

# Visual Communication Design Units 3 & 4

## Chapter 3 — Methods, media & materials

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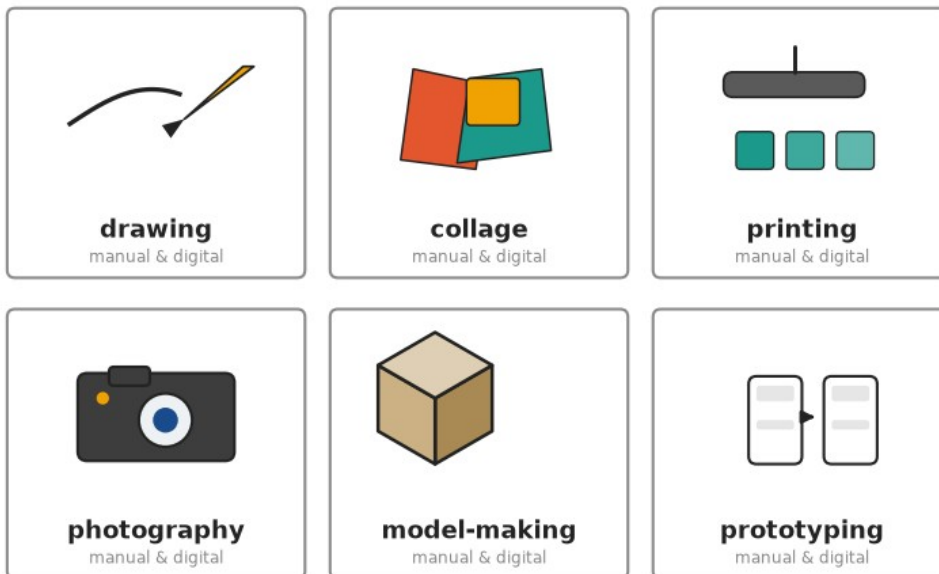
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### Theory

In the Study Design, **methods** refers to *the manual or digital processes used to evolve design ideas, concepts and solutions*. A method is what a designer **does** to move the work forward — the *process* they carry out — as distinct from the tools they make marks with (**media**) and the surfaces they work on (**materials**). Methods are used at every stage of the VCD design process, from generating rapid ideas through to resolving a presented solution.

The Study Design names six methods, noting that the list *can include but is not limited to*: **drawing, collage, printing, photography, model-making** and **prototyping**.

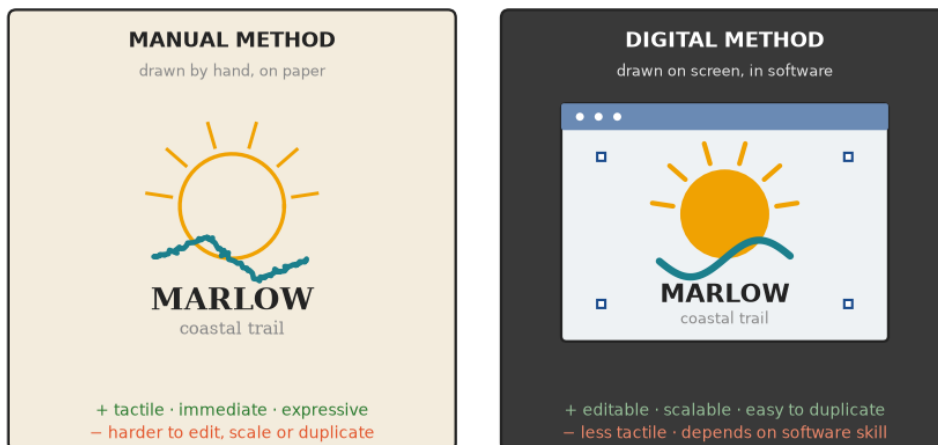


Each method has a clear job, and most can be carried out either by hand or on a computer:

- **Drawing** — mark-making to visualise ideas, concepts and solutions. It may be **manual** (pencil, pen or marker on paper) or **digital** (a stylus on a tablet, or vector and raster software). Drawing is used at every phase; in VCD, drawings are further classified by *purpose* as **development, documentation** and **presentation** drawings (Chapter 1). The how-to of constructing them is taught in Chapters 4 and 5.
- **Collage** — assembling and arranging fragments (cut paper, images, type, textures) into a composition. It may be **manual** (cutting and pasting physical materials) or **digital** (layering scanned or photographed elements in software). Good for quickly exploring composition, colour, texture and mood — for example, mood boards.
- **Printing** — transferring an image or design onto a surface. It may be **manual** (relief, lino, screen and mono-printing, or stamping) or **digital** (inkjet, laser and large-format output, or three-dimensional printing). Good for producing multiples, adding texture, and testing how a design reads as a physical output.
- **Photography** — capturing images with a camera. It may be **manual** (a film camera, using analogue film, developed and printed by hand) or **digital** (a digital camera or phone). Good for gathering reference and context, capturing mood and texture, documenting models and prototypes, and producing imagery for a solution.
- **Model-making** — constructing a three-dimensional representation of a form. It may be **manual** (card, foam, clay or timber) or **digital** (three-dimensional modelling software). Good for testing form, scale and proportion, and seeing how an object or environment works in three dimensions.
- **Prototyping** — building a testable version of a design to try it out and gather critique. It may be **manual** (a low-fidelity card-and-tape model) or **digital** (a clickable screen prototype, or a high-fidelity digital model). *Low-* and *high-fidelity* prototyping are defined in Chapter 1. Good for testing and evaluating a concept before it is resolved.

