

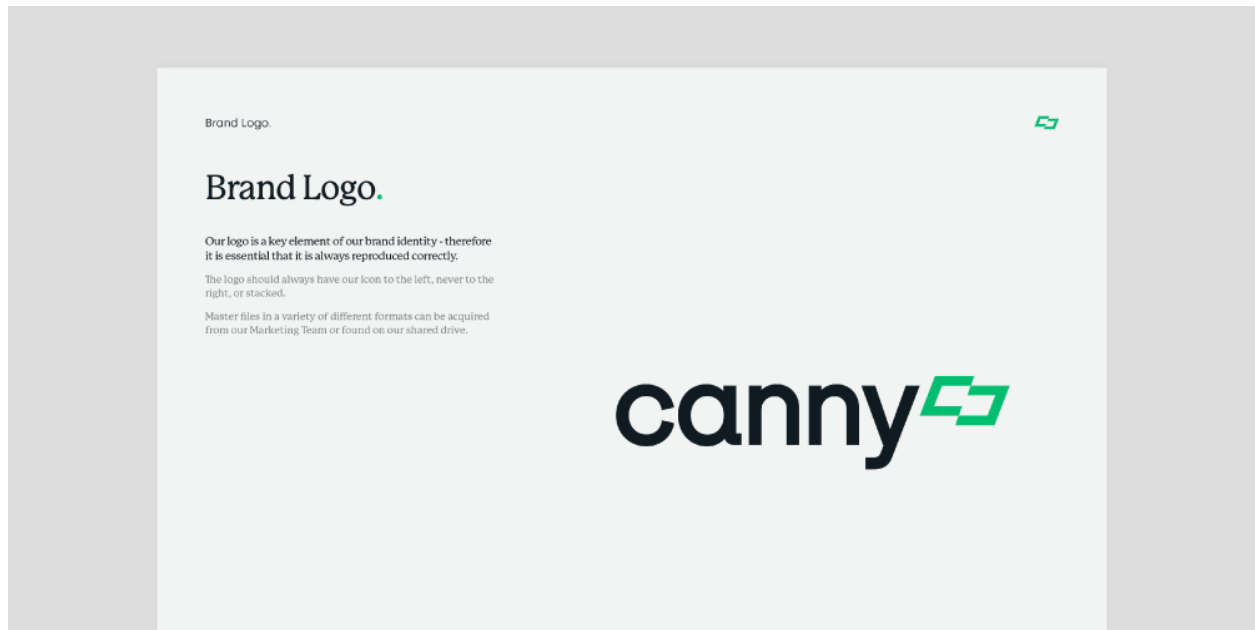
# WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A BASIC BRAND GUIDELINE DOCUMENT?

A basic brand guideline document will often bypass the brand strategy, mission, and vision, side of things, and go straight to the visuals.

We believe every good branding project should be based on the **foundation of a solid brand strategy**.

However, sometimes there simply isn't the budget for that, or, you need something that [solely documents your brand's visual identity](#).

So, let's take a look at that route first:



## Logo Design

The first thing that should be shown in your brand guidelines is your logo design.

This is the main form of the logo, and the design that you would expect to see 90% of the time.

In the first instance, it should be shown in full colour, in all its glory. Be proud of it!

[Check out this post](#) if you're looking for tips to make your logo design more effective.

## Logo Variations

Your logo variations are the other logo designs that your brand could use.

This always trips people up.

If your logo has a logo mark to the left, and the text to the right, it doesn't always need to be used in that layout.

Make sure you also have a vertical version or "lock up". A version without text. A version without the logo mark, and so on.

Think about McDonald's and how they use their logo:

A big yellow M by the side of the road

Yellow M and McDonald's text on the building itself

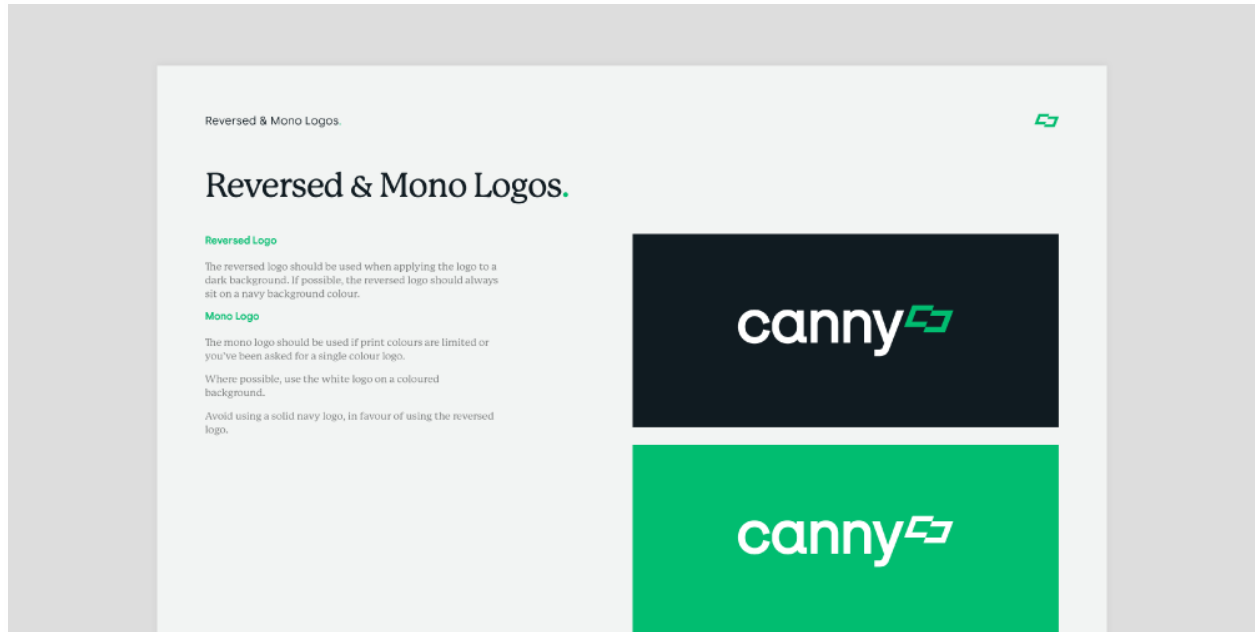
Full or reduced versions of the logo on their packaging

Big yellow M painted on their drive-thru floor

It's important that your logo design is fully flexible.

And all of these versions of your logo design should be represented within your brand guideline document.

Remember, **your brand guidelines are an evolving document**. If you open up a new shop, store, franchise, or location, and come across a new use case, make sure it gets documented!



