

Ten common mistakes made by do-it-yourselfers

By Elizabeth Trew

Just because programs to write and design marketing materials are easy to use and readily available, doesn't mean that everybody should write and design their own materials.

Here's 10 of the most common mistakes made by do-it-yourselfers.

1. **Spelling and grammar mistakes** – Remember, spell check will flag words that don't exist, it will not flag words that are used incorrectly. People who are not fluent in English should either have someone else write their brochures or have them edited by an experienced editor. If you cannot afford a professional, get a friend or family member to help you.
2. **Failing to sell the benefits of your product** – For instance, when writing about a piece of clothing, highlight its beauty, softness or durability, rather than only mentioning what it's made of.
3. **Using too much prose and too few bullet points** – You want people to find what they want at a glance when they read your brochure.
4. **Too many font sizes, styles and colours** – You don't want your flyer to look like a ransom note.
5. **Too much information** –Your brochure should spark interest and get people into your store, visit your web site or give you a call. It shouldn't tell them unimportant information that is not relevant to the sale.
6. **Overuse of clip-art** – Look at the brochures you get from a large organization. Most use very little, if any, use clip-art.
7. **Improperly centering text** – Blocks of text should either be left-justified or fully-justified and should not be centred, as it makes it difficult to read. Headings can be centered. Columns of numbers should always be right-justified.
8. **Inconsistent layout** – Margins, paragraph spacing and text boxes for headings should be the same throughout your brochure. Inside panels should be balanced so they contain about the same amount of information. Paragraph and lines should not extend to the next panel. I remember seeing a brochure with a few dozen layout inconsistencies. Thinking about it gave me a headache!
9. **Poor quality pictures** – You are better off not using pictures, rather than using low-resolution pictures. Be careful when you use group shots that faces are large enough that the subjects can be recognized. This may mean making the pictures larger or using fewer pictures. And, don't use shots showing people's backs while they watch something.
10. **No call to action** – People need to be told about the next step they should take, whether it is to call you, visit your store or go to your web site. Contact information should always be on the back panel (as it is the last thing people see) and not buried in the inside panels.