**The key distinction: manual and digital methods.** A **manual** method is carried out *by hand* using physical tools and materials — sketching in pencil, cutting and gluing a collage, pulling a screen-print, building a card model. A **digital** method is carried out *using computer hardware and software* — drawing with a stylus on a tablet, building a form in three-dimensional software, editing a photograph on a computer. The same method can usually be done either way: you can draw by hand or on a tablet, make a model in card or in software, take a photograph on film or on a phone.

### The same task — the MARLOW trail mark — two methods



The two methods carry different strengths. Manual methods are **tactile, immediate and expressive** and need no software, which suits fast, divergent ideation — but a hand-made artifact is harder to edit, scale, duplicate or share. Digital methods are **editable, scalable, precise** and easily duplicated and shared, which suits refining and resolving a design — but they can feel less immediate and depend on skill with the software. Designers often begin with manual methods to explore ideas quickly, then move to digital methods to refine and resolve, or combine both across the process.

**Method is not media, and not material.** These three words name three different things, and the examiner reports repeatedly warn students not to confuse them.

- **Method** = the *process* you carry out — drawing, collage, printing, photography, model-making, prototyping.
- **Media** = the *application* you make marks with — manually, pencil, ink, markers, paint or analogue film; digitally, software, apps and online platforms.
- **Material** = the *surface or substrate* on or from which the design is made — paper, card, textile, metal, plastic, glass, or a touchscreen / digital interface.

|                                                                                                                                    | METHOD<br>the process you carry out | MEDIA<br>the application you make marks with | MATERIAL<br>the surface you work on |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| manual example                                                                                                                     | manual drawing                      | graphite pencil                              | cartridge paper                     |
| digital example                                                                                                                    | digital drawing                     | vector software (e.g. Illustrator)           | touchscreen                         |
| <b>TRAP: “Illustrator” names the MEDIA, not the method.</b><br>the method is “digital drawing”; media/materials are covered in 3B. |                                     |                                              |                                     |

So “digital drawing” is a **method**; **Adobe Illustrator** is the **media** (a software application) used to carry it out; and the touchscreen, or the paper it is printed onto, is the **material**. Media and materials are the focus of subtopic 3B, and evaluating methods, media and materials together in a final solution is the focus of 3C — but you must be able to tell the three apart here.

**Watch-out — always say manual or digital.** Students blur these. When a question asks about a method, state clearly whether it is **manual** or **digital**, and be specific about which process it is.

**Watch-out — a tool or app is not a method.** Naming a piece of software — *Illustrator*, *Photoshop*, *Procreate* — as the “method” is a heavily reported error. Those are **media**. The method is the *process*: digital drawing, digital photo editing, digital modelling.

**Watch-out — keep method, media and material distinct.** A **method** is the process, a **medium** is the application, a **material** is the surface. “Screen-printing” is a method; “ink” is a medium; “card” is a material. Do not slide from one vocabulary into another mid-answer.

**Watch-out — methods evolve ideas, concepts and solutions.** Methods are used *throughout* the process to develop the work. Judging methods, media and materials *in a resolved solution* is a separate, evaluative skill (3C); here, focus on identifying the process and whether it is manual or digital.

## Worked examples

### Example 1 — scaffolded

Identify the method used in each version of the MARLOW mark shown, state whether it is manual or digital, and describe one advantage of each. (4 marks)

| Working                                                                                                                                                                      | Comment                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The left version was produced by <b>drawing</b> the mark <b>by hand</b> on paper — a <b>manual</b> method.                                                                   | Name the method (drawing) AND classify it (manual): the question asks for both.                      |
| The right version was produced by <b>drawing</b> the mark <b>on screen in software</b> — a <b>digital</b> method.                                                            | Same method (drawing), different form. Naming the software would name <i>media</i> , not the method. |
| An advantage of the <b>manual</b> method is that it is fast, tactile and expressive, so the designer can capture an idea immediately without needing a computer.             | “Describe one advantage” = one clear benefit tied to the method.                                     |
| An advantage of the <b>digital</b> method is that the mark is easily edited, scaled and duplicated without loss of quality, so colourways and sizes can be trialled quickly. | Give a <i>different</i> advantage for the digital form to earn the second mark.                      |

### Example 2 — scaffolded

A student’s folio labels the MARLOW mark: “Method — Adobe Illustrator.” Explain why this is not a method, and state the correct method, media and material for the digital version. (4 marks)

| Working                                                                                                                                 | Comment                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adobe Illustrator is a <b>software application</b> , so it is a <b>medium</b> (a digital application used to make marks), not a method. | Explain the error with the correct category — media, not method.        |
| The <b>method</b> is the <i>process</i> the student carried out: <b>digital drawing</b> (digital illustration).                         | Name the actual method — the process, not the tool.                     |
| The <b>media</b> is the digital application used to make the marks — the vector software, Adobe Illustrator.                            | Media = the application; this is where “Illustrator” correctly belongs. |
| The <b>material</b> is the surface worked on — the <b>touchscreen / digital interface</b> (or paper, if the file were printed).         | Material = the surface/substrate; completes the three-way distinction.  |

### Example 3 — unscaffolded

Define what is meant by a design “method”, and explain the difference between a manual method and a digital method, giving one example of each. (3 marks)

A design **method** is a *manual or digital process used to evolve design ideas, concepts and solutions* — what the designer **does** to move the work forward, such as drawing, collage or model-making. A **manual** method is carried out *by hand* using physical tools and materials — for example, sketching a concept in pencil on paper. A **digital** method is carried out *using computer hardware and software* — for example, building a three-dimensional model in modelling software. The difference is simply whether the process is performed by hand or on a computer; the same method, such as drawing, can often be done either way (1 mark: definition; 1 mark: the manual/digital distinction; 1 mark: a valid example of each).

