

Social Media Graphics Design — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into reps. You will set up correct canvases and safe zones, design a thumbnail-first feed post, build and script a carousel, and assemble a locked template kit with a nine-grid plan. Work through one section per module and finish with a complete starter pack, a reusable template system, and a one-page style guide you could hand to a teammate today.

Platform Formats and Safe Zones

Lock the real specs into reusable files and prove your safe zones against the live interface before designing anything.

Worksheet: Canvas and Safe-Zone Spec Sheet

Fill one row for each surface you will actually design for. Pull the dimensions from the course and note, in your own words, where the platform interface covers your canvas. This becomes your quick-reference card so you never guess a size again.

Surface (IG feed / IG square / Story-Reel cover / carousel page / X header)

Canvas size (width x height in px)

Aspect ratio

Top safe-zone margin to keep clear

Bottom safe-zone margin to keep clear

Side or avatar overlap to plan around

What gets cropped in the grid or thumbnail preview

Exercise: Interface Overlay Audit

On your own phone, screenshot a live Story, a Reel on a profile grid, and your X profile header. Drop each screenshot into a design frame at the correct canvas size and dim it as a reference layer. Trace the danger zones where buttons, captions, and the avatar sit.

- On the Story, exactly how many pixels from the top and bottom must stay clear of the profile bar, caption, and reply field?
- On the Reel cover, where does the square grid crop fall, and what title placement survives it?
- On the X header, how much of your design does the avatar cover, and how much do the top and bottom mobile crops remove?

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- What is the one element you would have placed in a danger zone if you had not done this audit?
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Checklist: File Setup and Naming Readiness

- I have created one named frame per canvas size (feed-1080x1350, story-1080x1920, carousel-page, x-header)
- I have built a reusable safe-zone overlay with red danger areas and a green clear zone for each canvas
- I have defined my brand colours as named tokens, not pasted hex codes
- I have defined a type scale as text styles (Hook, Subhead, Body, Caption)
- I have one protected master template frame that I duplicate rather than edit
- I have chosen a file-naming convention in the form brand_platform_topic_size_version and written it down

Designing for the Feed and Stories

Train the thumbnail-first habit, then build a feed post and a Story sequence that read in one second and stay on brand.

Exercise: The One-Second Thumbnail Test

Design one feed post at 1080 x 1350, then export it and shrink it to about 150 px wide. Glance for one second, look away, and judge it honestly. Repeat the shrink-and-glance after each fix until it passes.

- After a one-second glance at thumbnail size, what is the post about, and could you say it without looking again?

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- Which single element dominated, and was it the one you intended (the hook or hero), not the logo or background?

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- Did the hook text stay legible when shrunk, or did it need to be larger, heavier, or higher contrast?

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- What one change most improved the post, and did raising contrast or cutting a competing element do the work?
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Worksheet: Brand System Definition

Lock the small, fixed system every future post will reuse. Commit to a tight palette and a type scale now so consistency is built in rather than re-decided each time.

Brand primary colour (name + hex)

Brand secondary colour (name + hex)

Accent colour reserved for the call to action (name + hex)

Neutral dark / Ink (hex) and neutral light / Paper (hex)

Hook type size on a 1080 canvas (px, bold)

Subhead / Body / Caption sizes (px)

Minimum text-to-background contrast ratio I will hold

Exercise: Three-Frame Story Sequence

Design a three-frame Story at 1080 x 1920 that carries one idea across hook, point, and ask. Keep all critical content inside the clear centre band and matching the brand system from the worksheet above.

- Does frame one earn the next tap with a single hook, kept clear of the top and bottom overlay zones?

• Does the middle frame make exactly one point at large size with room to breathe?

• Is the final ask (follow, swipe, reply, visit) stated plainly and anchored above the reply field?

• Do the three frames share background, type style, and logo position so they read as one connected Story?

Checklist: Feed and Stories Quality Gate

Each post has one clear focal element that survives the thumbnail test

On-image hook text is large and heavy enough to read at small size and under compression

Text over photos sits on a panel, scrim, or shadow that holds at least 4.5 to 1 contrast

Every colour used comes from my defined palette tokens, with the accent reserved for the call to action

Every text layer uses a defined type-scale role rather than a hand-picked size

Stories and Reels covers keep critical content out of the interface overlay and survive the grid crop

Carousels and Multi-Slide Storytelling

Script a carousel as plain text before designing it, then build continuity and export it correctly for both platforms.

Worksheet: Carousel Script (Hook, Body, Close)

Write the whole carousel as plain text before opening a design tool. One line per slide. Only move to design once the sequence reads well as words. Use the Carousel Planner template to lay it out slide by slide.

