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University of Phoenix

Illustration & Icon Style Guide

Intro

This guide is a quick deep dive into the styling of the illustrations and icons. This guide serves as a foundation, it should be updated as new challenges push the guidelines into new and more specific directions.

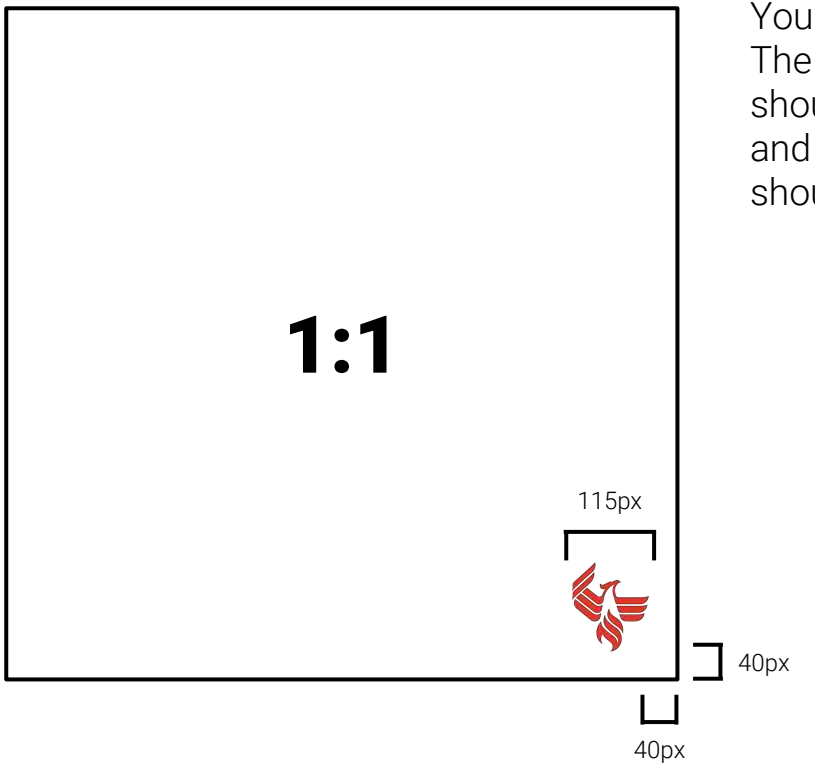
The intent of this guide is to help bring more consistency, and help the design process to become more efficient.

Illustration

Illustrations bring character to a brand. They should be used to help express complex and abstract ideas, and also to bring more personality to the mundane.

1. Specs

Specs - The Basics for Social Posts



You can find a quick style guide here for social posts. The logo lockup template can be found here.The logo shouldn't be moved, and or recolored other than white and red. Text, illustrations, and other design elements shouldn't go past the guidelines in the template.

2. Shapes

Shapes - The logo and how its built.

The logo is made up of varying circles of different sizes and sharp edges. These are the two building blocks that we will work with. The logo has about a **90% rounded shape to 10% sharp edge** ratio. This will be the same ratio throughout all the illustrations and icons.

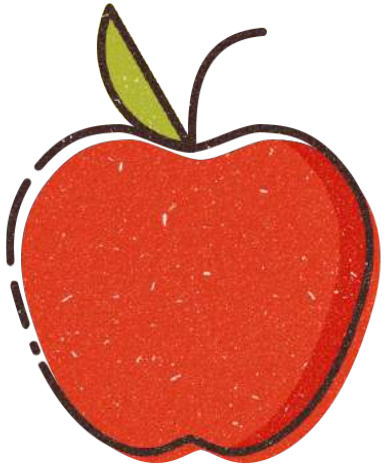
10%

Sharp Edge

90%

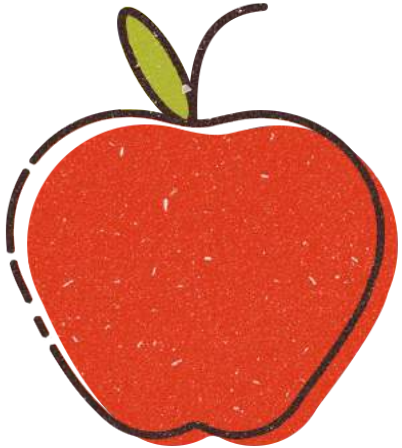
Round Shapes

Shapes - Illustrations should follow this ratio



Like this

Tip of the leaf and butt of the apple give it the 10% sharp edges, the rest of the shape is made up of perfect circles.

