Icons

Icons are simple visual representations capturing the essential characteristics of a class of objects.
Icons are often at the root of mental representation created for organizing and classifying symbols.
Good icon design includes details necessary for the icon to accomplish its purpose. Often a less detailed image makes a better emblem, especially for general or abstract concepts.
SYMBOLS
The Alphabet of Human Thought

From the beginnings of human culture, visual awareness has been a key element to communication. From cave drawings to the printed word, the visual record has outlasted all other forms of communication.
Three categories of symbols:

Personal
Conventional
Universal

*Forgotten language; an introduction to the understanding of dreams, fairy tales, and myths*
By Erich Fromm
Personal Symbols
Loyalty, devotion, and unconditional love
Tranquility, serenity, and harmony
Conventional Symbols
All languages are made up of symbols. The word “bird”, whether spoken, illustrated, signed, thought, or written, is not a bird, but is a symbol for a bird. If you are asked to envision a bird, you will probably either call to mind the image of an average, typical, or generic bird or a simple image of a specific but common bird species. This is your mental “bird symbol” — the basic mental representation you hold of a bird. The symbol for a generic bird may be represented by an icon.
Our minds are organized with many thousands of mental symbols each representing one of many objects and abstract concepts we think about, including: cars, chairs, the future, your hopes, good, evil, your dog, pain, your friends, and even yourself. This is how our mind organizes information, stores and retrieves memories, and creates, links, and extends categories.
A symbol is not an object; it is our mental representation of an object, concept, or class of objects or concepts.
Bird
Table
Airplane
Tree
Spoon

Conventional symbol
Blue Mosque
Misinformation and lack of knowledge are major contributing factors in the process of creating stereotypes.
Stereotypes
Although symbols are essential for organizing memory and thoughts, they are directly responsible for creating stereotypes. For example, if you are unfamiliar with penguins and you extend your bird symbol to give yourself a starting point for imagining a penguin, you will be making many false assumptions. A stereotype becomes inaccurate and often harmful when you fail to extend a general symbol to account for individual differences.
Stereotyping is a process of mental simplification and generalization in application of certain forms of behavior, appearance, and function to group of people, objects, and situation.
Stereotypes (or "characterizations") are generalizations or assumptions that people make about the characteristics of all members of a group, based on an image (often wrong) about what people in that group are like.
Universal symbols
SUN
Human body
**SYMBOLS: The Alphabet of Human Thought**

**Pictograms**

A pictogram is an **image that represents an object**. Pictograms are useful for conveying information through a common “visual language” able to be understood regardless of one's native language or degree of literacy.
**SYMBOLS: The Alphabet of Human Thought**

**Chinese** is composed entirely of pictograms, a system of writing used by more than any other in the world. (About 1 billion Chinese speakers compared to 350 million English speakers). To be literate in Chinese requires knowledge of several thousand of the over 80,000 Chinese pictograms — although about 3,500 are most commonly used. The pictogram above is Chinese for world peace.
From natural depictions people developed simplified and abstracted pictorial depictions and symbols, which are called word-picture-writing or also picture-type.

Between 2000 and 1300 bc the Phoenicians developed a consonant-type, which might be seen as an inspiration for the Latin characters used today.

These characters were taken and widened by the Greeks about 1100 bc. They replaced some letters and added the vocals.
Development of Type

The letterforms we use today were not always as we see them now. Over the past 5000 years, they evolved, linked to the rise and fall of civilizations, different cultures adding their own distinct imprint on the symbols of language.
Development of Type
Linda
Rebus
The rebus is a pictorial image that represents a spoken sound. Today the rebus is mostly used for amusement however it was a critical link in the development of the phonetic alphabet starting in Egyptian hieroglyphics.

IBM by Paul Rand, an American graphic designer

Phonogram
The below image is Milton Glaser's well-known rebus “I Love New York” It is a combination of a rebus and a phonogram. A phonogram is a symbol (letter) that represents a spoken sound.
Ideogram

An ideogram is a character or symbol representing a complete idea or concept. Above, an ideogram demonstrates the perils of tipping a vending machine.
During the Middle Ages European trade guilds began using marks to identify the origin and content of their products. The term “hallmark” comes from the identification marks that metal artisans stamped into metal when exhibiting wares in the guild hall in London.

The terms ear mark and branding have their origins in the practice of farmers marking ownership on their animals.
Logotype or Logo?

Technically the term logotype means a symbol comprised entirely of typography. The Coca-Cola symbol is an example of a purely typographic logotype.

Types of LOGOS
- Letter based
- Abstract based
- Pictorial based
- Word based

The effectiveness of a good logo depends on:

a. distinctiveness
b. visibility
c. usability
d. memorability
e. universality
f. durability
g. timelessness
Printer's Devices

Printer's devices (symbols) were used to identify the printer or publisher of a book. Many early printers used the combination of the **orb and the cross**, a signifier of the earth and Christianity.