### Example 4 — unscaffolded

A studio developing a new festival identity must (i) rapidly generate many rough thumbnail ideas, and (ii) produce a final logo that can be scaled to any size without loss of quality. For each task, recommend a manual or digital method and justify your choice with reference to what that method is good for. (6 marks)

- (i) For rapidly generating many rough thumbnails, a **manual drawing** method is best suited. Sketching by hand is fast, immediate and expressive and needs no software, so the designer can produce a broad range of divergent ideas quickly while judgement is suspended — exactly what early ideation calls for. (ii) For a final logo that can be scaled to any size without loss of quality, a **digital drawing** method (vector software) is best suited: a digital vector mark is editable, precise and *scalable*, so it can be enlarged to a billboard or reduced to a favicon without becoming blurred or jagged, and it is easily duplicated and shared for production. The manual method therefore suits the divergent, exploratory task and the digital method suits the resolved, reproducible outcome — and many studios move from one to the other across the process (6 marks: correct method named for each task, each justified by what that method is good for, tied to the task’s demands).

## Practice questions

### Scaffolded

**Q1.** Using the methods panel (Figure 1): (a) Name the method best suited to capturing a real texture or scene. (1 mark) (b) State whether **printing** is a manual method, a digital method, or both. (1 mark) (c) Describe what **model-making** is good for when developing a design. (2 marks)

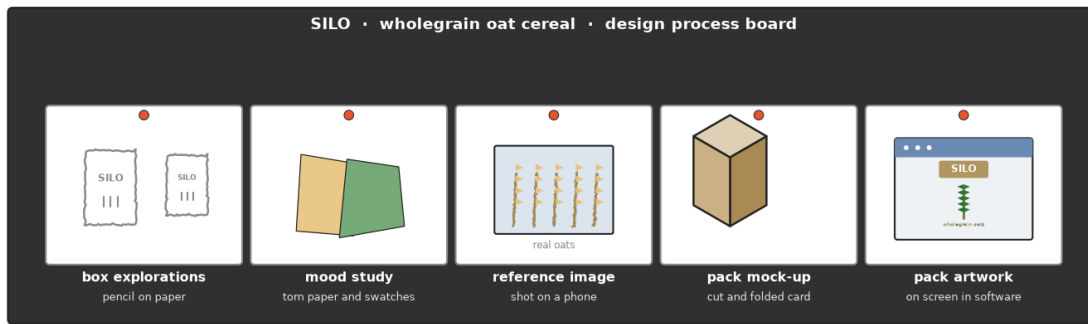
**Q2.** Methods can be **manual** or **digital**. (a) For each of the following, name the **method** being used and state whether it is **manual** or **digital**: (i) photographing a set of props with a film camera; (ii) assembling scanned fabric swatches into a mood board in layout software. (2 marks) (b) Name one method **other than drawing** that can be carried out both by hand and digitally, and name each form. (2 marks)

**Q3.** Using the two versions of the MARLOW mark (Figure 2): (a) State **one** visual difference between the two marks that shows which method produced each. (1 mark) (b) Describe one **limitation** of developing the mark by the manual method. (2 marks) (c) Describe one **limitation** of the digital method. (1 mark)

**Q4.** Using the method / media / material diagram (Figure 3): (a) Classify each of the following as a **method**, a **medium** or a **material**: (i) collage; (ii) marker pen; (iii) card. (3 marks) (b) Name the method a designer is using when they work in photo-editing software such as Photoshop. (1 mark)

**Q5.** Drawing is a design method. (a) State the two forms the drawing method can take. (1 mark) (b) Name the three purposes a drawing may serve in VCD, as classified in Chapter 1. (3 marks) (c) Explain why drawing is a method used at **every phase** of the design process, referring to two different phases. (2 marks)

**Q6.** Model-making and prototyping are both methods. (a) Distinguish between **model-making** and **prototyping**. (2 marks) (b) Give one **manual** and one **digital** form of prototyping. (2 marks)



Questions 8, 9 and 14 refer to the SILO oat-cereal process board shown above. Elsewhere, apply the concepts to the scenario given.

**Q7.** List the six methods named in the Study Design and, for each, state one form it can take (manual or digital) and one thing it is good for. (6 marks)

**Q8.** Using the SILO process board, identify **two** methods the designer used and, for each, state whether it is manual or digital. (4 marks)

**Q9.** The designer photographed real oats and used the image in the process. Explain **two** ways photography can be useful as a method in the design process. (4 marks)

**Q10.** Describe **collage** as a method and explain one thing it is good for when developing an aesthetic. (3 marks)

**Q11.** Distinguish between a **manual** form and a **digital** form of **printing**, giving one example of each. (4 marks)

**Q12.** Explain why a designer might build a **manual (physical) model** as well as, or instead of, a **digital model** when developing a three-dimensional object. (4 marks)

**Q13.** A folio page for a hand-printed SILO tote bag reads: “**Method:** cotton canvas. **Media:** relief printing. **Material:** printing ink.” Identify what is wrong with these labels and give the correct method, media and material. (4 marks)

**Q14.** Using the SILO process board, **analyse** how the designer combined **manual and digital methods** to move the design from early ideas towards a resolved solution. (6 marks)

**Q15.** Explain the difference between a design **method** and the **media** used to carry it out, giving one example of each. (3 marks)

**Q16.** SILO is adding a QR-linked recipe site to the pack, and the designer must test how users move between its screens before the site is built. **Evaluate** the use of **prototyping** as the method for this task, referring to what it lets the designer test, one limitation, and whether a **manual** or a **digital** prototype would suit the task better. (6 marks)

