# 6 BASIC TIPS TO SIMPLIFY YOUR DESIGN

1. GET INSPIRED

Start with a Google image search that relates to your project. Note the colors and fonts you like and the layouts and compositions you find appealing. Download images you love (click on "view image" to view the full size image, then control+click on a Mac or right click on a PC to save the image). Save your images in a digital "swipe file" so you can look at them again while designing.
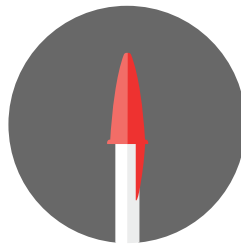
2. SKETCH IT

Sketching is a great way to unleash your creativity and get unstuck. Before designing with digital tools, take out a pen and paper and start sketching possible compositions. Explore how you might place all of your elements and identify any additional assets still needed. If you get stuck while designing digitally, come back to your notebook and sketch some more.

3. ALIGN TO A GRID

A grid simplifies the process of placing elements by giving you columns (and possibly rows) to line up edges along. As often happens, what's simpler for you is also simpler for your audience: alignment to a grid helps lead a viewer through a design and creates a sense of unity and cohesion. Learn how to create a custom column grid for your design at http://matternco.com/column-grid.
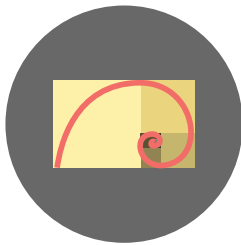
4. STAY GOLDEN

The golden ratio (also known as the golden mean) has been used in art and architecture throughout history. It lets you divide a space into two sections with an aesthetic symmetry. The math is simpler than you'd think: take the total width or height and divide it by 1.61803398875 to get the larger section. Then take the total width or height minus the larger section to get the smaller section.

5. THINK IN THREES

Three is a magic number. Tidy and beautiful, yet still a little odd, three is a designer's best friend. Not only aesthetically pleasing, three can also be easily scanned and understood. Grouping your content into three balanced parts will give your design a solid, simple structure: three columns, three images, three headlines, three paragraphs, three buttons. Three can help you (and your design) out a lot.

6. LESS IS MORE

Less is often more in design. Whitespace (the space between elements) should be considered a fundamental component of design. The best way to ensure "less" is to edit text down to the fewest words possible, select graphics for relevance and quality, and moderate fonts and colors. A readable body font paired with a contrasting header and a color palette of 3-6 balanced colors will give your design a sleek and simple framework.

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