## Logo Design Reversed and Single Colour

This touches on what we've just talked about, because essentially, reversed and single colour logos are logo design variations. However, this feels like it deserves its own section.

Your logo design exists in a primary colour palette. This is its typical form, the thing people will see most often.

But then you need to show it in reverse, on a different colour background, and more often than not, in a single colour (typically black.)

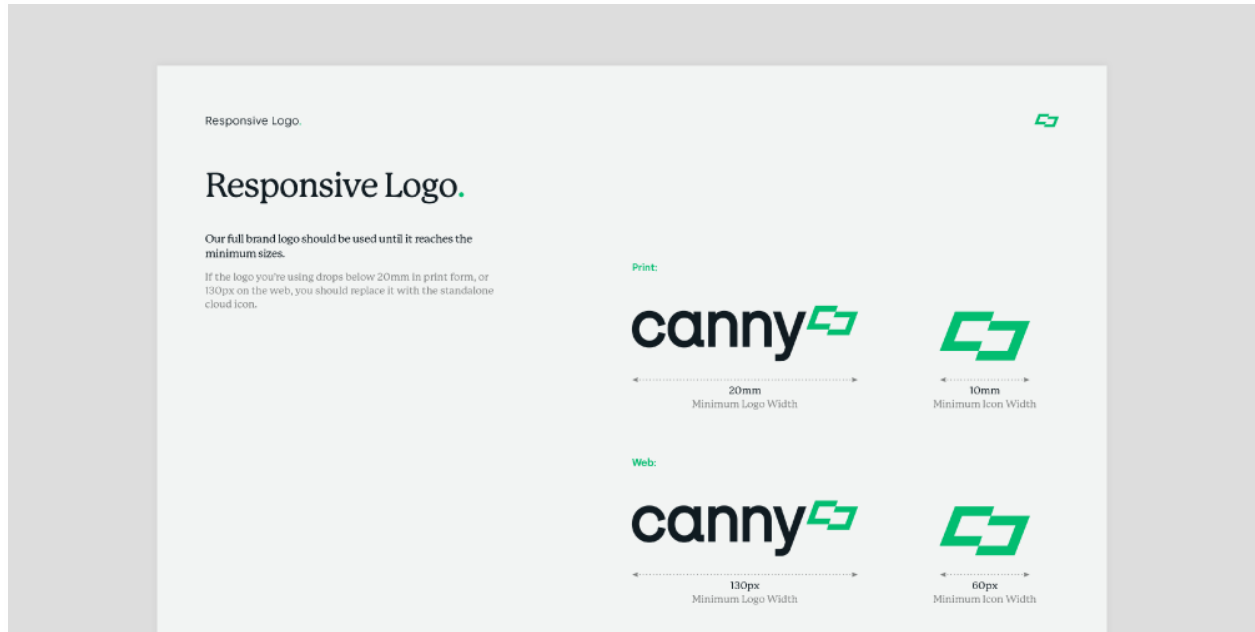
By doing this, you're also [proving your logo design works in a number of different ways](#).

You might ask; "why, who's going to see it?"

Well, if you photocopy a document, it goes down to one single colour. If you need to put your logo on a dark background instead of a white background, then you need an alternative.

All of these little things should be documented within your brand guidelines.

If your logo design is designed properly and effectively, your agency won't have any problem presenting it in these different formats.



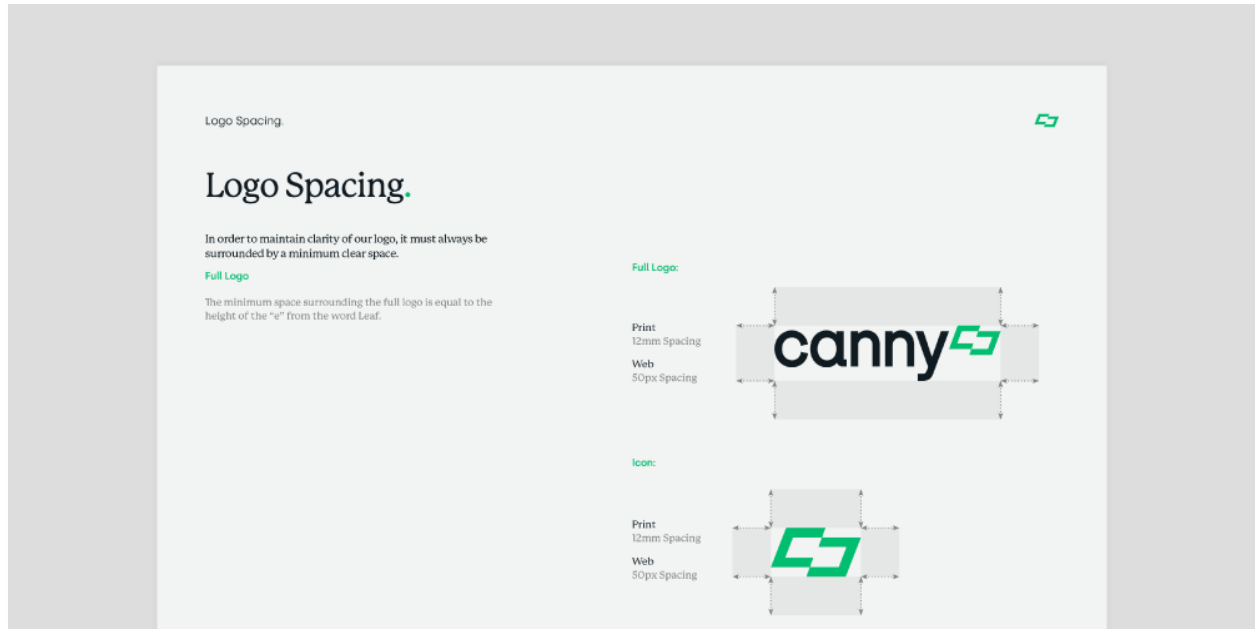
## Responsive Logo

Your responsive logo design is the version of your logo that will be used on smaller screens like a tablet or mobile phone.

This section should show you how to use your logo across a range of devices, showing how the logo can change when it gets to a certain size.

The important part to consider here, is that when your logo is reduced in size, it should still be instantly recognisable as your brand.

Check out our Responsive Logos above to get an idea of how this looks in practice.



