How to...

Create a Reference Clip File

The best way to begin to think like a graphic designer is to start collecting examples of designs. If you build a reference clip file, you can turn to it for ideas whenever you need them. This file, filled with good (and sometimes strikingly bad) examples of all kinds of graphic design, can be a wonderful source of inspiration.

1 Assemble manila file folders or a multi-pocket accordion file.

2 Create categories for each file. For example, you might sort printed ads or packaging according to their unique use of

- typography
- photography
- collage
- color swatches and palettes
- creativity or concept
- funny or humorous approach

3 For three-dimensional objects, take digital photographs of packaging, signage, buildings, and landscape, and categorize them by the unique qualities that interest you. Store them in clearly labeled folders for easy reference.

Guidelines:

1. We will be using manila folders for our clip file. If there is something else you'd like to use for this, please run your idea past me.
2. You will fill out the "Reference Clip File Form" for each of your examples.
3. You will have the following categories in your clip file:
   a) elements of design
   b) principles of design
   c) typography
   d) grid
   e) poor design examples
   f) category of your choice
   g) category of your choice