## Answers

**Q1.** (a) Photography. (b) Both. (c) See solutions (testing form, scale and proportion in three dimensions). **Q2.** (a) (i) Photography — manual; (ii) collage — digital. (b) e.g. model-making — manual (card/foam/clay) and digital (three-dimensional modelling software). (Accept collage, printing, photography or prototyping.) **Q3.** (a) e.g. the left mark's lines are uneven and wobbly; the right mark's curves are smooth, even and carry selection handles. (b) See solutions (hard to edit/scale/duplicate). (c) See solutions (less tactile / depends on software skill). **Q4.** (a) (i) method; (ii) medium; (iii) material. (b) Digital photo editing (digital image editing). **Q5.** (a) Manual and digital. (b) Development, documentation and presentation. (c) See solutions (quick, and as rough or as resolved as the phase needs — e.g. Develop thumbnails, Deliver presentation drawing). **Q6.** (a) Model-making = making a 3D representation of a form; prototyping = making a testable version to test and critique. (b) Manual = low-fidelity card model; digital = clickable screen prototype. **Q7.** See solutions — drawing, collage, printing, photography, model-making, prototyping (each with a manual/digital form + a use). **Q8.** Any two from the board, correctly classified, e.g. manual drawing (manual); collage (manual); photography (digital); model-making (manual); digital drawing (digital). **Q9.** Any two: gather reference/context; capture mood/texture; document models/prototypes; produce imagery for the solution. **Q10.** Collage = assembling and arranging fragments into a composition; good for quickly exploring colour, texture and mood. See solutions. **Q11.** Manual e.g. screen, lino, relief or mono-printing, or stamping; digital e.g. inkjet/laser/large-format (or 3D) printing. See solutions. **Q12.** See solutions (physical model tests real scale, proportion and handling that a screen cannot). **Q13.** All three labels name the wrong category: Method = relief (lino) printing — a manual printing method; Media = printing ink; Material = cotton canvas. **Q14.** See solutions (manual ideation and card model → digital refinement to a resolved pack). **Q15.** Method = the process; media = the application used. e.g. drawing (method) with a pencil or software (media). See solutions. **Q16.** See solutions (prototyping builds a testable version for critique — tests the screen flow; limitation = it only simulates the site; judgement, e.g. manual paper prototype first, digital clickable prototype after).

## Fully-worked solutions

**Q1.** (a) **Photography** — a camera captures a real texture or scene directly. (b) **Both**: printing can be **manual** (screen, lino, relief, stamping) or **digital** (inkjet, laser, large-format or three-dimensional output). (c) Model-making is good for **testing form, scale and proportion** and for seeing how a three-dimensional object or environment actually works and is handled — things a flat drawing cannot fully show (2 marks: a valid use + a reason).

**Q2.** (a) (i) The method is **photography**, carried out **manually** — a film camera exposes analogue film, which is then developed and printed by hand rather than captured as a digital file. (ii) The method is **collage** — assembling and arranging fragments into a composition — carried out **digitally**, by layering scanned elements in software (2 marks: one each; both the method AND its classification are required). (b) **Model-making** can be done both ways: **manually**, by constructing the form in card, foam or clay, and **digitally**, by building it in three-dimensional modelling software (accept collage, printing, photography or prototyping — for example prototyping: a low-fidelity card-and-tape model (manual) and a clickable on-screen prototype (digital)) (2 marks).

**Q3.** (a) The left mark's lines are **uneven and slightly wobbly** and the sun and wave vary in weight, which is what a mark drawn **by hand** looks like; the right mark's curves are **smooth, even and exactly repeated** and it sits inside selection handles, showing it was built **on screen in software** (1 mark: one valid visual difference tied to the method that produced it). (b) A limitation of the **manual** method is that the hand-made mark is **hard to edit, scale or duplicate** — changing a colour or resizing it cleanly means re-drawing it, and it cannot be enlarged without losing quality (2 marks). (c) A limitation of the **digital** method is that it can feel **less tactile and immediate**, and it **depends on the designer's skill with the software** (and on having the hardware) (1 mark).

**Q4.** (a) (i) collage = a **method** (a process of assembling fragments); (ii) marker pen = a **medium** (an application used to make marks); (iii) card = a **material** (a surface/substrate) (3 marks: one each). (b) When working in Photoshop the designer is using the method **digital photo editing** (digital image editing) — Photoshop itself is the *media* (1 mark).

**Q5.** (a) **Manual** and **digital**. (b) **Development, documentation** and **presentation** drawings (3 marks: one each). (c) Drawing is used at **every phase** because it is the fastest way to make thinking visible, and it can be pitched at whatever level of finish the phase needs. In **Develop**, rapid thumbnails let the designer put down and compare many divergent ideas in minutes; in **Deliver**, a resolved presentation drawing communicates the finished solution to the client. The one method therefore carries the work from the first rough idea through to the final presentation (2 marks: a reason + two phases named, each with what drawing does there).

**Q6. (a) Model-making** is the process of constructing a **three-dimensional representation of a form**; **prototyping** is the process of building a **testable version of a design** in order to **test and critique** it (low- or high-fidelity). A model shows the form; a prototype is made to be tried out and evaluated (*2 marks: both distinguished by purpose*). (b) A **manual** prototype is a **low-fidelity card-and-tape model**; a **digital** prototype is a **clickable on-screen prototype** (or a high-fidelity digital model) (*2 marks: one manual + one digital*).