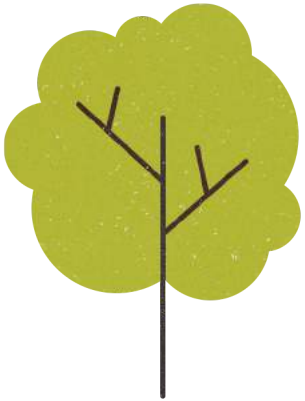


Not this

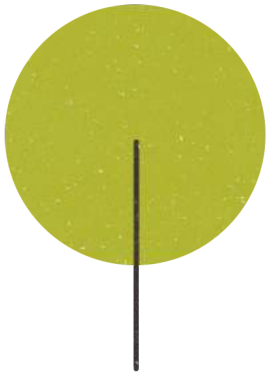
Everything is too round. Makes it feel too childish.

Shapes - Finding balance

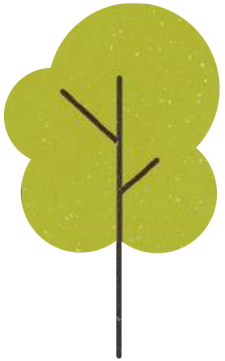
Try to limit yourself with the amount of shapes you use. Too many and the illustration feels overwhelming, not enough and you start to get too abstract. Try and find the happy middle between the two. The number of shapes needed will change depending on the object you're illustrating.



Too much
8 circles feels too cluttered.



Too little
one circle feels way too abstract.

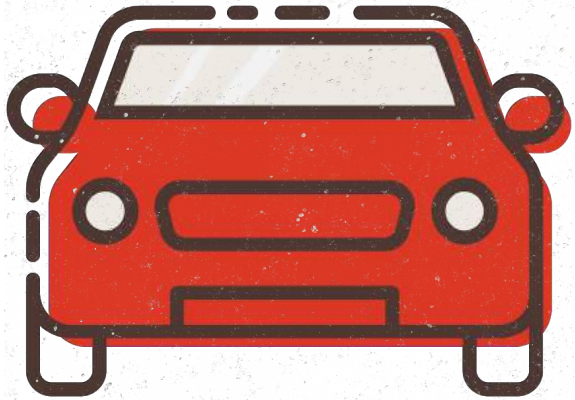


Just right
4 circles for this feels just right.

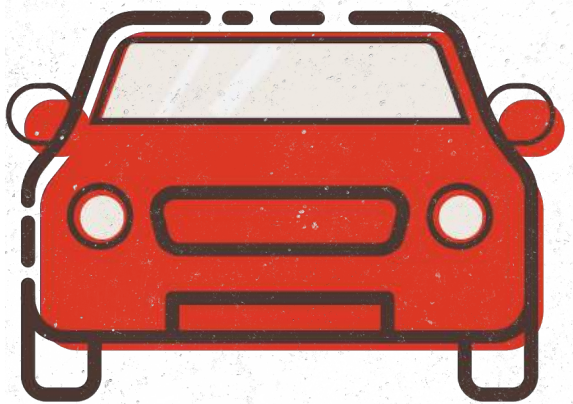
3. Lines & Edges

Lines & Edges - Line weight & styling

All lines are 8px with a round tip. The outline should always be brown (4D3733) but there may be times where it could be white or creme (EEE9E3)



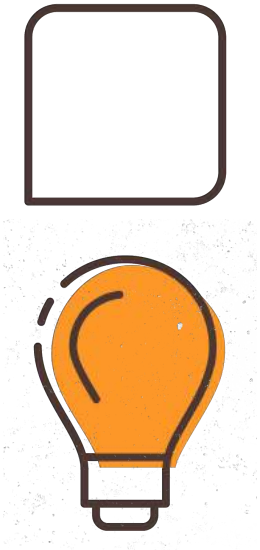
Consistent
All lines are 8px.



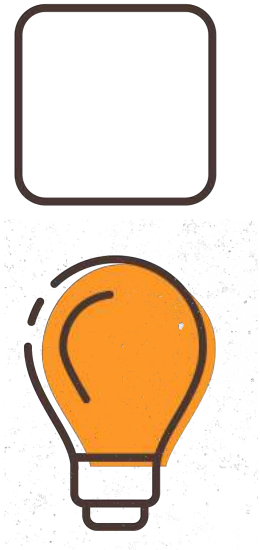
Inconsistent
Lines are inconsistent. Lines shouldn't be smaller for details.

Lines & Edges - Rounded Corners

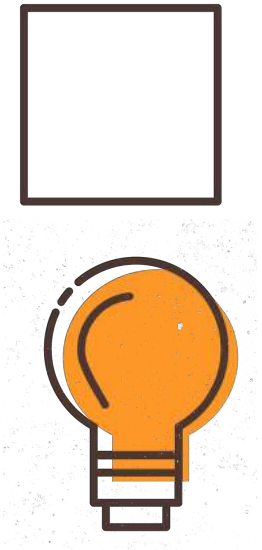
Corners should follow the same 90/10 ratio, so 90% of the time the shapes should have rounded corners, and 10% of the time they should have sharp corners. Rounded corners should be 10px.