The mark below is a version of the orb and cross by Joannes de Colonia of Venice, 1481.

Aldus Manutius, who started his famous **Aldine Press** in Venice in 1494.
Monogram

Greek for “single line.” In early European kingdoms illiterate monarchs signed documents with custom monograms. Today a designer's monogram can increase the status to an everyday object and add value to the price.
Coat of Arms & Family Crest

The origin of “a coat of arms” came from the symbols displayed on the crest of a helmet or metal chest armor to help identify soldiers in battle or jousting matches. Eventually the images were moved off of the helmet and chest plate and onto banners, dinnerware, etc.
Corporate Symbol Pioneers

Symbols are “Styled”

AEG symbol, 1907 (below)
As the Art Nouveau style waned logo styles became more geometric and simplified. Peter Behren's symbol for AEG (a German electrical company) was the anchor to an entire design scheme applied to the print work, products and architecture for AEG.

Trademarks are designed to reflect the stylistic period during which they are created. Above is the GE logo first used in the late 19th century at the height of the Art Nouveau period.
Both Behrens and Lowey have been named by historians as the “Father of Modern Industrial Design.” Similarly they both designed iconic symbols.

Lowey is most well known for his simplified **streamlined designs** that he applied to buses, cars and airplanes. He pushed the 1940's design frontier by application of his mantra, MAYA (Most Advanced, Yet Acceptable).

Above is his logo for Shell Oil, a symbol that became so familiar that the company was able to drop the name entirely without loss of customer recognition.
It was in the area of corporate identity design that American graphic designer Paul Rand achieved his highest recognition. His designs reflect the style of the mid to late 20th century — simplicity, neutrality, clarity — all part of the vocabulary of the Modernist period. But Rand added a blend of playfulness and illustration that set his work apart.
ISOTYPE: International System of Typographic Picture Education: “Words Divide, Pictures Unite”

The ISOTYPE system was born from research and theories of Otto Neurath (1882–1945), a Viennese philosopher, economist and social scientist. As a child he was fascinated by the function of Egyptian hieroglyphics—their forms and ability to communicate a story. This early influence was integrated into his life's work, the development of a system to pictorially organize statistics.

Neurath was deeply convinced that his "world language without words" would not only enhance education but help international understanding.
Neurath rejected histograms with numerical scales, pie charts and continuous line charts for a method that displayed facts in a more easily understood form, numbers were represented by a series of identical pictorial elements or signs, each of them representing a defined quantity. While his contemporaries showed variation by altering the size of their symbols, Neurath increased or reduced the quantity of symbols, each symbol representing a specific amount.
Gerd Arntz (1901–88)
Graphic Artist of ISOTYPE Symbols

An essential member of the Neurath group was German artist Gerd Arntz who joined the ISOTYPE team in 1928. Arntz was an activist artist who embraced the same socialist ideals as Neurath. He was artistically and philosophically influenced by the Expressionism and Constructivism movements. As part of his socialist values Arntz embraced the primitive qualities of wood block as his primary medium. The wood block medium, in turn, influenced the look of the ISOTYPE. Arntz drew over 4,000 ISOTYPE symbols in his own direct and clean graphic style that set the tone for future symbols in the coming decades.
The 1970's: A Decade for Information Symbol Design

Otl Aicher, Munich Olympics, 1972
The pictograph style Otl Aicher and his team devised for the Munich Olympics and the Frankfurt Airport has been integrated into international information styles. His Olympic symbols set a new standard for reductionism and clarity in 1972, the era of the "International Style."
Henry Dreyfuss

Another industrial designer with an interest in symbols. (Along with Lowey and Behrens he is also considered "the father of industrial design!?). Henry Dreyfuss advocated using symbols to replace words such as on-off, stop, up-down, etc, on control panels to enhance safety and clarity.
In 1974 Henry Dreyfuss urged the AIGA and the IDSA to join forces to convince the US Department of Transportation to implement a well designed system of passenger and pedestrian symbol signs. "This system of 50 symbol signs was designed for use at the crossroads of modern life: in airports and other transportation hubs and at large international events."
William Golden

Designing for CBS Broadcasting, Golden created the first symbol that was deliberately considered for how it would appear on screen.

