Defining Mass

As stated in the introduction, mass equals size. Each piece you create has a physical mass. The physical mass or size is the actual dimensions of the piece — height, width, thickness/weight (of paper), and depth (3D objects).

Additionally, each element within the design (graphics, photos, lines, text blocks) have their own mass relative to the whole piece. For example, a photo that is physically 3 inches by 5 inches can appear smaller or larger depending on the physical size of the paper it is printed on and the size and proximity (closeness) of other items on the page.

Some ways to use mass within your designs:

- **to accommodate information, content**
  Example: To present all the desired or needed information comfortably a designer may create a bi-fold rather than the usual single business card

- **to accommodate normal size restraints or expectations**
  Example: The postal service has limitations on the height and width of different types of envelopes. If a designer ignores those requirements it could incur additional mailing costs for the client.

- **to convey a mood or provide emphasis**
  Example: A place that is physically large (such as an amusement park) or a business that offers a huge assortment of products may use brochures or other marketing pieces that are larger (physical dimensions) or heavier (weight) than normal to carry out the 'bigger' or 'more' theme.

- **to create contrast**
  Example: A designer might design a full-page magazine ad using a single small image in the middle of the page with lots of white space. The contrast between the size of the page and the size of the content (image) draws attention to the image and can create a specific mood (depending on other elements) such as conservative, elegant, lonely, or open.
Sometimes bigger isn't always better. Take a brochure for example:

It is an 8 ½ x 11 inch full color two-sided brochure (folded twice). This brochure opens twice and is visually packed and appears massive due to the following elements:

- It has a large physical size when opened
- It is folded down numerous times, and although the paper is thin, glossy card stock, it appears massive due to the number of layers created by the folds.
- It is densely packed with bold, multicolored graphic elements, multicolored and shadowed text, and photographs - making it visually massive and heavy. The brochure is packed with information.
- Careful because too much mass could make a design confusing.
Defining Mass Exercise

Look at four types of material as your Class Samples:

- physically large pieces (larger than 'letter size')
- physically small pieces (business cards, small space ads, tags)
- physically large pieces that incorporate small or visually small elements and lots of white space
- physically average or small pieces that incorporate large or visually large elements (such as a single dominate photo or huge headlines compared to other items on the page)