AN ICON YOU SHOULD KNOW...

Paul Rand

American graphic designer and teacher, 1914 to 1996

Paul Rand was an American graphic designer, art director and teacher, born Peretz Rosenbaum in Brooklyn, New York, in 1914. He made his name with magazine and advertising work in the 1930s and 1940s, then spent decades designing identities for large companies. His logos for IBM, Westinghouse, UPS, ABC and NeXT are still studied today. He also wrote books about design and taught at Yale from 1956 to 1985. Read this page in about five minutes, then use the links at the end to look deeper.



Paul Rand. Wikimedia Commons, public domain. Full credit on page 3.

FURTHER LOOKING

Paul Rand: Modernist Master: His work by client, plus his books, articles and interviews. paulrand.design

Letterform Archive, This Just In: Paul Rand: Sketches, comps and brand guides in the San Francisco collection. letterformarchive.org

IBM, The IBM Logo: The company's own history of the mark. ibm.com

Video: Interview with Graphic Designer Paul Rand, Part 1

Reading: Rand, Paul. *Design, Form, and Chaos*. Yale UP, 1993.

Reading: Rand, Paul. *From Lascaux to Brooklyn*. Yale UP, 1996.

Reading: Rand, Paul. *Paul Rand: A Designer's Art*. Yale UP, 1985.

Reading: Rand, Paul. *Thoughts on Design*. Wittenborn, 1947. Chronicle Books, 2014.

01 Fact Sheet

1914	Born Peretz Rosenbaum on August 15 in Brooklyn, New York.
1932	Finishes high school and a night art program at Pratt Institute. He later studies at Parsons and with George Grosz at the Art Students League.
1937 to 1941	Art director for *Esquire* and *Apparel Arts* magazines.
1941 to 1954	Art director at the William H. Weintraub advertising agency in New York.
1947	Publishes his first book, *Thoughts on Design*.
1956	Becomes design consultant to IBM and begins teaching at Yale.
1960 to 1962	Designs logos for Westinghouse, UPS and the American Broadcasting Company (ABC).
1966	Receives the AIGA Medal.
1972	Redraws the IBM logo with eight horizontal stripes.
1985	Retires from Yale. Publishes *Paul Rand: A Designer's Art*.
1986	Designs the logo for NeXT, the computer company led by Steve Jobs.
1996	Dies November 26 in Norwalk, Connecticut, at age 82.

Life and career Milestones tied to the key works

FIVE KEY WORKS, PAGE 2

1956 and 1972 IBM	**1960** Westinghouse	**1961** UPS	**1962** ABC	**1986** NeXT

02 Five Key Works

Rand's sketches, booklets and book covers are still in copyright, so this page shows his logos and links to the rest. The logos are still trademarks of the companies that own them.

1956 and 1972: IBM

A slab-serif logo that later got stripes

In 1956 IBM chief executive Thomas J. Watson Jr. hired Rand to give the company a new look. Rand redrew the letters IBM in a slab-serif typeface called City Medium. In 1972 he cut the letters into eight horizontal stripes. IBM still uses this 8-bar logo. Rand also designed IBM annual reports and packaging for many years.

LOOK FOR Stripes that tie three very different letters together | Heavy slab serifs that sit firmly on the baseline

Read IBM's own history of the logo →



IBM, 1956 and 1972. Wikimedia Commons, public domain. Trademark of IBM.

1960: Westinghouse

A W built from dots and lines

For the electric company Westinghouse, Rand drew a W from three short lines, each topped by a dot, set over a bar inside a circle. His sketch sheets for the mark survive. On one sheet he tries the W in circles, as a face, in script and next to the full name. The simple answer came at the end, not at the start.

LOOK FOR Dots and lines that read as a letter | A circle that holds the whole mark together

See Rand's Westinghouse sketches at Paul Rand: Modernist Master →



Westinghouse, 1960. Wikimedia Commons, public domain. Trademark of Westinghouse.

1961: UPS

A package with a bow on top of a shield

Rand's mark for United Parcel Service put a small package, tied with a bow, on top of a shield. The letters ups sit inside the shield in lowercase. Letterform Archive tells how Rand showed an early sketch to his young daughter Catherine. She said it was a present, and he knew the idea worked. UPS used the logo from 1961 to 2003.

LOOK FOR A picture of a gift that also says package delivery | Bold lowercase letters inside a strong outline



UPS, 1961. Wikimedia Commons, public domain. Trademark of United Parcel Service.

1962: ABC

Three round letters in a circle

Rand designed the logo for the American Broadcasting Company in 1962. It sets the lowercase letters abc inside a solid black circle. The round shapes of the a, the b and the c repeat the circle around them. The whole mark uses just one color.

LOOK FOR Letters made almost entirely of circles | White letters cut out of a black shape



ABC, 1962. Wikimedia Commons, public domain. Trademark of ABC.

1986: NeXT

One logo and a booklet to explain it

Rand was hired to design a logo for NeXT, the computer company led by Steve Jobs. He showed only one design and explained it in a booklet signed "Weston, Connecticut, Spring 1986." In the booklet he splits the word onto two lines, uses a lowercase e for contrast and sets the letters on a black cube tilted at 28 degrees. He wrote that "it is needs, not wants, ideas, not type styles which determine what its form should be."

LOOK FOR A word split in two so each letter can be larger | One lowercase letter that breaks the pattern

Read the whole NeXT booklet at Paul Rand: Modernist Master →



NeXT, 1986. Wikimedia Commons, public domain. Trademark of Apple Inc.

TRY THIS

Rand sold the NeXT logo with words as much as with pictures. Pick a word that is hard to picture, such as next, soon or maybe, and design one logo for it. Then write a one-page rationale in plain sentences. Explain the letter shapes, the color and why the idea fits. Show only your best version. If you cannot explain a choice, change it.

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REFLECT
Think About It

Rand showed Steve Jobs only one logo and a booklet that explained it. Why might one strong idea with a clear reason persuade a client more than ten options? When could it backfire?

03 Sources

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IMAGE CREDITS

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Paul Rand. IBM logo, 8-bar version, 1972. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain as a simple logo (too simple for copyright), tagged PD-textlogo on Commons. Trademark of IBM. Accessed 17 Nov. 2026. Rendered as PNG for display.

Paul Rand. Westinghouse logo. Wikimedia Commons (file dated 1959). Public domain as a simple logo (too simple for copyright), tagged PD-textlogo on Commons. Trademark of Westinghouse. Accessed 17 Nov. 2026.

Paul Rand. UPS logo, used 1961 to 2003. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain as a simple logo (too simple for copyright), tagged PD-textlogo on Commons. Trademark of United Parcel Service. Accessed 17 Nov. 2026. Rendered as PNG for display.

Paul Rand. American Broadcasting Company logo, about 1962. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain as a simple logo (too simple for copyright), tagged PD-textlogo on Commons. Trademark of ABC. Accessed 17 Nov. 2026. Rendered as PNG for display.

Paul Rand. NeXT logo, 1986. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain as a simple logo (too simple for copyright), tagged PD-textlogo on Commons. Trademark of Apple Inc. Accessed 17 Nov. 2026. Rendered as PNG for display.

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