**Q7. (One valid form and use for each — 6 marks.)**

- **Drawing** — manual (pencil on paper) or digital (stylus/software); good for visualising ideas, concepts and solutions at every phase.
- **Collage** — manual (cut-and-paste) or digital (layering in software); good for exploring composition, colour, texture and mood.
- **Printing** — manual (screen/lino) or digital (inkjet/laser); good for producing multiples and testing a physical output.
- **Photography** — manual (a film camera and analogue film) or digital (camera/phone); good for capturing reference, context, mood and documentation.
- **Model-making** — manual (card/foam/clay) or digital (3D software); good for testing form, scale and proportion in three dimensions.
- **Prototyping** — manual (low-fidelity card) or digital (clickable screen prototype); good for testing and critiquing a concept before it is resolved.

**Q8.** The board shows several methods; any **two**, correctly classified, earn the marks — for example: the rough thumbnail sketches are **manual drawing (manual)**; the torn-paper mood study is **collage (manual)**; the image of the oats is **photography (digital)**; the card box is **model-making (manual)**; and the crisp on-screen pack is **digital drawing (digital)** (*4 marks: two methods named + correctly classified manual/digital*).

**Q9.** Photography is useful because it can **capture reference and context** — a photograph of real oats records their exact colour, texture and form for the designer to work from — and because it can **produce imagery for the design and document the process**, for instance recording models and prototypes or supplying a texture to place into a layout or collage. (*4 marks: two distinct uses, each explained.*)

**Q10.** Collage is the method of **assembling and arranging fragments** — cut paper, images, type and textures — into a single composition, either by hand or digitally. It is good for developing an aesthetic because it lets the designer **rapidly try combinations of colour, texture and imagery** and see the *look and feel* they create, so a mood or character can be explored and judged quickly before committing to it (*3 marks: description of the method + a use tied to aesthetic development*).

**Q11.** A **manual** form of printing is a hands-on process such as **screen-printing, lino or relief printing, mono-printing or stamping**, where ink is pressed onto a surface by hand. A **digital** form of printing outputs a design from a computer, such as **inkjet, laser or large-format printing** (or three-dimensional printing). Both transfer a design onto a material, but one is produced by hand and the other by a machine driven from a digital file (*4 marks: a manual example + a digital example, each identified as such, with the distinction drawn*).

**Q12.** A designer might build a **physical (manual) model** as well as a digital one because a real, handmade model lets them **test the actual form, scale, proportion and how the object is held and used** in three real dimensions — things that are hard to judge fully on a flat screen. A physical model can be picked up, viewed from any angle and tested with users, giving immediate tactile feedback, whereas a digital model, though easy to edit and view, only *represents* the object on screen. Making a physical model therefore checks that the design works in reality before it is resolved (*4 marks: at least two reasons — real three-dimensional testing + tactile/user feedback — explained against the limits of a digital model*).

**Q13.** All three labels name the wrong category. **Relief printing** is the *process* the designer carried out, so it is the **method** — a **manual** form of printing — not the media. **Printing ink** is the *application used to make the marks*, so it is the **media**, not the material. **Cotton canvas** is the *surface the design is printed onto*, so it is the **material**, not the method. Corrected: **Method — relief (lino) printing, carried out manually; Media — printing ink; Material — cotton canvas (a textile)** (*4 marks: the three mislabels identified + the corrected method, media and material given*).

**Q14.** The board shows the designer moving from **manual** methods early to **digital** methods as the design resolves. Early **ideas** are explored with **manual drawing** (rapid hand-drawn thumbnails of the box) and **collage** (torn paper and swatches to try colour and texture) — fast, expressive methods suited to divergent exploration. The idea is then tested three-dimensionally with a **manual model** (a low-fidelity card mock-up of the pack), checking form and scale in the real world. **Photography** (digital) captures the real oats as reference imagery. Finally the design is refined and resolved with **digital drawing**, producing the crisp, editable, scalable on-screen pack ready for production. So the designer combines manual methods to *generate and test* and digital methods to *refine and resolve*, each chosen for what it does best at that stage (6 marks: names manual and digital methods across the process + shows how each contributes to moving ideas → resolved solution).

**Q15.** A design **method** is the **process** the designer carries out — such as drawing, collage or model-making — while the **media** is the **application used to carry that process out** — such as a pencil, markers or paint, or software and apps. For example, *drawing* is the method, and the *graphite pencil* (or the vector software) is the media used to do it. The method is *what you do*; the media is *what you do it with* (3 marks: method defined as process + media defined as application + a matched example of each).

**Q16.** **Prototyping** is the method of building a **testable version of a design so that it can be tried out and critiqued**, which is precisely what this task needs. A prototype of the recipe site lets the designer put the screens in front of real users and test **whether they can find a recipe, whether the order of the screens makes sense, and where they hesitate or tap the wrong thing** — behaviour that a static drawing of the same screens cannot reveal, and it exposes those problems while they are still cheap to fix. Its **limitation** is that a prototype only *simulates* the site: it cannot test real loading speed, live content or the finished visual treatment, and a rough prototype can draw comment on its own unfinished look rather than on the flow being tested. A **manual** prototype — the screens sketched or printed on paper and moved by hand as the user “taps” — is extremely fast and cheap, and can be redrawn between one user and the next; a **digital** prototype — a clickable on-screen prototype — takes longer to build but is tapped on the real device at real size. **Judgement:** because the designer is testing *movement between screens* before anything is built, the **manual, low-fidelity prototype suits this task better** — more layouts can be tested for the same effort — with a digital clickable prototype used afterwards to confirm the flow on the actual screen (6 marks: what prototyping lets the designer test + a limitation + a manual/digital comparison + a justified judgement).

