PRINTtips

Marketing with Brochures: Using Folds to Tell the Story

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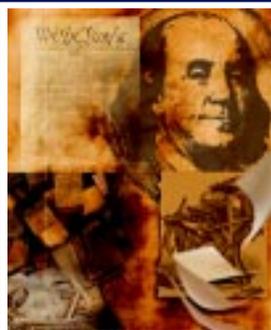
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Printing is one of the most important occupations in America. Without printing, America as we know it would cease to exist.

As printers, we are proud of our work, and humbled by the responsibility to uphold the values and traditions of our great nation.

When you think of a marketing brochure, you probably think of the standard trifold – a letter- or legal-sized sheet of paper folded in thirds, creating six pages. And while the popularity of this format is undeniable, there are other ways to fold a sheet that allow you to tell your company or product story in a completely different way.

But we're getting a bit ahead. Whether you use a standard trifold or something more exotic, you must first analyze the information you are presenting in the brochure to determine how many segments or sections it has, which in turn indicates how many transitions will be made in the brochure. Having this information at hand as you are thinking about design and layout will guide your decision about folding.

Begin with a storyboard

Imagine your information as a slide show or a PowerPoint presentation, with an introduction, the heart of the presentation, and a conclusion. The introduction tells the reader what the brochure covers; the heart of the presentation presents the details about the company, product or service; and the conclusion asks for the order or presents a call to action.

You could outline what will be presented in your brochure. But since the brochure will contain more than text, you might consider borrowing a technique from film and video production called *storyboarding* – a series of panels that outline the scene sequence and major changes of action or
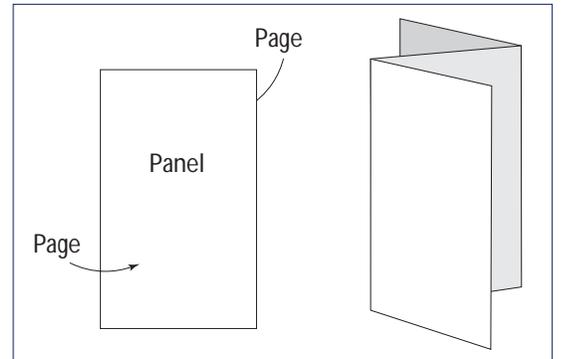
plot. Use this technique to diagram the flow of information as well as the photos and graphics that will be included in your brochure. When you have completed the brochure storyboard, you will clearly see the transition from topic to topic.
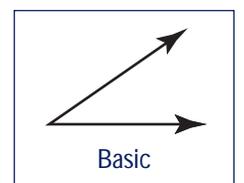
Folding styles

In a folded brochure, *panels* are two-sided sections of the printed piece, defined by the crease of the fold.

A *page* is one side of a panel. For example, a trifold brochure consists of three panels and six pages.

Every folding style begins with a *parallel fold* – a single fold that divides a sheet into one panel of two pages. Each folding style produces different panel and page counts.
The most common styles are:

- *Basic:* the basic folding style is one parallel fold – simply put, folding a sheet of paper in half producing two panels of four pages.


Basic

"Imagine your information as a slide show or a PowerPoint presentation..."

"Every folding style begins with a parallel fold..."

- *Accordion:* the accordion style is two parallel folds producing three panels and six pages. When viewed from the side, an

Accordion

accordion fold produces a characteristic back-and-forth or "z" shape (accounting for the nickname *z-fold*.) When one panel folds inside, the fold is known as a *letter fold*. The accordion fold is a very popular style.
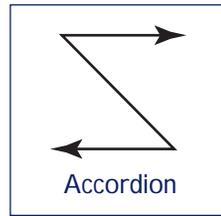
- *Gate:* a gate fold consists of two or more panels folding to the center from opposing sides. Gate folds are usually symmetrical but do not have to be.


Gate
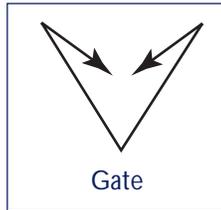
- *Parallel:* a parallel fold is two or more folds parallel to each other. A *double parallel fold* produces four panels of eight pages.

Parallel
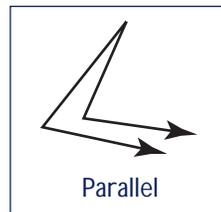
- *Roll:* a roll fold consists of four or more panels that roll in on each other. Each panel is incrementally smaller to allow it to tuck into

Roll

subsequent panels. One benefit of a roll fold is that it allows for multiple panels while maintaining a compact shape. A roll fold is also known by the nickname *barrel fold.*
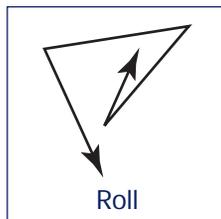
The number of panels in any folding style can be doubled by using a *broadside-style fold* to fold the sheet in half prior to using a folding style. For instance, whereas a letter fold has three panels of six pages, a broadside letter fold has six panels of twelve pages.


