### Business card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Language level:</strong></th>
<th>Upper-intermediate; Advanced (B2; C1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learner type:</strong></td>
<td>Teens; Adults; Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong></td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity:</strong></td>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong></td>
<td>Business cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language:</strong></td>
<td>Language of design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials:</strong></td>
<td>Video; Slideshow</td>
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</table>
Preparation, materials and equipment

1. For this activity, you will need the business card scene from the film American Psycho. To access the clip on YouTube, click on the following link:

   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qolvd3zzu4Y

2. A ‘kinetic typography’ version of the scene also exists. It can be accessed on YouTube by clicking on the following link:

   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IFkNLNm-gg

3. You will also need a PDF slideshow of book covers which can be downloaded from Lessonstream at:

   http://lessonstream.org/2011/12/06/business-cards/

4. For each student, print a copy of the Business Card Worksheet on pages 6 - 9.

5. Optional: Collect a few business cards for this activity and bring them into the classroom.

   Decide how you are going to display the clip and slideshow in class. Possibilities include:

   • Mobile device (For one-to-one situations)
   • Laptop, desktop, tablet computer (For small groups)
   • Computer, projector + screen (For larger classes)

   Don't forget the loudspeakers.

   If you don’t have Internet access in class, you could download or ‘capture’ the video from YouTube. Use www.savevid.com or a similar site. Note, however, that in doing so, you will be breaching YouTube’s Terms of Use.
Lesson plan

1. Use the example teacher script and questions below to conduct a whole-class discussion about the business card scene from the film American Psycho.

I want to describe a scene from a film. Listen and see if you can identify the film. In the scene, there are five men sitting around a table. Each man has something which is very important to him. The men start comparing these things.

What are these things that the men are comparing? Can you guess?

[Possible answers include: mobile phones, pictures of their family, pictures of their cars, etc. Note that you may want to tell students that although the answer is nothing rude, the scene in the film does have phallic undertones.]

While they compare these things, they refer to:

- Type
- Colouring
- Thickness

[Write these words and all other bullet points on the board.]

Any more ideas?

Here are some of the adjectives they use to talk about these things:

- Impressive
- Tasteful
- Subtle
- Really nice
- Off white (= almost, but not quite white)

Here are some of the things they say / features that they discuss:

- (It's got) raised lettering
- It even has a watermark.
- I picked them up from the printers yesterday.

What do you think that these these men are comparing?
2. After exploring all possibilities, show students the video clips (the original film scene as well as the kinetic typography version).

3. If you are teaching professionals, ask them to take out their business cards. Ask each person to give a brief history of their card. For example, ask them to discuss the following questions:

- How long have you had your business card?
- How often do you give it out?
- When did you last give it out? Who did you give it to and where were you?
- How does it compare with previous ones who have had?
- From a design point of view, what do you like / dislike about it?

(Note that this might work best if students are put into pairs / groups.)

4. On the board, write these headings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall appearance</th>
<th>Friendly, formal, subtle, conventional, giving credibility, less is more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Layout</td>
<td>Alignment, spacing, clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettering</td>
<td>Typeface*, size, modern, old fashioned, varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Avoid writing the words email and website. Everyone knows what an email address and a website look like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size and shape</td>
<td>Conventional, unconventional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Card &amp; printing</td>
<td>Avoid cheap thin card and bad printing quality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brainstorm ideas for what makes a good business card and write ideas beside the appropriate headings (see examples above).

* Note that the terms ‘typeface’ and ‘font’ are often used interchangeably. However, in typography, there is a there is a distinction to be made. A document may be written in a single typeface (Helvetica, for example) but using several different fonts (11-point Helvetica boldface; 14-point Helvetica Neue italics, etc.) In this way, the term font gives more specific information about size and style.
5. Tell students that they are going to see some images of business cards. Tell them that the images have been taken from a site called YourBusinessCardSucks.com which takes a critical look at business cards and their design.

Show students the slideshow and each time you display an image, ask them to say what they think about the business card - something good and something bad. For larger classes, this will work better if students are put into small groups.

6. Give out copies of the Business Card Worksheet on pages 6 - 9. Show students the comments, which are taken from the website, and tell them that they relate to the business cards that they have just seen. Ask students to do two things: 1. To match the comments with the images and 2. To decide whether or not they think the comments are fair. Note that comment 5 contains the abbreviation WTF? (= what the fuck?) If you feel that this is not appropriate for your class, use correction fluid to remove it.

