

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

References

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allegory	a representation of an abstract or spiritual meaning through concrete or material forms; figurative treatment of one subject under the guise of another; a symbolic narrative
analogy	a partial similarity between like features of two things, on which comparisons may be based
icon	a picture, image, or other representation; a sign or representation that stands for its object by virtue of a resemblance or analogy to it
iconography	symbolic representation, especially the conventional meanings attached to an image or images
metaphor	the application of a word or phrase to an object or concept which it does not literally denote, in order to suggest comparison with another object or concept
sign	a mark or language unit that stands for or denotes another thing. A sign and its object have a connection. The interpreter brings meaning to the sign.

Sign Types in Graphic Communications

Icon =	Resembles the thing it represents. An icon imitates or copies aspects of the subject. <i>(a pictography or photograph of an apple)</i>
Index =	Has a factual or causal connection that points towards an object. <i>(wet streets are a sign that it has rained)</i> <i>(smoke signifies a fire)</i>
Symbol =	Has an arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the thing signified. The interpreter understands the symbol through previous knowledge and experience. <i>(the word apple)</i>
Metasymbol =	A symbol whose meaning transcends the tangible realm of simple one-to-one relationships. History, culture, and tradition play a role here. <i>(an apple with a snake near it)</i> <i>(an apple on the teacher's desk)</i>

Sign, Signifier, Signified

(from Saussure's *Linguistics theory*)

Sign = Something that denotes another thing.

Signified = The thing that is represented.
(an apple)

Signifier = The image/element that represents it.
(the word *apple* or a pictograph of an apple)

Interpreter = The person who perceives and interprets the sign.

The interpretation of sign is impacted by the context in which it is used, and its environment.

Example: a red circle means _____

Images

Images are pictures of all kinds from simple line to realism.

notation

pictograph

silhouette

contour drawing

line as tone

representation

Logo Design

A logo or logotype is a trademark or company name.

The principle of a logo is to identify. Simplicity is its means.

A logo, primarily, says who, not what, and that is its function.

A logos effectiveness depends on its distinctiveness, visibility, adaptability, memorability, universality, and timelessness.

Good design adds value, meaning, respect, and sometimes pleasure to the viewer.

Good logo design is easy to remember and reflects the business it symbolizes.

Early Identity Symbols

- Transylvanian potters inscribed their personal marks on bowls and vessels 7000 years ago.
- Ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman artisans carved their initials in their works.
- Ancient religious sects created logos including the Christian Cross, Judaic Star of David, Islamic crescent moon.
- Middle ages brought royal seals and coats of arms depicting lineage, aspirations, or virtues of nobleman.
- Trademarks for guilds appeared in the Renaissance for masons and other craftspersons.
- By the Industrial Revolution trademarks were firmly rooted in corporate and product identity.