90% round / 10% sharp
The opportunities to add a sharp edge make sense for the shape



100% round
Feels too cartoony. Doesn't reflect the logo.



50% sharp / 50% round
Feels too edgy. Doesn't reflect the logo.

Lines & Edges - Line Break

Line breaks are placed on wherever the offset of the color happens. A good rule to follow is there should be about 1-3 breaks for small objects, and 3-6 for big object. The logic is small objects should have less detail so they don't feel cluttered. Big objects have more room for detail so it's not overwhelming when they have more lines.

Like this

1-3 breaks for small objects.
3-6 for big objects

Not this

Too many breaks for small object.
Not enough for the big object.

4. Color

Color - Primary Colors

The primary colors of the brand should be a good first go to when creating an illustration. Especially red. Here are the colors:

DE3518 00A4B5 405E71

Color - Secondary Colors

The secondary colors should be used as accents. It starts to feel off brand if they are featured as the focus on an illustration.

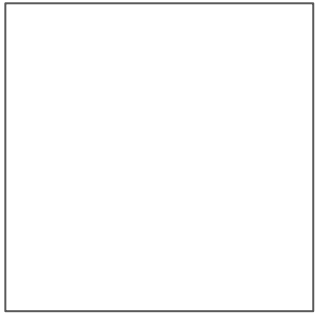
FF9800

AFB42B

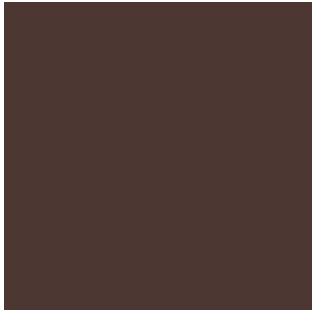
Color - Neutral Colors

Neutral colors should be in all illustrations. The brown is used for the line art, the white/creme colors are great as background colors.

fafafa



ffffff



4D3733

EEE9E3

Color - Color Proportions

Illustrations should roughly follow these proportions found below. For a full section including tints, review page 39 of the Phoenix style guide.

Backgrounds should be neutral colors and will take up most of the color space, but because they are neutral they won't be demanding as much attention as the other colors.

The primary colors are the focus of the brand, therefore they should try to be the focus of the illustrations.

The secondary colors should only help aid the primary colors. They should be used as accents, not as the focus.

Color - Limit Colors

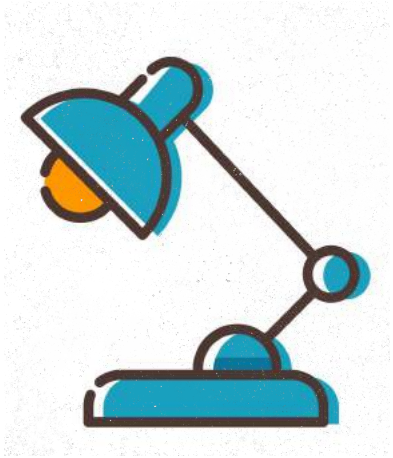
Limit yourself to a max. Of 3 colors. The focus should be on one of the primary colors of the brand.

2 complimentary colors
Red/green, and blue/yellow pair well together, but you don't always need to use that combo.

5 colors
Too much going on here, hurts my face.

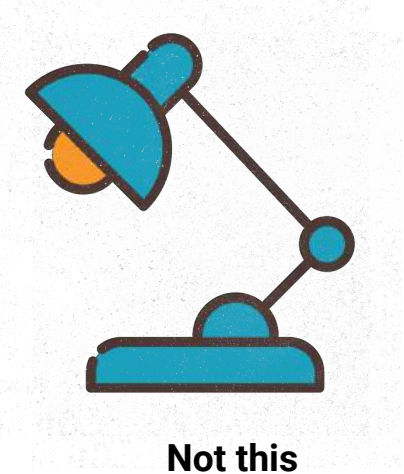
Color - Off set the color

The offset is the big stylistic choice of the illustration style. The filled block of color should be about 8px from the outline (Or, use the outline as a guide.) The off set should all be going the same direction, and should only be applied to one color from the illustration.



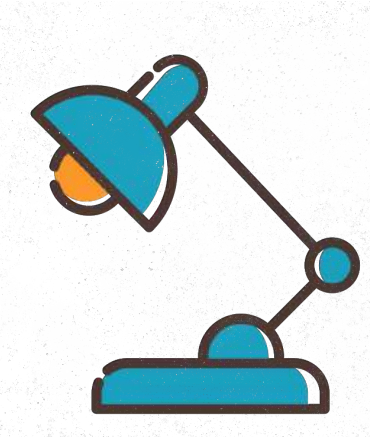
Like this

Offset is consistent. The blue is the only color offset. The offset is about 8px away from the outline.



Not this

There should be at least one offset in each illustration.