## Chapter 3 Methods, media and materials — 3B Media and materials

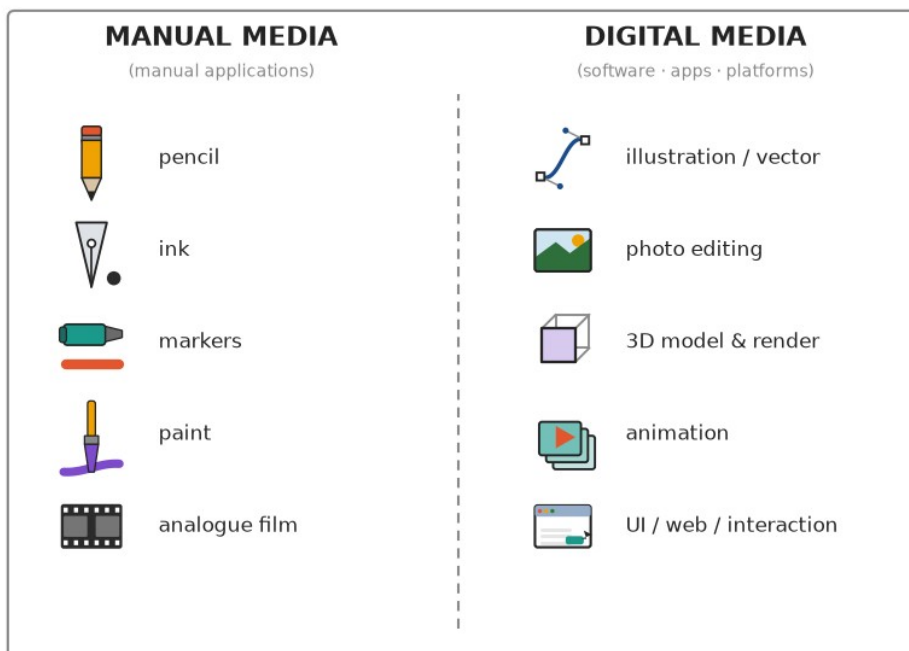
### Theory

**Media** and **materials** are two of the three things a designer chooses when giving a design its physical or on-screen form. The Study Design defines them precisely, and the examination expects you to use those exact terms — and to keep them apart from **method** (the process, covered in 3A).

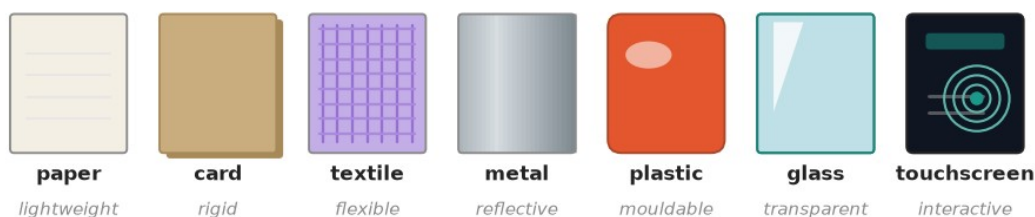
**Media** are the manual and digital applications used to visually communicate ideas and information. The medium is the *application* — the thing the designer uses to make the marks or images.

- **Manual media** include, but are not limited to, **pencil, ink, markers, paint** and **analogue film**.
- **Digital media** include, but are not limited to, **software, apps and online platforms** used for graphic, game or interaction design, web development, concept art, illustration, three-dimensional modelling and rendering, photo editing and animation.

**Materials** are the surfaces or substrates on or from which designs are made. The material is the *surface* a design sits on, or the substance an object is made from. Examples include, but are not limited to, **paper, card, textile, metal, plastic, glass** and a **touchscreen or digital interface**.



The panel above sorts the media into the two families the examiner asks you to name: **manual** on the left, **digital** on the right. Notice that both a pencil and an illustration app are *media* — the point of difference is only whether the application is manual or digital.



The materials panel shows a stylised swatch of each surface with **one property** that most affects how a design on it is read: paper is *lightweight*, card is *rigid*, textile is *flexible*, metal is *reflective*, plastic is *mouldable*, glass is *transparent* and a touchscreen is *interactive*. The property carries meaning — a reflective metal signals durability and quality; a matte, absorbent paper signals something plainer and more natural.

**The analytical move.** To read the media and materials in a design example you:

1. **Identify the media** (the application) and say whether it is **manual or digital**, naming it specifically (pencil, ink, marker, paint, analogue film / a named type of software or app).
2. **Identify the material** (the surface or substrate the design is made on or from).
3. **Explain how each choice affects the communication and the aesthetic** — a cause-and-effect chain from the quality of the medium or the finish of the material to what it signals to the audience.
4. **Check the choice against the field of practice, purpose and context** — a strong choice *suits* the field (Messages, Objects, Environments or Interactive experiences), the purpose and where the design is used.



Consider the original *HEARTH & HOME Makers Market* poster above. The cottage illustration was drawn with **ink** — a **manual medium** — whose slightly uneven, hand-drawn line reads as warm and handmade. The poster is a **two-colour print on kraft card**: the **material** is **card**, and its warm tan tone and matte, uncoated surface signal a natural, craft, locally-made character. Together the manual medium and the kraft material build a *warm, handmade, artisan* aesthetic that suits a community makers’ market and its craft-buying audience. (The *process* used to put the ink on the card — screen-printing — is the **method**, and belongs to 3A.)