## Logo Spacing

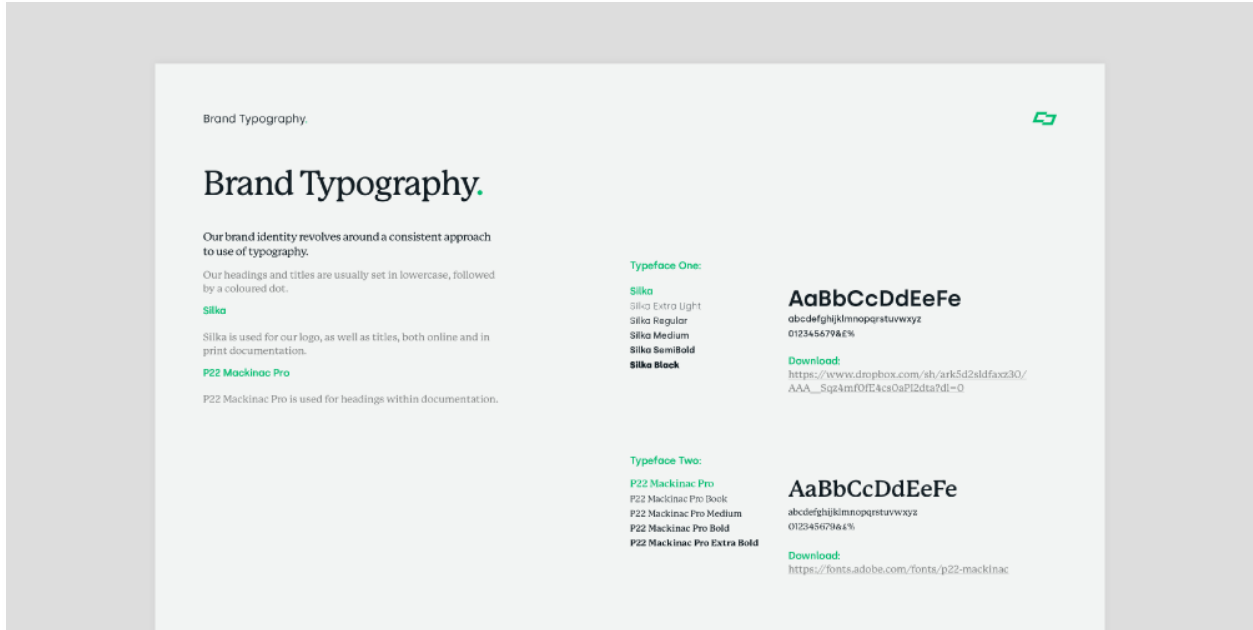
The space around your logo is often as important as the logo itself. In fact I'd say the space you give your logo, can make or break the design.

If your logo is cramped into a tiny space, surrounded by conflicting elements, it won't look professional at all.

Your logo should be displayed with "x-height" guides, showing how much clear space should be around the logo at all times.

There should also be an indication of how small you should take your logo at any given time. Again, use the responsive logo section above as a guide.

At Canny, we give minimum sizes for print (in millimeters) and for digital (in pixels.) After that point, your responsive logo sizing should be used.



## Brand Typography

The typography used across your brand should be documented in full.

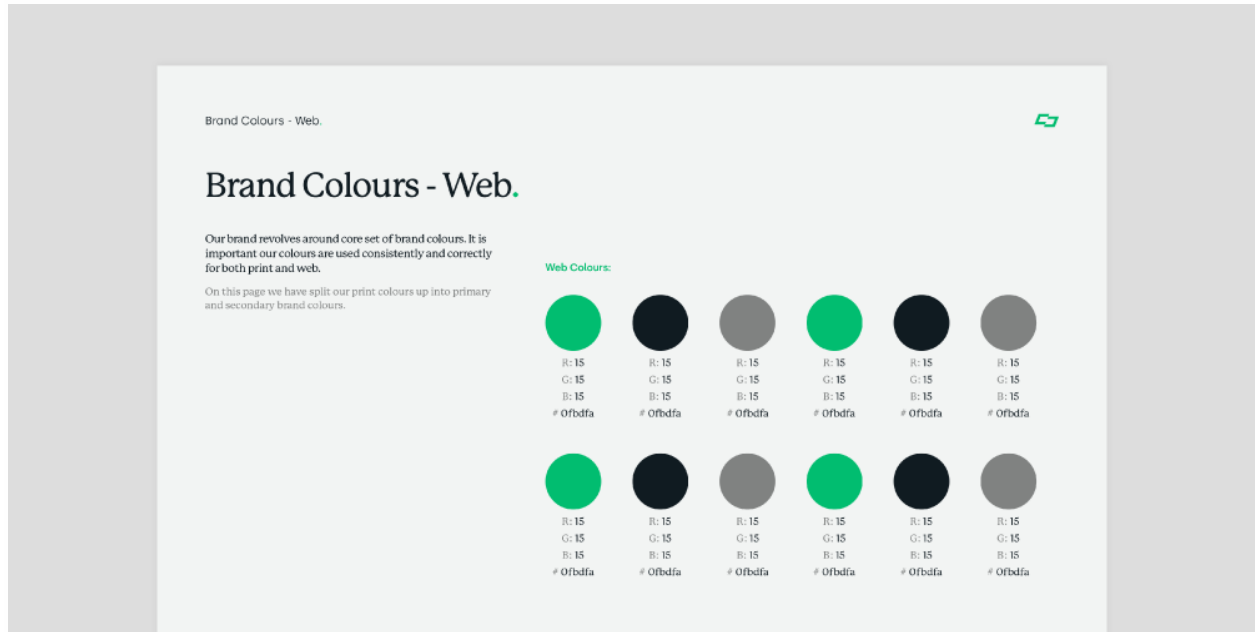
This should include, the font used within the logo, as well as;

Headlines

Sub-headlines

Paragraphs

Your brand guidelines document should outline the typography used, where you can get access to them, and the sizes they should be used at, as well as their relation to each other.



## Brand Colours

Your brand colours exist in a variety of forms.

Primary brand colours

Secondary brand colours

RGB (web) colours

CMYK (print) colours

The primary colours are often the colours found in your logo design, plus a version of black, or versions of black, used as your main text.

Secondary colours exist to add depth to your brand's colour palette.

These might be used across other forms of advertising, such as leaflets, exhibition stands, or your website.

