The shapes within a design create visual interest. When you design any advertising space, you need to make conscious decisions about all sorts of shapes: the letters in the typefaces you select, headline units, copyblocks, objects in pictorial elements and even the negative shapes created by the positioning of elements within the space.

Generally speaking, irregular shapes are more visually interesting than symmetrical ones, especially geometric symmetrical ones such as most product packages. For that reason, an ad with a picture of a box or a can slapped in the middle of the page is usually boring and won't hold the viewer's attention very long.

As you can see, all the pictorial shapes in the Sharps ad above are irregular. They are interesting shapes to look at even when you take away the details.

There are exceptions, of course. For instance, the bottle shape in Absolute ads has become a hugely successful advertising icon. But it is, after all an exception. At left is an example of how Chanel turned a boring bottle shape into an interesting shape.

Negative spaces in ads also form shapes. As you design ads, try to become more conscious of the space around other elements. In the most striking and interesting ads you'll find that both the positive and negative spaces have interesting shapes. Take another look at the shapes in the abstract illustration on the Space page.

Shapes can influence the overall tone of a design, too. For instance, angular shapes have an air of formality and look somewhat mechanical/technical. Flowing curves are more organic and relaxed, and convey movement.
If a shape is very interesting, its prominence can be accentuated by dropping the background. And, whoever said a photo of an office interior had to be rectangular? Certainly not KnollOffice as you can see in the images below. The specific shapes they have selected to define the boundaries of their imagery represent the customers whose office furniture systems are discussed in the body text, Quaker, American Airline and Bulova.

Although all the ads shown on these pages feature shapes very prominently, designers pay attention to shapes that are merely part of a larger image, too. We’ve focused on the shapes of the imagery here, but the shapes of typographic elements are no less important. You’ll learn another way that shapes can be important when you reach the **Direction** page in the chapter about **Layout Principles**.