**Matching media and materials to the field, purpose and context.** A media or material choice is only “right” in relation to what the design is for. A touchscreen interface cannot be delivered on paper; a weather-exposed park sign should not be printed on card. The matrix below pairs the media and materials that typically suit each of the four fields of practice.

| Field of practice                                                                                                | Typical media (application)                                 | Typical material (surface)        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|  <b>Messages</b>                | illustration, vector & photo-editing software; ink, markers | paper, card                       |
|  <b>Objects</b>                 | 3D modelling & rendering software; markers                  | plastic, metal, textile, glass    |
|  <b>Environments</b>            | 3D rendering software; pencil, markers                      | card (scale models), glass, metal |
|  <b>Interactive experiences</b> | UI & interaction-design software; photo editing             | touchscreen / digital interface   |

- **Messages** (posters, packaging, publications) are usually made with illustration, vector and photo-editing software, or with **ink and markers**, on **paper or card**.
- **Objects** (products, packaging, furniture) are visualised with **three-dimensional modelling and rendering software** or with **markers**, and made from **plastic, metal, textile or glass**. Note that the medium is the **marker** — *rendering* is the technique the designer uses it for, not a medium.
- **Environments** (interiors, exhibitions, sets) are visualised with **3D rendering software** or with **pencil and markers**, and built from materials such as **card** (scale models), **glass** and **metal**. Again the medium is the **pencil or marker** — *perspective* is a drawing method (3A).
- **Interactive experiences** (apps, interfaces, wayfinding) are made with **UI and interaction-design software**, together with **photo-editing software** for the images placed in the interface, and delivered on a **touchscreen or digital interface**.

**Watch-out — media ≠ material ≠ method.** These name three different things about the *same* design. A vector illustration application (for example Adobe Illustrator) is a **medium** (a digital application); **printing** is a **method** (a process, 3A); **card** is a **material** (a surface). Do not answer a “media” question with a method (“printing”) or a material (“card”).

**Watch-out — name manual or digital, and name it specifically.** “It uses media” earns nothing. State whether the medium is **manual** (pencil, ink, markers, paint, analogue film) or **digital** (name the type of software or app), because the examiner marks the distinction.

**Watch-out — a material is a surface or substrate, not a subject.** The material is what the design is made **on** or **from** (paper, card, textile, metal, plastic, glass, touchscreen) — not what the design depicts and not the presentation format.

**Watch-out — match the choice to the field, purpose and context.** A complete answer says *why* a medium or material suits the field of practice, the purpose and where the design is used or viewed — not just that it “was used”.

## Worked examples

### Example 1 — scaffolded

*For the HEARTH & HOME poster, distinguish between the medium and the material used, and separately name the method used to produce it. (3 marks)*

| Working                                                                                          | Comment                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Medium:</b> the cottage illustration was drawn with <b>ink</b> — a manual medium.             | The medium is the <i>application</i> used to make the marks; name it AND say it is manual.      |
| <b>Material:</b> the poster is printed on <b>kraft card</b> — the surface the design is made on. | The material is the <i>surface / substrate</i> , not the process and not what the poster shows. |
| <b>Method:</b> <b>screen-printing</b> — the process used to                                      | Method belongs to 3A; naming it here shows you can                                              |

| Working                         | Comment                                                         |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| transfer the ink onto the card. | keep the three apart, which is exactly what the examiner tests. |

### Example 2 — scaffolded

*Explain how the choice of material affects the communication and aesthetic of the HEARTH & HOME poster. (4 marks)*

| Working                                                                                                                                  | Comment                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The material is <b>kraft card</b> — a warm tan, matte, uncoated surface.                                                                 | Identify the material and its relevant properties (colour, finish) before explaining the effect.         |
| Because the surface is un-bleached and matte, it reads as natural, plain and handmade rather than glossy or mass-produced.               | Explain the <i>mechanism</i> — how the property of the surface creates a reading.                        |
| This builds a <i>warm, artisan, locally-made</i> aesthetic and signals to a craft-buying audience that the market's goods are hand-made. | Tie the material to a NAMED aesthetic and to the audience/purpose to earn the communication marks.       |
| A bright white gloss stock would have pulled the same design toward a slick, commercial feeling instead.                                 | A brief contrast shows you understand the choice was deliberate (optional, strengthens the explanation). |

### Example 3 — unscaffolded

*The FERNLY plant-care app is shown on a smartphone. Identify the media and the material used to deliver it, and state whether the medium is manual or digital. (3 marks)*

The **medium** is **UI / interaction-design software** — a **digital** medium used to design and lay out the screens. The **material** is the **touchscreen (digital interface)** of the phone — the surface on which the design is delivered and used. Both are digital: no manual medium is used, and no physical material such as paper or card is involved, because the product exists only as an on-screen interactive experience.

### Example 4 — unscaffolded

*Discuss how the media and material chosen for the FERNLY app suit its field of practice, purpose and context. (4 marks)*

The FERNLY app belongs to the field of **interactive experiences**, and its media and material are matched to that field. The **digital medium** (interaction-design software) lets the designer build tappable icons, screens and animated feedback that a static design printed on paper could not, while the **touchscreen material** is *interactive* and *luminous*, so the user can tap, swipe and receive real-time responses. This suits the app's **purpose** — reminding a user when to water and care for plants — because reminders must update and respond, which only a digital interface can do. It also suits the **context** of use: a phone held in one hand, indoors, checked in short glances, where a bright, responsive screen communicates instantly. The same design fixed on a **paper or card** material could not serve this field, purpose or context — a printed surface cannot respond to touch or update — so the digital media-and-material pairing is appropriate.