Slide 1 hook (one bold promise or question that earns the swipe)

Slide 2 point

Slide 3 point

Slide 4 point

Slide 5 point

Slide 6 point (add or remove rows to land between 6 and 10 slides total)

Final slide close (single call to action + handle)

Total slide count

Exercise: Continuity and Edge-Bleed Build

Design the scripted carousel from a single master page duplicated for every slide. Add a progress cue and one edge-bleed transition where a shape runs off one slide and continues on the next. Keep critical content in from the sides for the LinkedIn gutter.

- Do all slides share identical margins, headline zone, footer, and logo position because they came from one

master?

- Is there a progress cue (dots, a 3 of 8 counter, or a bar) so readers know how much remains?
- Does your one edge-bleed transition line up across the seam when viewed at full size on a phone?
- Is all important content held a comfortable margin in from the sides so the gutter and edge peek do not clip it?

Checklist: Carousel Export and Proof

- I exported each Instagram slide as an individual 1080 x 1350 PNG or JPG, named in order (slide-01, slide-02)
- I exported the LinkedIn version as one multi-page portrait PDF with pages in order, to upload as a document
- I chose PNG for crisp text-and-flat-colour slides and JPG where photos dominate, keeping file weight reasonable
- I previewed the actual exported files on a phone and swiped through at real size
- I confirmed slide order, sharp text, no content under the interface, and aligned edge-bleed transitions
- I archived the editable master plus both export sets together under one campaign name

Template Systems and Brand Consistency

Turn your best layouts into a locked, reusable kit and plan a cohesive nine-grid, then package it so consistency survives other people and time.

Exercise: Build the Starter Template Kit

Convert your strongest layouts into a kit of locked, fill-in templates: a quote, a tip or how-to, an announcement, a carousel master, and a Story. Lock the grid, margins, tokens, type styles, and logo, and clearly mark only the editable zones.

- Which zones did you leave editable (headline, image, body) and which did you lock, and is the off-brand choice now hard to make?
- Are all colours and type sizes driven by named tokens and styles so nobody hand-picks a hex code or size?
- Are logo size and position fixed identically across every template?
- If your team uses Canva, did you rebuild the locked template as a brand-kit template so non-designers fill rather than redesign?

Worksheet: Nine-Grid Feed Plan

Plan the next batch of posts as a moving window, not one post at a time. Use the Feed Grid Planner template to drop in thumbnails and balance colour and contrast across the whole 3 by 3 view before you publish.

Grid rhythm chosen (consistent palette / alternating pattern / row themes / anchor-and-fill)

Position 1 post (type + dominant colour)

Position 2 post (type + dominant colour)

Position 3 post (type + dominant colour)

Positions 4 to 9 posts (type + dominant colour each)

Where the bold anchor posts sit in the window

Adjustment made so no two heavy or same-coloured posts clump as the window scrolls

Worksheet: One-Page Social Style Guide

Capture the rules that keep the brand consistent when other people post. Keep it to a single page so it actually gets used. Fill each field so a new team member could ship on-brand on day one.
Canvas sizes used and which template covers each surface

Colour tokens and where each is allowed (note the accent is for the call to action only)

Type scale and the role of each size, with one do and one do-not example

Grid rhythm rule that keeps the feed cohesive

File-naming convention and where masters and exports are stored

Logo files, clear-space rule, and the fonts the brand uses

Checklist: Brand Kit Handoff Readiness

- Logo files are included in the formats and with the clear-space rules people will actually need
- Brand colours are listed as named tokens with their hex values
- Fonts and the full type scale with sizes for each role are documented
- Locked post, carousel, and Story templates are packaged (in Figma and a Canva brand kit if used)
- Safe-zone overlays for each canvas travel with the kit
- Someone other than me could ship an on-brand post from the kit and the one-pager without asking a question

Your Action Plan

1. Build your reusable canvas frames and safe-zone overlays for IG feed, Story-Reel, carousel page, and X header.
2. Run the interface overlay audit on your own phone and write down the exact danger-zone margins for each surface.
3. Lock your brand system: three to five colour tokens (accent reserved for the call to action) and a type scale as named styles.
4. Design one feed post and pass the one-second thumbnail test, fixing focal point and contrast until it reads at 150 px.
5. Design a three-frame Story sequence that carries one idea across hook, point, and ask within the clear band.
6. Script a 6-to-10-slide carousel as plain text first, then build it from one master with a progress cue and one edge-bleed transition.
7. Export the carousel two ways: ordered Instagram images and a single LinkedIn PDF, then proof both on a phone.
8. Convert your best layouts into a locked starter template kit with editable zones marked and everything else protected.

9. Plan your next nine to twelve posts in a 3 by 3 planner so the grid reads as one cohesive brand as it scrolls.
10. Package the brand kit plus a one-page style guide and test the handoff by having someone else ship an on-brand post from it.