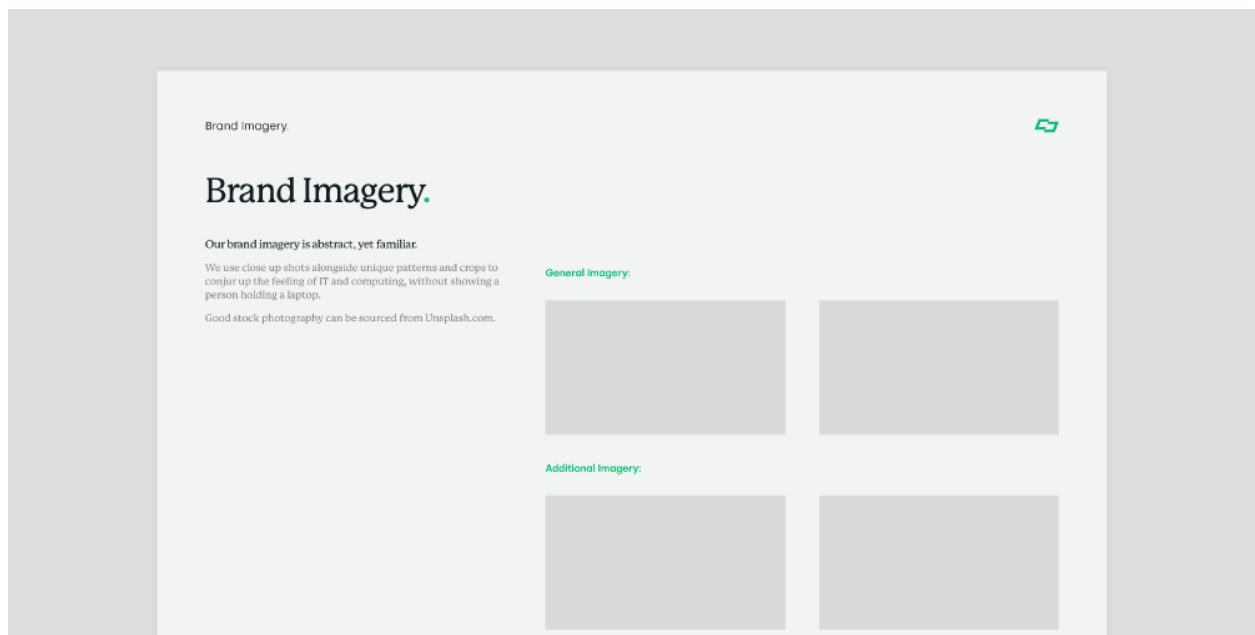
[When you're creating marketing materials](#), it's important to have flexibility while remaining "on brand."

As the importance of the digital world rises, people seem to have forgotten all about print colours.

A vibrant colour that looks great on screen might not work in print. Translating it directly into a print colour will probably look too dull and muddy.

Lately, [we've been building brand identities](#) that are fully flexible across both print and web, by accounting for that in the brand guidelines.

Rather than simply swapping out RGB for CMYK values, try creating your own CMYK palette. You'll often get better results!



## Brand Imagery

Photography and illustration can play a key role in your brand identity.

It's important that a consistent photographic or illustrative style is established from the outset.

Are you using conceptual photography to demonstrate concepts, or scribbly illustrations to help visualise things?

If you're looking for good photography, check out our post on [where to get the best photos](#) for your brand.

This section of the guidelines will usually feature a selection of appropriate images, and a selection of inappropriate images.



With photography, this will focus mainly on light, composition, and subject matter.

With illustration, you'll be looking at style, colour, and subject matter.

Photographers and illustrators find this section particularly useful if they're being brought in to help your brand.

## **Brand Stationery**

Your brand stationery should also be documented within your guidelines.

Branding projects always tend to include (at a minimum), your business cards and letterheads. Make sure these get documented!

One of the biggest inconsistencies we see across brands [when we help them to rebrand](#), is how they set out their business cards.

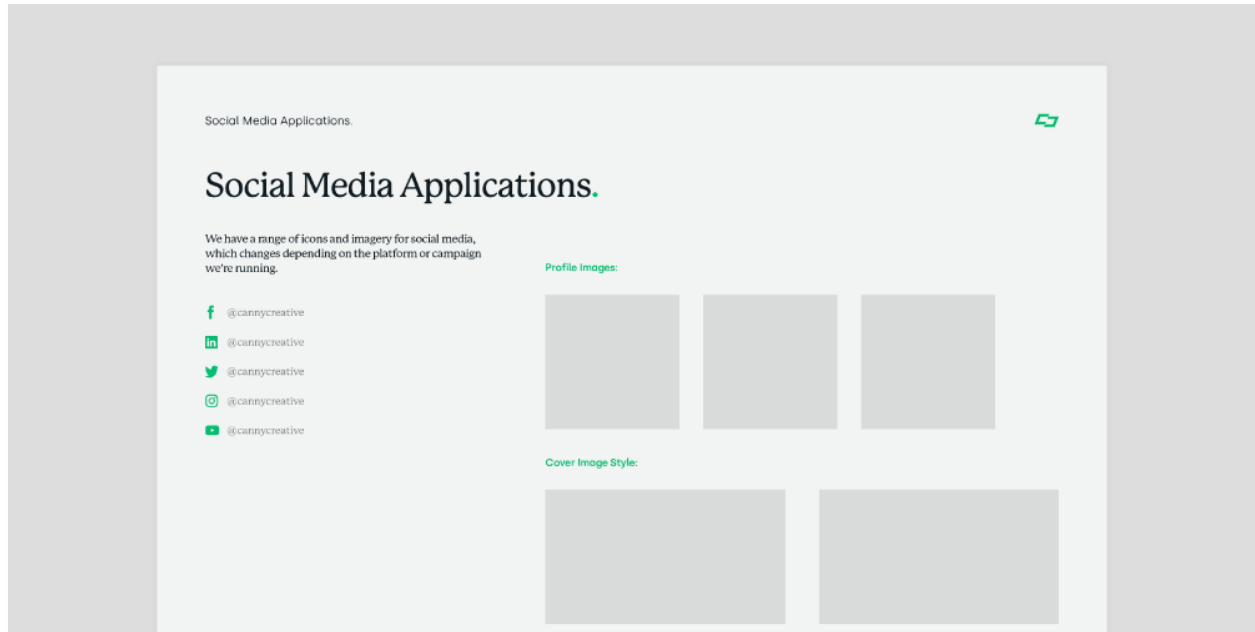
Are you using T, Tel, or Telephone? Are you setting out your number with or without the international dialling code? All of this should be ironed out in your guidelines.

When you're adding new staff members, and getting additional business cards printed, you can use the document created by your agency, to help create the new business cards.

Then, hand the document over to the printers, and explain where they can find the relevant part of the document.

Some brands go as far as to note down paper stocks and finishes, so they can ensure consistency across all of their stationery.

For reference; that's the right route forward!



## Social Media Assets

The last thing typically included in the most basic of brand guidelines is social media assets.

