The Perfect Diamond

When creating a dialogue bubble, there is a certain look you want your bubbles to have. This look is called the perfect diamond. You want to form your dialogue bubble so that a few words begin and end every bubble with more words filling out the middle of the bubble. Publishers and other letterers will tear your pages apart if you do not obey this law of lettering. You may be asking why it is so important—great question. The reason why a diamond is used as a text layout is because balloons are ellipses and to best fill the space your text should be in an oblong. By not using the diamond layout there is excess white space in the bubble and using the diamond reducing the white space and fills the bubble more appropriately. Also, proper lettering will reduce the amount of art the bubble covers. Readers would rather see good art than the white space of a bubble. There is a simple way to make this process quicker and less painful. In Illustrator you can click and drag a box with the text tool to select the specific amount of space you allot for dialogue. Then, within that space, you can reorganize the text to fit the bubble and have the diamond shape. Take notice of this principle as it is used in the comics you read and work to apply it in your own lettering.


Proper Padding

Having the proper amount of spacing in a bubble can be difficult. What is too much? What is not enough? There isn't a set-in-stone rule but there are suggestions to make the design work easier. Based on the image to the left, there needs to be a comfortable space between the words and the edge. Don't leave so much space that the bubble takes up unneccesary artwork and don't make the bubbles so tight to the words that they're cut off. The amount of spacing also depends on the comic. The excess white can be a relief on the eyes and create a reprieve from the artwork. So, the bottomline is, if you are unsure, check with your client and see what they think.

Sound Effects: Add a BANG to Your Comic

Sound effects make comic books more engaging. They can be tricky to make in a way that adds to the experience. What needs to come first is an appropriate font. That can be tough. A lot of great fonts looks great but each has their time and place in the story. First, it should match the overall tone of the scene. It's a comedic scene, rounder, more flowing letters are best as they convey motion and are comfortable on the eyes. For action scenes, explosions, or crashes, consider the effect a sharper, stiffer font has. It adds to the tension and feeling. With a font chosen, there are a lot of possibilities with what can be done to make the sound effect

> **"These are handy and easy to learn."**

unique. This lettering tip is about stroke-only SFX. These are handy and easy to learn. The benefit to using stroke-only SFX is that very little of the art is covered, allowing the SFX to do its job and maintain the visual impression of an explosion or kick to the face.
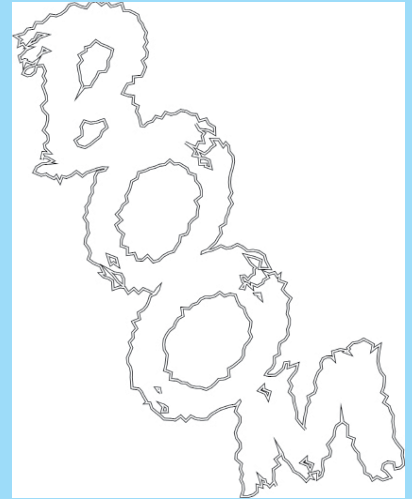
Biography: Rus Wooton

One of the greatest letterers in the business today is Rus Wooton. He began his lettering career in 2003 for a handful of companies: Image, Marvel, Dark Horse, and Archaia. Back then, a large group of letterers banded together under the title Virtual Calligraphy. Rus escalated to the prestigious position from there. His career is defined by an amazing work ethic and a talent unreachable by others. Rus has set an industry standard—not only for amount of consecutive books worked on at once—but for the quality of work he has produced. His work gives inspiration to those starting out as a level of talent to be reached. If readers take time to study the way he letters in an almost unnoticeable way, they'll have a great basis to grow their lettering skills. His amazing work can be seen in East Of West, Tokyo Ghost, Low, Black Science, Deadly Class, and The Walking Dead. In a recent issue of Black Science, Rus broke down what choices go into the many books

that he letters, "I have a lot of opportunities to play with caption placement too, helping to guide the reader. Rus's expertise can be seen a lot of books. Take a trip down to your local comic shop to check out his work.

Online Resources

Sometimes the best way to learn is by seeing. There are multiple websites that offer helpful video tutorials:

- ninjalettering.com
- jimcampbell-lettering.co.uk
- blambot.com

Refer to these sites for more helpful tips and tricks to get you over any roadblocks you may be up against.

Letter Drone

Toben Racicot (Letter Drone) has lettered and designed comics like:

**Fear Catalyst,
The Cinderella, Rexquirks,
Arrivals & Departures, and
Love is an Illusion.**

His love of comics started after a tragic sumo wrestling incident that shattered his left knee. He abandoned the sumo world and turned to superheroes and sci-fi. When he isn't lettering, he's dreaming about sushi, and spending his time reading the many amazing books published by Image Comics.