Susan Kare, Mac Icons

“The visual language of point-and-click computing came to life from the imagination of Susan Kare, hired by Apple in 1983 to design the look and feel of the Macintosh interface. Her sleek screen fonts—with jet-set names like Geneva and Monaco—launched the first wave of elegant digital typography.”
A Downside to Symbols: Cultural Mismatches

Religious Interpretations

The Red Cross logo, designed in 1963, cannot be used in Muslim countries due to its connotation of Christianity. The red cross will soon be changed to the red diamond, an acceptable symbol for Christian, Muslim, Jewish and other world religions.
Perception of Skull & Crossbones

“Research indicates that the old skull and crossbones used in the past to identify poisons had little meaning for the children in the 20th century. Pirate symbols have been exploited in movies, cartoons, commercial products and amusement parks to denote happy, exciting things like pirates and adventure. In a university-conducted testing program, children at daycare centers were shown six symbols which were affixed to identical bottles of mouthwash often found in family homes. The symbols included a red stop sign, the skull and crossbones, and four others.
Mr. Yuk was developed for, and is distributed by, the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.
At the beginning of the test, each child was told that he might find bottles like these at home and was asked to identify any bottle he might not like to play with. The symbol that proved to be least attractive to the children was Mr. Yuk.”
Rebranding and Anti-Branding

Rebranding

Rebranding is the process by which a product or service developed with one brand, company or product line affiliation is marketed or distributed with a different identity. This may involve radical changes to the brand's logo, brand name, image, marketing strategy, and advertising themes.

In 2001 the global agency DDB design a logo that could be used to promote tourism and trade. This summer, the company unveiled its design: a red-and-white kite whose tail is held by a dancing stick figure that doubles as the K in the word “Polska.” The Polska lettering is thick, red and curvaceous, a nod to the emblem of the Solidarity movement.
Rebranding | Culture Jamming

The British Petroleum “green” logo became a target of ridicule and derision after a colossal oil spill gushed into the Gulf of Mexico for three months during the summer of 2010.

“Culture jamming, is the act of using existing media such as billboards, bus-ads, posters, and other ads to comment on those very media themselves or on society in general, using the original medium's communication method. It is based on the idea that advertising is little more than propaganda for established interests, and that there is little escape from this propaganda in industrialized nations.
Based upon art student Carolyn Davidson's interpretation of the wings of Nike in 1971, (her original fee $35 but received a later bonus) the swoosh was once the emblem of youth and athleticism but now has an unfortunate association with corporate greed.
Anti-Branding

The world’s first global anti-brand created by *Adbusters* magazine. **Black Spot Sneaker** an eco-friendly, anti-brand sneaker—the black spot replaces the corporate logo. As describe on the Adbusters web site:

“The world's most ethical shoes”

Our current historical moment is an opportunity to redesign and rethink how we interact with the market—to move away from hyper-inflated megabrands like Nike and go smart, go local, go indie...to change the system by putting power back into the hands of the many.
Dove
The dove is a universal symbol of peace and innocence.
In ancient Greek myth it was a bird of Athens which represented the renewal of life.
In the Bible it was a dove released from the Ark by Noah which returned with an olive branch to show that the Biblical flood was over. Ever since, the dove has symbolized deliverance and God's forgiveness.
According to legend the devil and witches can turn themselves into any bird shape except the dove.
In ancient Japan the dove was sacred to Hackiman the god of war, but it was a dove with a sword which announced the end to war.

Contextual and conventional symbols
This is the primary symbol of Taoist religious and philosophical beliefs. The yin-yang is also used in Confucianism. Tao, "the way," theorizes that everything in the universe is made of two conflicting forces: the yin and the yang. The yin is the negative, passive power, depicted in black. The yang is the positive, active power, depicted in white. Harmony can only be achieved when the two are perfectly balanced, as in the circle. The small circle of the opposite color is contained in each, signifying their interdependence. The yin may represent the soul, night, darkness, the Earth, and sustenance, whereas the yang may represent the spirit, light, day, heaven, creation, and dominance. As darkness preceded creation, the yin precedes the yang.
Peace Symbol

Gerald Holtom designed the peace symbol in 1958 for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The "N" and "D" are represented by the corresponding flag signals, according to the discipline of the "Semaphore" hand-held flag signaling system.

Four-Leaf Clover

According to legend, after Eve was banished from paradise, she plucked a four-leaf clover from the Garden of Eden and took it with her. Although cloves normally have only three leaves, the persistent sleuth can eventually find one with four leaves and, along with it, find good luck. (Maybe the good luck is just in finding one.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Marriage, rebirth</td>
<td>Death, sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Faithfulness, request</td>
<td>Hostility, dislike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Wealth, garden</td>
<td>Badness, thirst, withering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Contentment</td>
<td>Discord, illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>Promise, high status</td>
<td>Poverty, laziness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Love, strong emotion</td>
<td>Anger, heartache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Spiritual love, purity</td>
<td>(None)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Elephant’s Memory A pictorial language consisting of more than a hundred and a fifty combinable graphic elements (pictograms and ideograms), primarily meant to be a learning and exploration tool towards children, concerning the concept of language.