What do your avatars look like? How about your header images? And even the content itself.

With so many varying degrees of social media content, it's important to establish a base style and build up from there.

We recently worked on some Instagram content for a new fitness group.

We ensured their Instagram stories aligned to their Instagram feed squares, which aligned to their Twitter and Facebook posts.

Consistency helps get your brand recognised, especially in the noisy social media space.

Digital Marketing 101 dictates that you're consistent in your approach, and your social media visuals needs to be part of that consistent approach too.

## The Brand Guideline One Sheet

An emerging trend when creating brand guidelines, is the brand guideline one sheet.

Not every single business needs brand guidelines that dictate every single output.

For example, we recently worked with a nursery business. Their staff members are often at full capacity, stretched, and in a hurry.

Detailing every single brand output and creating an in-depth brand guideline wouldn't have been a good use of time or budget.

A quick reference sheet is much more helpful in this situation!

So, when working with a branding agency, consider your needs and requirements before rushing into creating a huge brand guideline document.

## **A MORE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO BRAND GUIDELINES**

The above covered the basics of a visual identity, and how to document it within your brand guidelines.

More comprehensive brand guidelines include all of the above, and more.

Typically, more advanced guidelines are used for larger corporations, and start to include elements of brand strategy, and further use cases.



As we discussed at the start of this post, brand strategy includes;

- Audience personas
- Competitor research
- Brand positioning
- Brand story
- Brand values
- Brand mission
- Brand touchpoints
- Brand messaging
- Tone of voice
- And finally, your brand identity.

We've already covered off brand identity above, so let's take a look at how the rest of your brand strategy fits into your brand guidelines.

If you're unsure about brand strategy, we created [The Ultimate Brand Strategy Development Guide](#) just for you!

On top of that, we're giving away our free comprehensive step-by-step guide [Brand Strategy Made Simple](#).

So we're not going to go into detail about each element here. Instead, we're going to show how your brand strategy could fit into your brand guidelines.



## **Audience Personas**

Your [Audience Personas](#) should epitomise your customer base. These fictional profiles will help to ensure your brand and [marketing efforts](#) will appeal to your audience.

We typically lay these out in brand guidelines based on our [Customer Persona Template](#).

By documenting your customer personas in your brand guidelines, you're showing people the type of customers you're trying to attract.

This can work in a number of ways. Not only does it help everyone align their efforts with your customer base, it can also help to generate referrals.

## **Competitor Research**

[Profiling your competitors](#) within your brand guidelines might seem an odd choice. But, it gives people a unique insight into your industry.

By taking a deep dive into the competitive landscape, you begin to paint a picture of where you sit and how you can grow to exceed customer expectations.

We typically dedicate a page to each competitor, and look at a mix of local, national, and international competitors, what they offer, and profile any key learnings that help our client's brand.

## Brand Positioning

Brand positioning is the process of placing your brand in the mind of your customers. Within your brand guidelines, you should outline how you're doing that.

Typically, when including brand positioning in a guideline, we only include the final brand positioning statement.

If they're having difficulty, we help our clients [formulate their brand positioning statement](#) using the following formula:

[Brand Name]'s [offering] is the only [category/service/product] that [benefit you bring to your customers].



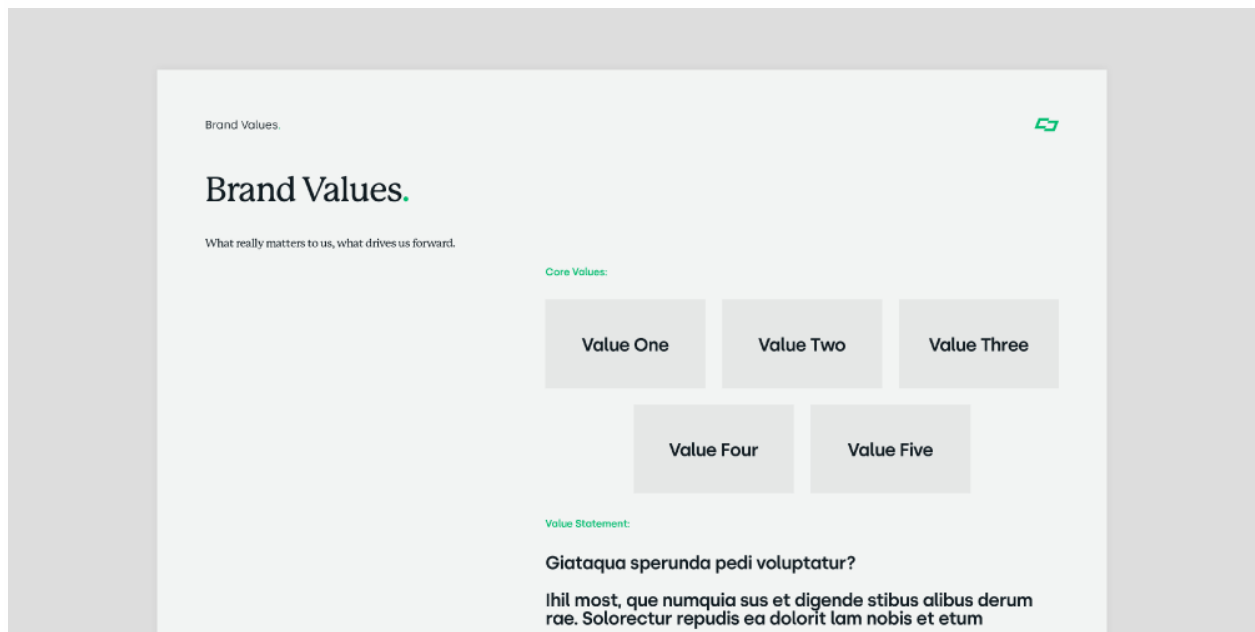
## Brand Story

Your Brand Story is unique to you – it can be funny, unexpected, serious, ambitious... but one thing is for sure, it must spark an emotional reaction.

It's the story of your brand, and how you help your customers.

To document this in your guidelines, we typically include the final brand story as a paragraph on a slide of its own. Sometimes, we'll include the direct pain points that our client's solve for their customers.

If you're struggling with creating your brand story, check out [Building a Story Brand by Donald Miller](#).



## Brand Values

At the core of your Brand Strategy, a [href="https://www.canny-creative.com/establishing-brand-values-give-foundation-growth/" rel="noopener" target="\\_blank">](https://www.canny-creative.com/establishing-brand-values-give-foundation-growth/). This collection of words should pack a punch. They are intrinsic to every aspect of your business, not just your marketing materials.

