

## **Developing Your Brochure Theme**

---

A brochure should have a target audience and an educational objective, which might also be described as the message or theme. In some cases, the target audience may be very general, such as a group of visitors to a nature center. In these cases, the theme may be tailored to appeal to a broader audience. If the target audience is very specific, such as fishermen at boat landings, the theme should target that audience. So, when developing your theme, ask, "who will be getting this brochure and why"?

The brochure theme provides the structure for the body of information and the take-home message for your audience. A hodgepodge of information that doesn't clearly contribute to a theme is unlikely to be useful in communicating a message to the reader. For example, a theme may be the description of a program or facility, conservation of a resource, boating guidelines in seagrass meadows, or information about the ecology of a local ecosystem or a particular plant or animal, to list a few.

Developing the theme may require narrowing your topic, which will help you focus and prioritize information for the limited space available. A simple three-step approach used to narrow and define themes for interpretive programs can be useful in developing themes for informational brochures as well:

1. Select a broad topic (example: seagrass meadows).
2. Narrow your topic (example: why fishermen should be concerned about damage to seagrass meadows from boat propellers)
3. Write a theme statement as a complete sentence (example: "Seagrass meadows are the nurseries of the ocean and are critical to Florida's fisheries. Protect them from your boat propeller.").

In developing the body of information within the brochure, it is important to ask yourself whether that information addresses your theme and provides a clear take-home message that the reader will understand.

## **Tips for Designing Your Brochure**

---

A couple of key tips can make your brochure more attractive, readable, and effective in conveying your message. In particular, it is important to use the different panels of the trifold brochure in the most effective manner. Professional brochure designers recommend using the different panels of a trifold brochure to provide different parts of your educational message.

\* Front panel. The front cover should be visually appealing and provide enough content to invite the reader to open the piece and read more. This may simply include a logo or image and title that describe the theme of the brochure. Avoid too much clutter on the front panel.

\* Back panel. In most cases, the back panel should be limited to credits and additional contact information. It is also a good spot for a testimonial. This is the panel people are least likely to read, so avoid putting key messages on the back panel.

\* Inside front panel. This is considered to be the most important panel in the brochure because it is the information that will immediately be seen when the brochure is opened. This panel should provide a statement or testimonial that summarizes your message. Brochure designers recommend that you design this panel last, although it is the first panel seen by the reader. By writing the inside spread first, you will have a better idea of what you want to summarize on the inside front panel. This is also a good place to include your Web site or other direct contact information.

\* Inside three-panel spread. This is the body of the brochure. When you open the trifold brochure fully, you have three full panels to develop your theme and accomplish your educational objective.

Additional points to consider when designing your brochure include making the brochure visually appealing and inviting to read. Avoid a cluttered appearance. Use space to create an open look, and develop your message so it is clear and concise. Use only high-quality photographs or images (at least 300 dpi), and be clear on permissions and credits on borrowed material and on the use of established logos. For example, Florida Master Naturalist Program students developing final projects should use the official Florida Master Naturalist Program logo provided on the brochure template.

Regardless of how attractive your brochure is, it will only be as good as the information it provides. Ensure that information provided in the brochure is factual and understandable. Avoid technical jargon and other forms of communication that alienate readers or obscure your message. Avoid being long-winded; succinct and concise writing is a good rule to follow.