7. Use the slideshow to do feedback.


8. Ask students to select their 12 favourite pieces of language from the worksheet - words, phrases, structures, or expressions that they would like to retain.

Note that this can be a very effective activity. Teachers can spend too much time deciding which pieces of language students should take from a text. This technique allows students to bring their individuality, interests and needs into the equation and tailor make their own vocabulary list.

9. Ask students to get into groups and compare their choices of language.

10. If applicable, ask students to have another look at their own business cards. Can they re-evaluate aspects of design in new light following this activity?

Credit

Thank you very much to Prescott Perez-Fox at YourBusinessCardSucks.com for giving me permission to use adapted versions of his comments. Prescott says that these days he is much less angry about bad business cards.

Variation

If your students don't have their business cards, bring in a selection of your own to evaluate (see Preparation, materials and equipment step 5.)
Match the comments with the business cards.
In each case, decide whether or not you think the comments are fair.

1. “I really like the logo and the typography on this one. But what a strange choice of card size. I’m generally weary of business cards that try to be different through the use of unconventional dimensions. Sometimes we are talking too small. Sometimes, too big. In this case, it just doesn’t look like a business card.”
   - [Business card: ________]

2. “This is interesting. Does the lettering really reflect the business on this one? The card uses the Avant Garde typeface which has become so strongly associated with the words “Avant Garde” that only confusion can arise here. I mean, if we were dealing with a retro fashion designer, we might be able to forgive them. But truck repair? A big problem of relevancy here.”
   - [Business card: ________]

3. “This is simple and elegant. However, as a business card, I think that I’d like to see a title or email address. Perhaps I’m just old fashioned! This is a letterpress card - you can see that the lettering is pressed into the card. This is currently quite a fashionable feature. Compare it with the business card scene in American Psycho when raised lettering was all the rage.”
   - [Business card: ________]

4. “I think we can all agree that the first rule of business cards is that the name of the business should be totally unambiguous. World Wide or World Wise? Perhaps they are secretly trying to imply that they are wise? This is a strange card indeed. I’m really not sure why the two phone numbers are punctuated differently. Why the inconsistency? The second number seems less like a phone number and more like a secret code.”
   - [Business card: ________]

5. It’s made of meat!!!!!!!!!???????? WTF?
   - [Business card: ________]

BUSINESS CARDS  by Jamie Keddie 6
6. “The “card” for this UK-based designer looks rather convincingly like a store receipt. Is this a novelty or an unnecessary gimmick? Hmm? Two questions spring to mind. First of all, wouldn’t it get instantly lost? Sometimes a conventional card in a classic rectangle shape suits the problem just fine. Secondly, what does a store receipt have to do with a graphic designer? A quick glance at his portfolio reveals that he doesn’t specialize in retail design. I don’t see how the card reflects the business. It all seems a bit irrelevant to me - shouldn’t a business card be a card?”

- [Business card: _________]

7. “We spend a lot of time on social networking sites. So much in fact, that the ‘status update’ has penetrated our offline world. I wonder if Kim decides to fill in these cards herself or leave to the recipient to do so (e.g. Kim Bost is smokin’ hot!”

- [Business card: _________]

8. “Why do we need faces on business cards? Do we need the images to remind us of the person that gave us the card? Is it to create a visual connection and therefore a more emotional relationship? Or is it to add credibility? Perhaps it’s quite simply a vanity thing. My opinion - keep your face off your card.”

- [Business card: _________]

9. “I always liked the old logo and mascot of this fruit juice company. But the strange thing about this card is the terrible spacing of the text. What happened there?”

- [Business card: _________]

10. “Simple and well-balanced. Nice layout. Everything that is expected from a business card.”

- [Business card: _________]

11. “A classic amateur design with all the typical faults. On business cards, you can keep lettering small and make good use of space. Here, the card has been filled with oversized text and inconsistent typefaces. All of this contributes to a cluttered card - untidy and chaotic. The layout is problematic as well: everything is centered and that extra information - the phone numbers - is pushed to the corners. Good alignment is pleasing to the eye but there is none of that here. And what’s with that “Go” button? In fact, why is the name of the restaurant trying to double as a URL in the first place? Am I being to harsh? I’m sure the food’s great!”

- [Business card: _________]