When including brand values in a brand guideline, we typically state the value, and accompany it with a descriptive sentence.

Try to avoid cliches like “transparent” and “honest” afterall, we expect everyone we deal with to be honest!



## Brand Mission

Some people call it a [Brand Mission](#), others a Vision, others a Purpose. At Canny, we always call it your Brand Mission.

Mission is apt, because just like putting people on the moon, you’re answering the question:

“Where are we aiming to be?”

Again, it’s a paragraph on a page. Nothing overly ambitious! Just be sure you detail exactly where you’re brand is going, and what you’re setting out to achieve.

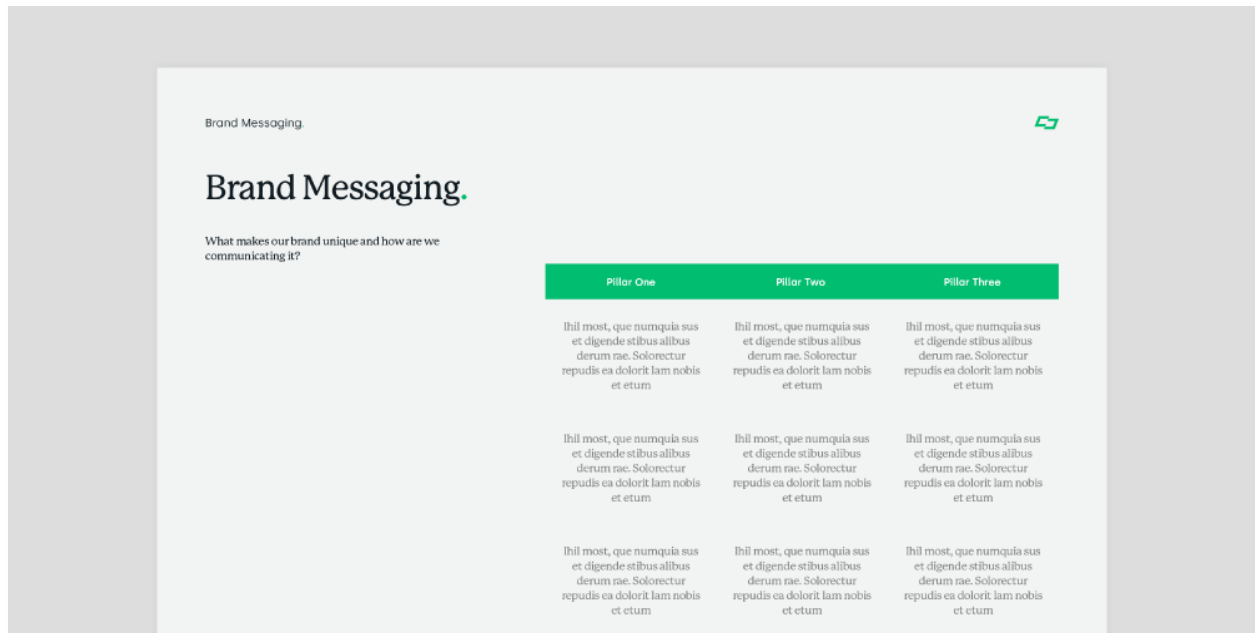
## Brand Touchpoints

Your brand touchpoints are the time and place where a customer comes in contact with your brand.

[Touchpoints can be very tricky to document](#) in your brand guidelines. We’ve found even just having a list of them, or some sort of table, that documents how and when customers will come into contact with your brand can be useful.



We try and avoid word clouds at all costs (because they're tacky as hell!) but if there was one place they'd be appropriate, this could be it.



## Brand Messaging

Your brand messaging is “what” you’re trying to communicate , and how you communicate it. It acts as a framework on which to base all of your external communications.

Again, you can list out your key messaging with little to no difficulty.

However, what we’ve found most useful in the past, is actually showing the messaging in use alongside that.

Maybe slot a Facebook advert, or a banner you’ve created onto the messaging slide too.

Another great way to visualise your brand messaging is by breaking it down into your brand pillars.

Brand Tone of Voice.

## Brand Tone of Voice.

How do we use words to channel our brand values.

| Voice Characteristic | Description   | Do  | Don't   |
|----------------------|---|---|---|
| Authentic            | ihil most, que numquia sus et digende stibus oibus derum rae. Solorectur repudis eo dolorit tam nobis et etum | - Delivery - Free to one UK address<br>- Lead Time - 20 working days from<br>- Delivery - Free to one | - Delivery - Free to one UK address<br>- Lead Time - 20 working days from<br>- Delivery - Free to one |
| Authoritative        | ihil most, que numquia sus et digende stibus oibus derum rae. Solorectur repudis eo dolorit tam nobis et etum | - Delivery - Free to one UK address<br>- Lead Time - 20 working days from<br>- Delivery - Free to one | - Delivery - Free to one UK address<br>- Lead Time - 20 working days from<br>- Delivery - Free to one |
| Open                 | ihil most, que numquia sus et digende stibus oibus derum rae. Solorectur repudis eo dolorit tam nobis et etum | - Delivery - Free to one UK address<br>- Lead Time - 20 working days from<br>- Delivery - Free to one | - Delivery - Free to one UK address<br>- Lead Time - 20 working days from<br>- Delivery - Free to one |
| Positive             | ihil most, que numquia sus et digende stibus oibus derum rae. Solorectur repudis eo dolorit tam nobis et etum | - Delivery - Free to one UK address<br>- Lead Time - 20 working days from<br>- Delivery - Free to one | - Delivery - Free to one UK address<br>- Lead Time - 20 working days from<br>- Delivery - Free to one |
| Friendly             | ihil most, que numquia sus et digende stibus oibus derum rae. Solorectur repudis eo dolorit tam nobis et etum | - Delivery - Free to one UK address<br>- Lead Time - 20 working days from<br>- Delivery - Free to one | - Delivery - Free to one UK address<br>- Lead Time - 20 working days from<br>- Delivery - Free to one |

## Tone of Voice

Your [brand's tone of voice](#) describes how your brand communicates with the audience and thus influences how people perceive your messaging.

Are your emails signed off with; “Thanks, thank you, regards, kind regards, faithfully, yours sincerely...”?

Do you greet people with; “Hi, hey, hello, howdy...?”

The tone of voice your brand uses can help accentuate the brand you want to communicate.

To document this, we typically include a tone of voice table. This shows you the characteristics, description, do's, and don'ts of how your brand communicates.

## Rounding Up Your Brand Strategy

The creation and documentation of a brand strategy is no easy task.

