Working with Long Copy

In long copy ads, you want to say everything that needs to be said and make it LOOK to the consumer like there is as little as possible to read. While lots of ads today are dominated by visuals and text is easier to deal with in snappy, one-liners, you’re going to have to face the fact that graphic designers often work with quite a bit of copy—catalogs, brochures, long-copy ads, etc.. There are some very logical reasons for putting a lot of copy in an ad:

1. The product is new or has new features.
2. The product is complex or intimidating to use.
3. You want to create a mental context for the product.

Although research in the 1980s demonstrated that consumers generally don’t read body copy, 1990s research showed that the ones who do read it have a high level of interest in purchasing the product. It also showed that ads with at least some body copy are perceived as more credible than ads without any.

It is the job of advertising creatives to help interested people make their decisions. But, it is the tendency of consumers to be lazy. Let's face it, given the choice, would YOU rather read a lot or a little? So, we try to make more look like less.

Contrary to this concept, your natural tendency will be to want to make the body text as big as possible. That is because YOU are lazy, too.

1. You want to make the type fill up space. It is the mentality you use when you are lazy writing a paper and want the teacher to think you wrote more than you actually did.
2. You find it harder to read small type on your monitor and are too lazy to simply change the VIEW to a larger size.

Tricks for making more copy look like less:

A. Use the smallest possible type size that is still easy to read. Different fonts look larger or smaller in the same point size because of the relationship of x-height to ascenders. Look at the three sentences below. They all are easy to read and all are acceptable for body copy, but one takes up a lot more space on the page.

Copy set over in sizes above 12 pts. looks childish. (12 point Americana)
Copy set over in sizes above 12 pts. looks childish. (9 point Americana)
Copy set in sizes above 12 pts. looks childish. (12 point Goudy)

B. Break the type into smaller “visual chunks.” Viewers will read what they perceive to be several small pieces of copy more readily than one large copy block.

1. Physically break your copy into several independent copyblocks and position them individually. To create independent copy blocks simply Cut some copy from a larger block, draw a new text box with your text tool (the box will disappear when you release the mouse button, but it is still there) and Paste. Then, adjust the size and shape of your new text box to make sure all of the contents are visible.
2. **Columns**: Go to **Layout menu --->Column guides**. On the Column guides dialog you can set the number of columns and the space between them *(not more than .5”)*. You can also set the columns for both of the pages you are viewing differently. Now, move your text into the first column and create dependent copy blocks in the others. (Review your notes and handout re text flow.)

*Here's another tip*: You can change the margin settings for different pages in your file as well as the column settings. Notice that there are two icons labeled L and R next to your page icons at the bottom of your screen. Click on them. Now, go to **Windows menu ---> Show Master Pages**. A Master Pages palette will appear showing Document Master highlighted. Click on the arrow next to the palette tab and select the **New Master Page** command. On the dialog box that appears, you can change both the margin and column settings. Notice that you also can designate whether this is to be a one or two page master. When you click **Okay**, the new master page will appear on your palette. Click on whichever master you want to govern any page of your file. *(Both margins and column guides are there to help you set TYPE. They’re irrelevant to other elements.)*

3. Use **subheads**, generally 12 to 20 points.

4. Insert **blank lines** between paragraph.

5. Put **actual lines** between paragraphs

6. Use **excerpts** *(a provocative sentence or two of larger, bolder type embedded into the body text)* You can create an excerpt by placing the copy in a text box *(review your notes on how to embedded a headline into a copy block using a text wrap)* and giving the box either a stroke or no stroke as you choose.

7. **Printer ornaments** at the ends of paragraphs or between them. There are many ornament font. Here are some names you are likely to see: Wingdings, Dingbats, and Wood Ornaments. You can find out what all the ornaments look like and which key to press using Key Caps. Go to **Apple menu ---> Key Caps**. When the window opens, select the font you want to view on the Font menu. *(Remember, most fonts actually have four sets of characters: lower case, upper case [shift], and two sets of alternate characters [option and option-shift].)*
8. **Drop caps and initials.** An initial is created by simply making the point size of the letter larger. In PageMaker, you need to decrease the width of the letter to prevent it from looking disproportionately thick. In Illustrator, you can simply increase the height of the letter.

PageMaker has a special feature for making drop caps. Select the first letter of your text with the text tool. (Do not adjust its size in any way.) Go to Utilities menu ---> Plug-ins ---> Drop caps. On the dialog box that opens, set the depth you want the letter to drop.

9. Embed small pictures in a large copy block. You can do this simply by applying a text wrap to the pictures.

---Headlines. The purpose of a headline is to attract attention and arouse curiosity. Make your headlines large enough to be noticed quickly especially when there's lots of body text.

You also want to make headlines visually interesting. Consider your font choice carefully. You want all the elements to convey the same message visually and verbally (Logical Unity).

Consider alignment carefully, too. In addition to left, right and centered, you can make your headline asymmetrical by cutting the lines of the headline apart and positioning them manually. You also can create some internal contrast by emphasizing a word or phrase. Be careful to consider the logic of what you emphasize. For instance, in a headline like, Cheer up a friend with flowers, you could emphasize either the word flowers or the phrase cheer up. You would not emphasize the word cheer by itself because it would make the headline read: Cheer up a friend with flowers.

Which brings us to line breaks. Make them logical to read. In the headline above, there are several logical ways to break the words into separate lines:

1) Cheer up a friend / with flowers.
2) Cheer up a friend with / flowers.
3) Cheer up / a friend / with flowers.
4) Cheer up / a friend with / flowers.

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