



**COLLABORATIVE TYPOGRAPHIC COLLAGE**

It is not uncommon to witness design students staring at a blank artboard—fingers perched over their keyboards, hovering in indecision. We’ve all been there, but this phenomena is especially profound for students. Most students are first trained in foundations wherein they compose and create by hand. Then, when the computer is introduced, they find it difficult to translate their compositional skills to a mouse and program.

For students, computer-imposed constraints often drive the creative process. Introducing alternative creative methods and processes can help students bridge the gap between analog and digital creation. Collaborative typographic collage is an excellent way of getting students to compose more intuitively and creatively.

**TOOLS/MATERIALS**

- + STUDENT MATERIALS: Scissors, x-acto knife & extra blades, ruler, pens, pencils, cutting surface, tape, glue, gluestick, colorless blender markers, stencils, & camera.
- + INSTRUCTOR MATERIALS: Blank index cards trimmed to poster proportions (reduced scale), content packets, & various analog tools/materials.

**CONTENT**

Print poster content in different typefaces at various sizes, weights, etc. Print simple patterns and textures comprised of letterforms and glyphs. Provide a packet of prints for each student. The packets will serve as the source material for the exercises.

**PREP**

- + Prompt the students to create lists of materials, tools, and verbs/instructions. See the short sample lists to the left.
- + Use the student lists to create concise analog directives. Add a time limit to each directive. Print the directives and shuffle the stack.
- + Clear work areas. Put laptops away. Organize analog tools and materials.

**BEGIN**

- + Lead the students through various collage exercises, announcing each directive and the time constraint. Be open to the ambiguous and absurd—sometimes they yield the most interesting results!
- + Whenever necessary, interject instructions not found in the directives stack.
- + Start simply and build to more complex, lengthy collages. I like to begin by having students create compositions based on a single, large letterform. See the sample directives listed to the left. Once the students are limber, they move from purely formal compositions to functional compositions with legible text.
- + An iterative approach is essential. Require the students to keep all of their collages, even the ones they do not like. Remind them that one “bad” collage does not make them a “bad designer.”

**TIPS**

- + Enforce time limits for each step. This forces the students to make fast, intuitive decisions instead of sitting in paralyzed indecision.
- + Gradually allow the students to compose three-dimensionally, using their cameras to capture the dimensional collage.

**PREP/LISTS**

MATERIALS	VERBS/INSTRUCTIONS
acrylic paint	burn
ink	tear
vinyl letters	cut
clay	weave
sandpaper	discard
	layer
	fold
	destroy
TOOLS	TIME
flashlight	seconds/minutes
projector	1 song
hammer	
paintbrush	
chisel	

**BEGIN/DIRECTIVES EXAMPLE**

- 1\_Select a large E from your packet. Using an x-acto knife & ruler, cut the E into 10–15 pieces.  
time limit: 2 minutes
- 2\_Switch desks with a classmate. Evaluate their letterform pieces. Throw 5–7 pieces away. Return to your desk.  
time limit: 30 seconds
- 3\_Assemble the remaining pieces into a pleasing composition. Do not recreate the letterform. Instead use pieces of the letterform to create an abstract, formal composition.  
time limit: 3 minutes

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