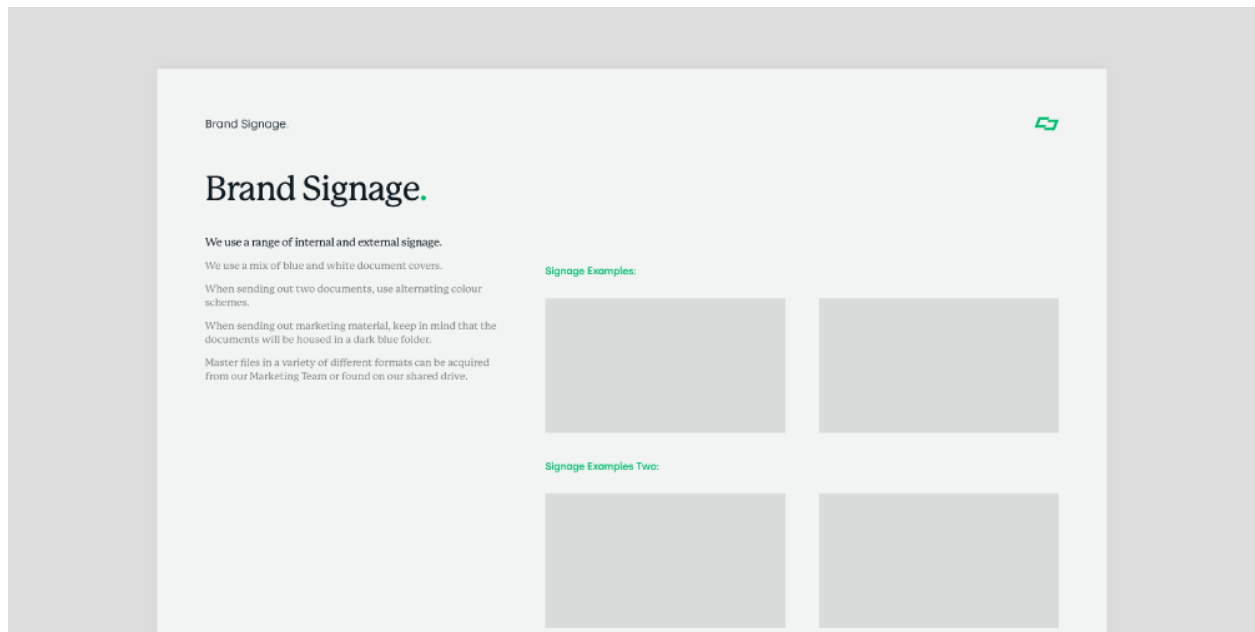
That's exactly why we always recommend using a professional branding agency to help. [will help steer your strategy in the right direction.](#)

If you're determined to have a go at creating your own brand strategy, do make sure to download our guide that will help give you the best possible start.

## ADDITIONAL VISUAL CONSIDERATIONS

We've talked about the basics of including your visual identity in your guidelines already.

However, if you're running a bigger operation, you might also want to consider the following.



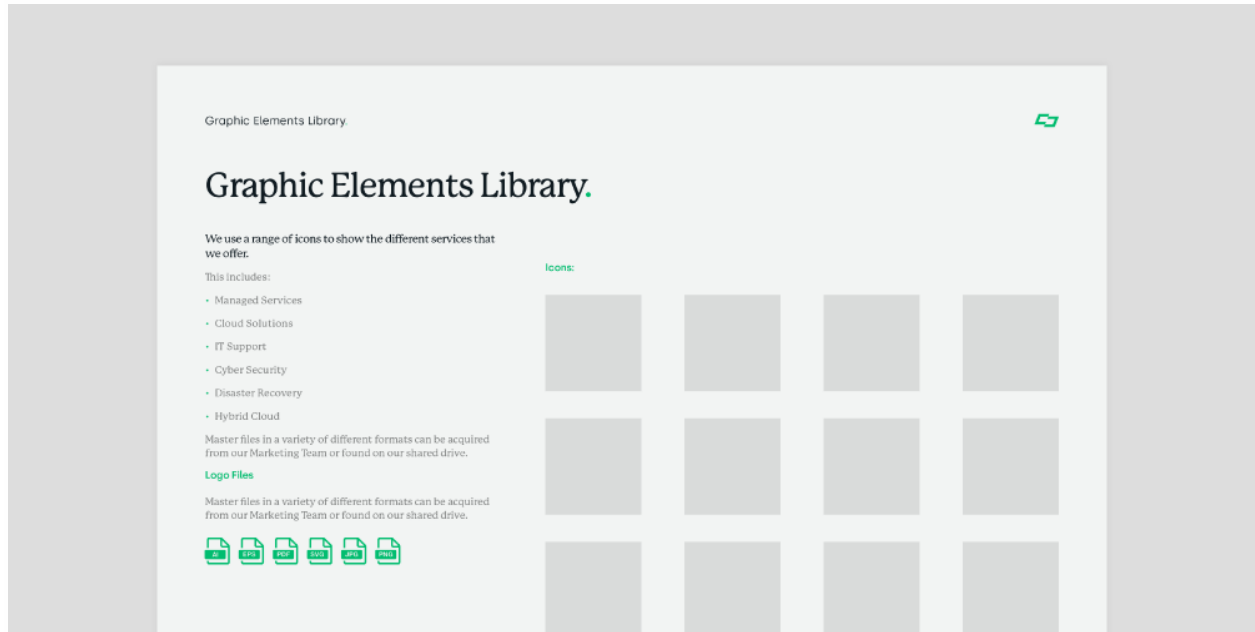
### Signage

If your company has physical locations, signage would be a common thing to find inside your brand guideline document.

Are your signs flat, plastic, vinyl? Or are they built up and illuminated?

How do you use your brand identity within your signage?

These are all considerations that should be addressed within your documentation.