Broadside
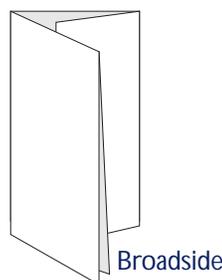
How folding styles reveal information

Each folding style reveals information in a different way. For example, the familiar trifold brochure consisting of three panels and six pages reveals information in four segments, shown as A, B, C, and D in the diagram:
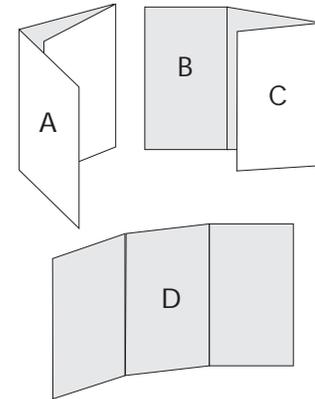
A is an ideal location for the introduction; *B* and *C* are individual story segments; and *D* is a multi-page spread. Note, however, that B and C are separate pages defined by the crease of the fold, but visually are tied together as a spread. Likewise, B must stand alone when viewed with C but visually will be tied to D when the brochure is opened. This presents some design challenges that should be taken into account when laying out the brochure.

A right angle fold (when the second fold is at right angles to the first fold) reveals information in a much different manner.

In this fold, the introduction still fits in position A. However, position B is now a two-page spread and position C is a four-page spread.
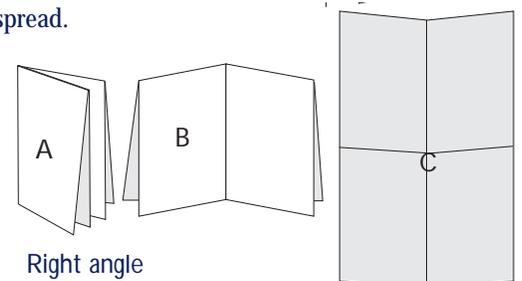
Right angle

A double parallel fold (the second fold parallel to the first) creates the same number of pages and spreads as a right angle fold, but gives an entirely different shape to the panels.

Marketing with Brochures: Using Folds to Tell the Story (continued)

What is the best fold to use for your brochure? It depends on the information you are presenting and how best to reveal it. For advice and to discuss other possible folding options, call us. We will be happy to schedule an appointment at our business or yours.

A

B

Double parallel

C
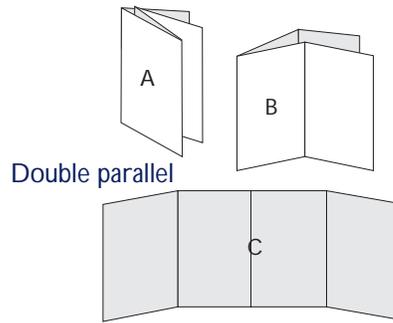
Q. *I know that scoring is sometimes required prior to folding. Can you provide any guidelines?*

A. A fold will be cleaner and more resilient when the grain of the paper is parallel to the fold. (*Paper grain* is the direction of the wood fibers in relationship to the web of the paper making machine.) Folding against the grain stretches and breaks the paper fibers, resulting in an uneven protrusion of the fibers called *cracking*. Scoring paper fibers prior to folding helps prevent cracking.

Whenever paper must be folded against the grain, scoring is always recommended. It is also recommended when an area of heavy ink coverage crosses through a fold or color breaks fall at a fold; when the paper weight is heavier than 80# text; or when the document will be entirely or partially hand folded.

Q&A
questions and answers

"Folding against the grain stretches and breaks the paper fibers..."

Tips for Folding by Hand

There are two types of folding – mechanical and hand. Mechanical folding is done by machine and involves feeding paper at high speeds through rollers to make a clean, tight fold.

If you are printing only a few documents on your desktop printer and folding them by hand, you can approximate the characteristics of a mechanical fold by using the bowl of a spoon as a *folding bone*.

1. Select a teaspoon with a deep bowl.

2. Make the first (parallel) fold in the document.

3. Holding the teaspoon by the bowl, press the outside of the bowl against the fold and press the fold flat along its entire dimension.

4. Repeat for second and subsequent folds.

If you are folding uncoated stock, you can also soften the paper fibers with a mist of water prior to folding.

IDEA CORNER

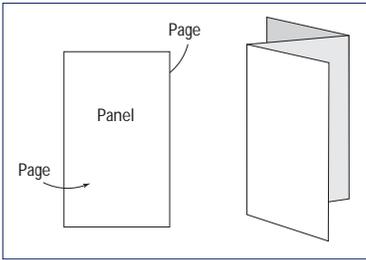*"...you can also soften the paper fibers with a mist of water..."*

Please Route to the Printing Buyer

Marketing with Brochures:

Using Folds to Tell the Story

Remember to Allow for the Fold

When designing a document that will be folded, it is important to allow for the fold. When one panel of the document folds into another (such as a letter fold), the fold-in panel must be slightly smaller. The process of making panels smaller is called *compensation* and must be done to ensure a tight, flat fold. If no compensation has been made for the fold, the panels will push against each other and the brochure will be slightly rounded in shape, called *telescoping*.

The ideal amount for compensation for a single sheet of paper with one panel folding into another is a "fat-sixteenth" – 3/32 of an inch – though the actual measurement can range from 1/16 to 1/8 inch. This means you need to reduce the width of the panel that will fold in by that amount. Remember, too, that panel width affects two pages – the front and back of the sheet. Because they involve a double thickness of paper, the compensation for broadside folds can increase to 1/8 - 3/16 to accommodate the pushout of the paper.

Ultimately, it is your responsibility as the document creator to include the correct folding compensation. If you are unsure about compensation measurements, call us at *(513)248-2121* and we will provide a diagram and measurements based on the paper you are using.

TRICKS **&** *tips*

"...include the correct folding compensation."