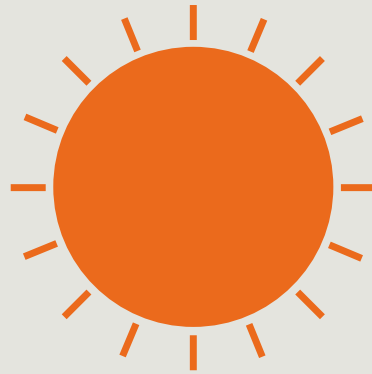


FIRST



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If you are just about to embark on your first year as a design student chances are you are working on your first summer project right now. This practical guide looks at what to do and what is expected.

Summer projects give you the opportunity to explore how it feels to take the first steps into your new life as a design student without having set a foot through the door. What you create will help your new tutors to get to know you, your methods of designing and ability to work independently. It also encourages you to set aside dedicated time to explore and learn about your subject of choice.

WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?

It can be a bit daunting to embark upon a first project without tutor support or guidance. You may be wondering - have I done too little or too much, is it interesting enough, have I covered everything required? You won't be the only one thinking this. All your new peers are in the same position.

It is natural to think 'what are they looking for?' when you begin your project. However, the emphasis should be on 'what

do I want to know?' In fact, most summer projects (unless the brief states otherwise) are not formally assessed, allowing you to focus on exploring your view of the brief without having to worrying too much about making a mistake.

When you first start your course your tutor may review your summer project and give you helpful feedback. They will be looking to guide you on how you approach your work, how you document information and how you translate what you have learnt into a new outcome.

GETTING STARTED

It is quite likely that you have been sent a brief which outlines the requirements of the project you have been set. Your brief should act as a guide for your project

Treat your brief like an exam question and break it down into a checklist. Identify any constraints that have been set or problems that need to be solved.

RESEARCH

Before starting any design project you need to do some initial investigation to gain

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inspiration and knowledge and to develop new ideas. This is the research stage. The research you gather here will explain the context of your work and is known as 'contextual research'.

Whilst gathering your research it is good to get a balance of primary and secondary information. Primary research includes own sketches, drawings, photographs, small-scale samples or models. Secondary research is information which has already been gathered and collated by others, for example in magazines, books or on the Internet.

Other great sources for research include: exhibitions and galleries, architecture, natural forms, films, music, festivals, travel, second-hand shops and people-watching.

DESIGN

Your brief may ask you to develop your ideas into a particular outcome or design. It is recommended that you invest time into this stage of the project. An experimental and exploratory approach to the design process can make the difference between an outcome based on imitation and one that demonstrates innovation.

Make sure your design ideas link closely with your research, the two should not be seen as separate entities. From your research bring colour, detail, line, texture and shape

through to the design development stage. Here you are showing your thought process, how you analyse and interpret information and how you can develop it in an informed way. Some written analysis helps to explain your thought process also.

PRESENTATION

Good presentation can lead to a clear, coherent and engaging project. Presentation is about communication. The communication of ideas, detail and identity.

Pay attention to the presentation of all aspects of your project, from initial research through to final outcome. Consider proportion, layout, use of text, font and clarity of image.

Finally, refer to the checklist you created from your brief. Have you communicated all the points you wished to cover?

A trip to the library and the help of a good librarian can arm you with a far broader wealth of research than scouting around the Internet. The Internet is great for unchallenging contemporary references, designers and images, however, it can lack a depth of well-researched opinion, so don't rely on it as your only source of information.