round, the students switched roles to ensure both teammates experienced each role. Drawing was done back-to-back to ensure the

drawer relied only on the verbal description given by the describer. Each student was provided a handout with the activity instructions and a space for drawing their logo. Students had five minutes to describe and draw the logo. After time elapsed, students were asked to compare their drawings with the company's logo. We provided time between rounds for students to discuss what they saw versus heard and how they each interpreted the basic shapes found in the logos.

Throughout the activity, students were encouraged to reflect on the previous lecture content and identify as many basic shapes used before they began describing their logo to their partner. This reinforced the students' skills of identifying the basic shapes and how they were used in a variety of formats and orientations.

Results to Date

Students provided positive feedback about the activity and their perceived learning. One student stated they enjoyed the activity "because it helped to use the things we've learned to describe to [our] partner the image in our heads." They found that it reinforced other design perspectives and helped them work with future clients. They stated, "this is good practice for making someone's mental image of their logo come to a visual representation." Students also demonstrated learned concepts about shapes being the building blocks of graphic design. One student stated, "my favorite part of this activity is being able to really see all logos really are basic shapes, even though some might be really complicated." Following this activity, students began to design their own logos for course materials. In descriptive paragraphs and discussions, students referenced basic shapes used during their creation process to make the designs easier to begin and complete. Additionally, the nature of the activity required students to rely on and further develop their verbal communication skills. They said, "it made me think and communicate a lot," and "my favorite part [was] using communication skills to understand how the shape [was] supposed to look."

Advice to Others

We observed students were less hesitant to draft and create logos in the course following this activity. By implementing gaming techniques, students were able to remove the pressure of "being creative" and focused on the simple foundations. Rerouting their focus was key in training them in graphic design. Time constraints within the activity aided in this effort by preventing students from focusing on too much at once and getting back to the "less is more" idea emphasized by Bokhua (2022). We encourage instructors to consider more than two rounds for this activity to allow students to get past the "awkwardness" they may experience in the first attempts at both drawing and describing. Additionally, instructors can provide more challenging logos with less visible basic shapes to further develop students' analytical skills.

Cost/Resources Needed

No cost is associated with this activity. Students need a pencil for drawing and preselected logos to be provided for gameplay.

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