HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

GRAPHIC DESIGN
COMMON PROJECTS

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Document by @LindsayMarshDesign

Logo Design
Time (hours) — Project Type

Time (hours)	Project Type
6	**Basic** (small business)
20	**Mid Level**
80	**Large Company**

Brand Package
Time (hours) — Project Type

Time (hours)	Project Type
15	**Basic** (small business)
30	**Mid Level**
120	**Large Company** (lots of various brand assets)

Social Media Post Design
Time (hours for each post)

Time	Project
(half hour) .5	**Simple & Quick** (Low visibility)
2	**Mid Level**
4	**Large Company** (High visibility)

T-shirt Design
Time (hours)

Time (hours)	Project
2	**Basic** (words only no custom graphics)
4	**Mid Level** (some custom graphics)
10	**Totally custom illustration** (details)

Stationery
Time (hours) — Project Type

Time (hours)	Project Type
2	**Letterhead Only** (3 layout ideas)
5	**Letterhead + Business Card**
8	**Full Stationery Suite** (Letterhead + Cards + Custom Envelopes)

Poster Design
Time (hours) — Project Type

Time (hours)	Project Type
4	**Basic** (just for a local event)
10	**Mid Level** (regional event)
20	**High Level** (national event or movie poster)

Magazine
Time (hours)
(Average length, includes cover design and layout of all pages)

Time (hours)	Project
16	**Simple** (just for a local publication)
40	**Mid Level** (larger distribution)
100	**High Level** (national magazine)

Book Design
Time (hours)
(Average length)

Time (hours)	Project
16	**Cover Only** (2 or 3 concepts)
60	**Cover + Inside** (simple text, 100 pages)
120	**Cover + Inside** (complex layouts with photos)

Billboard
Time (hours) — Project Type

Time (hours)	Project Type
4	**Digital Billboard** (2 or 3 concepts)
6	**Print Billboard**
16	**Large Unique Custom Billboard** (Like you would see in Times Square. fixed, non-animated)

Flyer Or Ad Design
Time (hours) — Project Type

Time (hours)	Project Type
4	**Basic** (just for a local event)
10	**Mid Level** (regional event)
20	**High Level** (national event, large exposure)

How long does a typical graphic design project take? A lot of designers hate to answer this question because it really depends on your ability, project type, client budget, client expectations and experience.

Most of my students want to know a ballpark range of what each project should take them (mid to pro-level). I hope this is helpful to you guys as a general very basic guideline. This can give you a range to shoot for as you gain more comfort doing design work. Repeating projects tend to lower these times drastically.

This chart shows how long common design projects take me (my own personal bias here) based on the project level or exposure. This is to complete each project with revisions and client satisfaction. **I chop my days up into 8 hour chunks.** Some projects take a fourth of a day, others a full day and magazine/books sometimes weeks. There have been long projects that have taken me months to complete.

This is my own personal experience based on 15-20 years in the industry. Yours will differ and when first starting out it WILL take you longer to do projects. You will also notice that projects really start to step up in hours when you start working with higher level projects and client budgets.

That is why it is so hard to answer the question, how much do you charge for a logo? This is because for a small local hair cut business, in

less than a day, I will most likely come up with a logo design that the client is happy with. For a large corporation, it will take me weeks (and they would expect it to take weeks, maybe months too!)

Knowing how long it takes you to do common projects is really important in figuring out how to price yourself and pace your projects each day.

There could be days where you work on 5 different smaller projects and days where you might work on the same project the entire day.

You will notice I did not include an hourly rate here. That one really is a more complex issue but figuring out your time-frame for projects is the first step.

There is an hourly or a fixed rate you could charge with fixed rates being more profitable only after figuring out how many hours a typical project might take you and padding your price with profit. Hourly rates are helpful when you still are not sure how long projects take you.

Ways to shorten project time:

- **Practice** creating similar projects over and over
- learning software **shortcuts** and advanced tools to speed up productivity
- Speeding up your layout and creative **brainstorming** processes.
- Having reasonable **expectations** and adding enough time for breaks and rest
- Allow technology and other **technical** issues be built into your time-frames. This will reduce stress in those situations.
- Create custom **templates** for commonly created projects like flyers and posters.

Why would it take you longer to do a ad or flyer for a large company compared to a smaller one? Shouldn't they take the same amount of time?

I think that ties more into client expectations. Take for instance, I do an ad design for a local bakery. I have one owner that approves the item and may not have revisions, they are happy, they have simple expectations and a simple budget.

A full page ad design for a large corporation as part of a larger ad campaign will take more than a few hours to put together (you also have to worry about brand guidelines which takes time to learn). You have to create different ideas, concepts, pitch to a team of people, maybe have lots of rounds of revisions from that team.

The client expectations are huge in larger companies with larger budgets. It just takes more time. This is all based on experience working for the little guy and the big guys and a lot of work for companies in-between.

FAQ

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cassandrabdesign So good!! Love your advice on how to shorten project times. What are your ways to speed up brainstorming process? This is where I get stuck spending way too much time.

Great question! A lot of the times trying to figure out the right layout for a design takes tons of time. After doing lots of different layouts you start to figure out the most optimal layout for the given information in a quicker time-frame.

Someone can send me a word doc of info and I can already start to see the focal point, headline and other blocked out information in my head. For example I see that it may benefit from a 3 column layout or that I may need three photos to make it work. **This just comes from time and practice.**

Make sure to learn to ask the client the **right questions** to help avoid going down roads that could waste time for both parties. Most of this is about having more confidence in talking with clients too and asking them to further narrow down their preferences.

Instead of coming up with so many different versions of my layout I can start to notice client preferences and start to guess based on previous feedback what layout or design might be favored.

What if I take longer than the time frames you listed? Does that make me a bad designer?

Absolutely not! This chart is based on my own personal experience. Everyone will have slightly different numbers and if it takes you more time that may not mean you are a bad designer. Most designers reading this will be at the beginning of their learning journeys and it will take time to discover your own project times.

After you gain a lot of experience, sometimes your time goes higher per project because your quality is increasing. **A logo took me one hour when first starting out** because I decided early on in the concept development process that my logo looked great. In fact, I did not have enough experience to realize what a good logo looked like.

A great way to know your estimate of time is just right is the average time it takes you to do a **high quality** project AND make the client **happy** and satisfied.

How do I learn about hourly rates, fixed rates or how much to charge?

Explaining freelance graphic design pricing is a **MASSIVE** undertaking as it depends on so many different factors. I ended up writing a 44 page pdf document that outlines my entire pricing process.

I added it as a download in my Freelance Masterclass course you can find discounts to **here.** I also decided to make available to pdf as a separate pdf purchase **here on my website.**

Pricing freelance work should depend on several factors.

As much as I wish I could answer the question on the previous page with an exact amount, I am afraid it depends on so many different factors, as you saw in my little example of what goes on in the minds of freelancers when trying to come up with pricing.

The value you provide
(Proving value can earn you big bucks)

Your own experience level
(Am I the expert or the newbie?)

It depends on project exposure level and client size
(Will this logo be seen by 100 people or 1,000,000?)

The final list of deliverables
(Is it more than just a logo design?)

The ability of the client to afford your services
(A small garage band may not have a budget at all)

The demand of your services by others
(Are you overloaded with client work? Are you a hot commodity?)

The
**PRACTICAL
GUIDE TO
FREELANCE
PRICING**

Lindsay Marsh