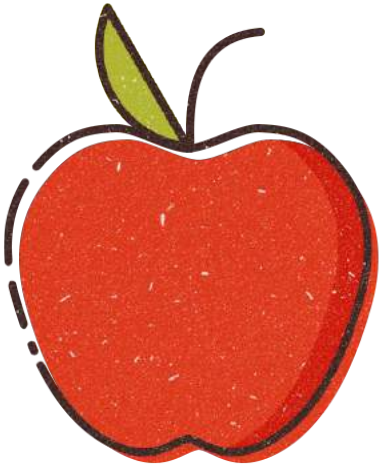
Not this

Offset is going all over the place. Offset isn't going past the outline.

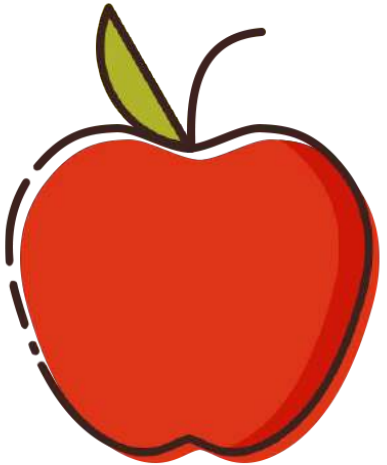
5. Texture & Shading

Texture & Shading - Texture

We have a paper texture that fits with the school theme. Use it on top of all illustrations, you can download textures here.



Like this
Adds a little information and gives it some personality.



Not this
Feels a little flat and boring.

Texture & Shading - Throwing shade

Use a hard brush or use even better use vector shapes to create a shadow. Use the same brown from the outline and apply a light layer mode. Use shadows sparingly, they aren't always needed but they can add a little dimension.

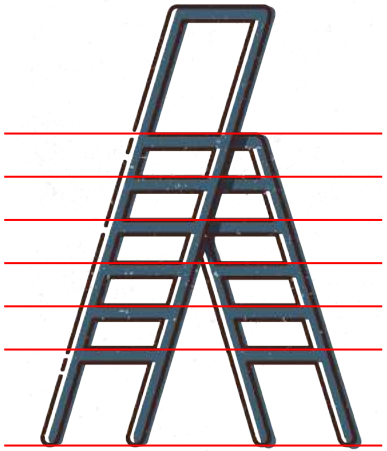
Slim shady
Just one shadow feels good for one small object.

Too shady
This feels like a bit too much.

6. Perspective & Dimension

Perspective & Dimension - Perspective is a little abstract

Usually a head on perspective works best, but if more is needed keep it just a little abstract. Illustrations shouldn't feel like they live in a 3D world.



A new perspective
Legs are matched up. Everything is lined up on a flat grid.

What we did in the past
Too much realism, everything is at an angle.

Perspective & Dimension - Shapes

A combination of shading and flat shapes against outlined objects will help give illustrations dimension. Usually a head on perspective works is best, but if more is needed keep it just a little abstract.

Like this

Shade & flat shapes give the house enough dimension

Not this

Everything is outlined. this makes it hard to focus on the house. No shading makes it too flat.

Icons

Icons are much more simple than illustrations, they share a lot of the same rules but icons are limited to express one quick idea.

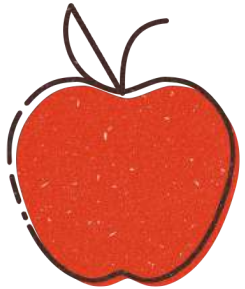
1. The Difference

The Difference - What's in common

Illustration
- Multiple colors.
- Shading.
- More complex.

- 8px line weight.
- Line breaks.
- Offset color
- 10/90 ratio.
- Paper texture.

Icon
- 1 color.
- Filled shape is focus of icon.
- More Simple.



The Difference - Icons are quick, Illustrations take their time.

Icons get the point across quickly and simply. They usually have less detail and are just one object.

Like this
Keeping it simple, doesn't have more information than you need.

Not this
Too much detail, it's trying to say too much other than "House."

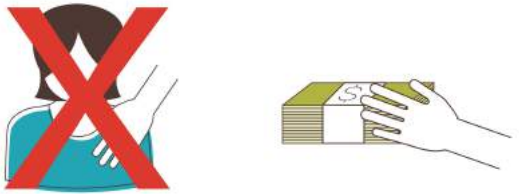
2. Storytelling

Storytelling - Icons shouldn’t always be literal

Sometimes icons need to discuss more serious topics. Icons can be seen as cartoony, so they might give the wrong voice to a sensitive topic. It's better to be more abstract, this gives the respective those topics deserve while also helping illustrate points.

New Approach

Enough to tell a story without getting graphic. This treats the topics seriously.



Original Designs

Feels a little cartoony for the subjects they’re talking about.

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Thank You.