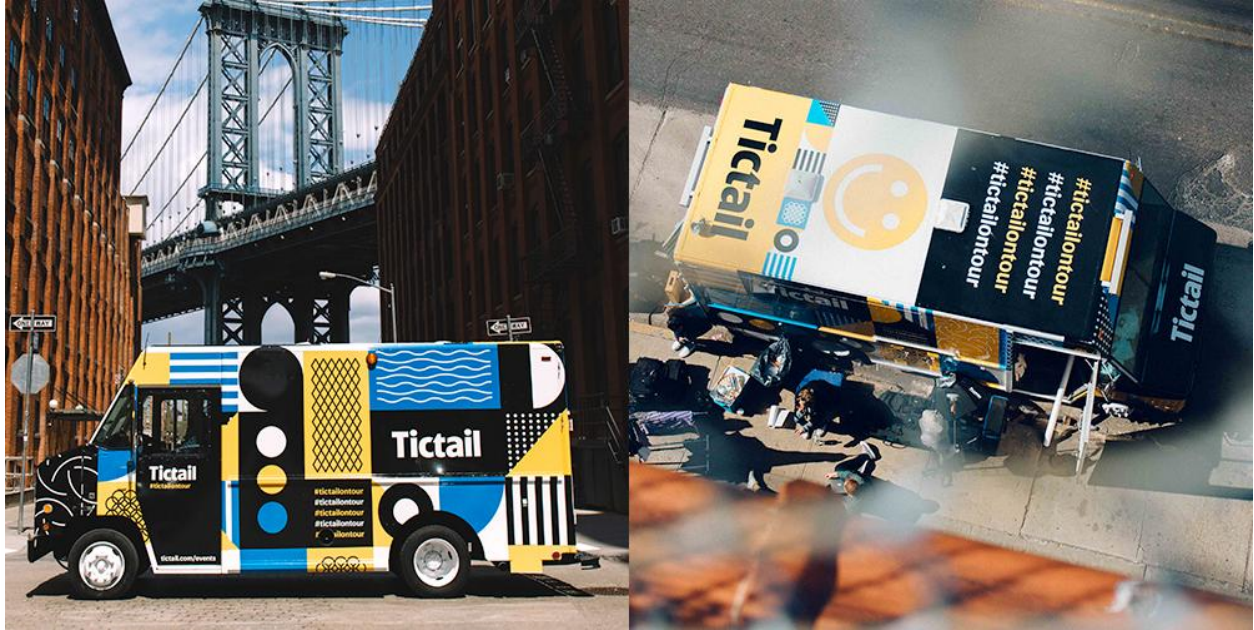
## Icons

There's been a huge rise in the use of iconography in brands over the last several years.

Do you use outlined icons or solid icons?

If you've worked to create an icon library, make sure it's included in your brand guidelines in case you ever need something on the fly!

This also helps align expectations if you move to a different creative agency in the future.

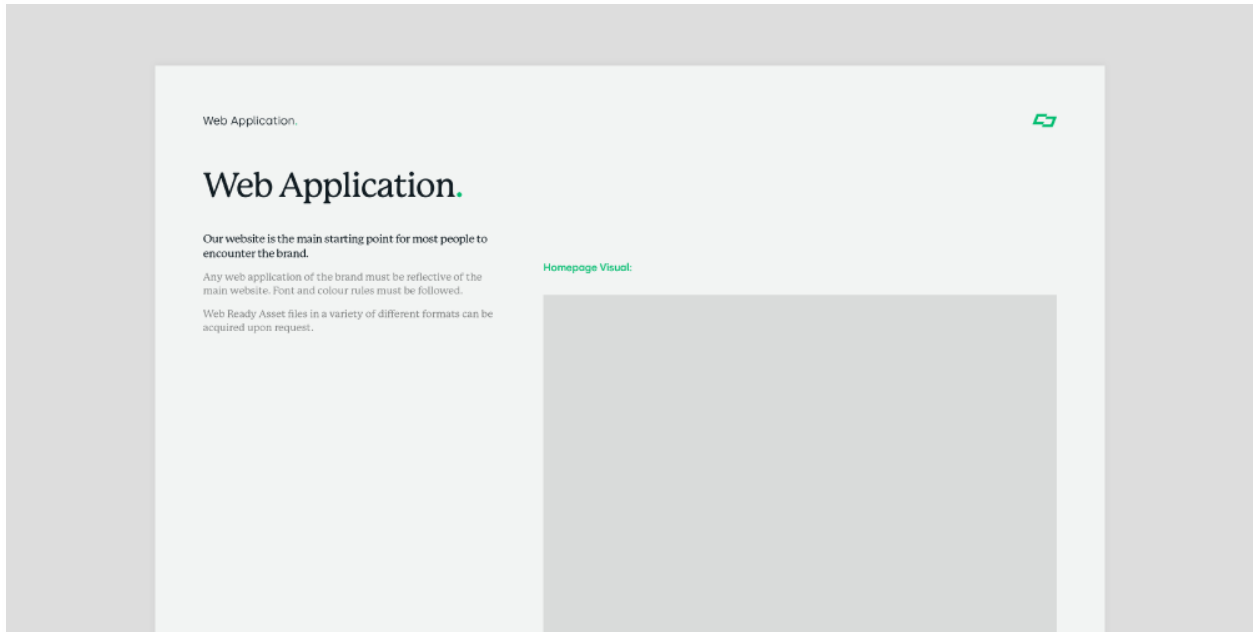


## Vehicle Livery

A lot of organisations have vehicles, and again, [their livery or sign writing](#) style should be documented in your brand guidelines.

If you own a fleet of taxis for example, do they all need to match? What signage goes on the side?

Documenting all of this in your guidelines helps make big decisions in the future.



## Website Style Tile or Web Style Guide

Your [website design](#) is an important part of your brand's communication.

But how does this fit into a brand guideline?

Well, professional design agencies are now starting to create website style tiles. These tiles are then used to show [the basics of a brand's](#) online presence and website.

They list out:

Fonts, colours, image types, how type interacts with imagery and more.

A brand website style tile can easily fit into your brand guidelines and give you an idea of how to use your brand identity online.

We also find it useful to include shots of several key pages and how they look on mobile, tablet, and desktop.

If you're struggling to get your website together, check out our post on [writing a website brief](#) to help you out.

## **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR BRAND GUIDELINES**

When creating your brand guidelines, include everything that you think is important to your business.

Because every single business is different, each set of brand guidelines can be completely different, and this post really is just the tip of the iceberg.

The larger the brand, the more touchpoints you'll have, and the more you should include in your guidelines.

As you create them, make sure to include a written description or summary on each page, to give everyone full visibility of what you were thinking when you included each element.

**The more people know, the more they can help.**

## **A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CREATING BRAND GUIDELINES**

Your brand guidelines are the complete guide to your brand. Both your brand strategy, and your brand identity.

**It's important that your brand guidelines don't live to collect dust.** It's a living, growing, breathing document.

They should be used when communicating with new suppliers or bringing people into the company.

They should also be added to and changed as your company grows and develops.

You run a new campaign and something works? Get it in the guidelines document to use going forward.

If you change something, make sure your guidelines are brought up to date to reflect the change.

Your brand guidelines are the comprehensive guide to your brand and company. Use them as the tool they were intended to be.

Reference : <https://www.canny-creative.com/>