## Practice questions

### Scaffolded

**Q1.** A photographer's exhibition catalogue is produced for a small gallery. The cover image was shot on **analogue film**, and the catalogue is printed on a lightweight, uncoated stock. (a) State whether analogue film is a **manual** or a **digital** medium. (1 mark) (b) Name the **material** the catalogue pages are made from. (1 mark) (c) Explain how the lightweight, uncoated surface suits the catalogue's purpose and the context in which it is used. (2 marks)

**Q2.** Using the media panel: (a) List **two** manual media and **two** digital media. (2 marks) (b) State what all of the media on the **right-hand** side of the panel have in common that makes them digital media. (1 mark)

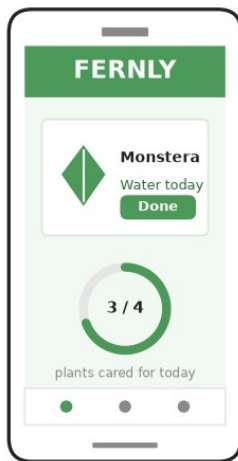
**Q3.** Using the materials panel: (a) State one property of **metal**, one of **glass** and one of **textile**. (3 marks) (b) For a soft toy, which of those three materials would suit best, and why? (2 marks)

**Q4.** Using the matching matrix: (a) Name a typical medium and a typical material for the **Objects** field. (2 marks) (b) Name a typical medium and a typical material for the **Messages** field. (2 marks)

**Q5.** (a) In your own words, define **media** and **materials**. (2 marks) (b) Explain why “printing” is neither a medium nor a material. (2 marks)

**Q6.** For the HEARTH & HOME poster: (a) Identify the manual medium currently used for the illustration. (1 mark) (b) Explain how re-drawing the illustration in digital illustration software instead would change the aesthetic. (2 marks)

### Unscaffolded



FERNLY app — UI on a touchscreen (digital interface)

Questions 7–12 refer to the FERNLY plant-care app shown above, unless otherwise stated.

**Q7.** Explain how the **touchscreen** material shapes the way the FERNLY app communicates with, and is used by, its audience. (4 marks)

**Q8.** Analyse how the choice of a **digital medium** contributes to the clean, contemporary aesthetic of the FERNLY app. (4 marks)

**Q9.** Compare the media and materials of the HEARTH & HOME poster (Messages) with those of the FERNLY app (Interactive experiences), referring to the field, purpose and context of each. (6 marks)

**Q10.** Explain how a designer’s choice of **manual media** — such as ink, paint or markers — can affect what a printed design communicates to its audience. (3 marks)

**Q11.** A designer draws an illustration by hand in **ink**, scans it, and completes the artwork in **illustration software** before it is printed on paper. Identify the **media** used and classify each as **manual** or **digital**. (4 marks)

**Q12.** A student writes that “the media used for the poster is card.” Explain why this is incorrect and give the correct classification of card. (2 marks)

**Q13.** Using the matching matrix, explain why **three-dimensional modelling and rendering software** (media) together with a material such as **plastic or metal** suit the **Objects** field. (4 marks)

**Q14.** A wayfinding sign is to be installed outdoors in a coastal park. Recommend a suitable **material** and justify your choice with reference to the **context**. (3 marks)

**Q15.** Choose **one** field of practice (Messages, Objects, Environments or Interactive experiences). Recommend a suitable **medium** and a suitable **material** for a design in that field, and explain how each suits the field, purpose and context. (6 marks)

**Q16.** Choose **one** artifact from this subtopic — the HEARTH & HOME poster or the FERNLY app. Analyse how its **media** and **material** choices work *together* to build a named aesthetic, and explain **one thing the pairing achieves that neither choice could achieve on its own**. (6 marks)



## Answers

**Q1.** (a) Manual. (b) Paper. (c) See solutions (lightweight → cheap and easy to carry; uncoated → no glare, images dominate). **Q2.** (a) Manual e.g. pencil, ink, markers, paint, analogue film (any two); digital e.g. illustration, photo-editing, 3D, animation, UI software (any two). (b) They are all software, apps or online platforms — digital applications. **Q3.** (a) Metal = reflective (durable); glass = transparent; textile = flexible (soft). (b) Textile — it is soft and flexible, so it is safe and comfortable to hold. **Q4.** (a) Objects: 3D modelling & rendering software; plastic/metal/textile/glass. (b) Messages: illustration, vector or photo-editing software (accept ink or markers); paper or card. **Q5.** (a) Media = the manual and digital applications used to visually communicate; materials = the surfaces or substrates on or from which designs are made. (b) Printing is a *process* (a method), not an application or a surface. **Q6.** (a) Ink. (b) See solutions (crisper, more uniform, digital/contemporary feel). **Q7–Q16.** See fully-worked solutions.

## Fully-worked solutions

**Q1.** (a) Analogue film is a **manual** medium — it is one of the manual applications the Study Design lists (pencil, ink, markers, paint, analogue film). (b) The pages are made from **paper**. (c) Paper is **lightweight**, so the catalogue is cheap to produce in quantity and light enough for a visitor to carry home — which matches its purpose as a take-away record of the exhibition. Because the stock is **uncoated** it is matte, so it does not throw back the gallery's spotlights as a gloss surface would, and its plain finish keeps attention on the photographs rather than on the page (2 marks: *the properties of the material tied to the purpose and to the context of use*).

**Q2.** (a) Manual media (any two): **pencil, ink, markers, paint, analogue film**. Digital media (any two): software or apps for **illustration, photo editing, three-dimensional modelling and rendering, animation, or UI / web / interaction design**. (b) They are all **software, apps or online platforms** — that is, digital applications used to visually communicate ideas and information. What makes a medium digital is not what it depicts but that the application itself is digital.

**Q3.** (a) **Metal** — reflective (and durable/rigid); **glass** — transparent; **textile** — flexible (and soft). (b) **Textile** would suit a soft toy best, because it is soft and flexible, making the toy safe, comfortable and pleasant to hold, whereas metal or glass would be hard and potentially dangerous (*material property matched to the object's purpose*).

**Q4.** (a) **Objects** — medium: three-dimensional modelling and rendering software (or **markers**); material: plastic, metal, textile or glass. (b) **Messages** — medium: illustration, vector or photo-editing software (ink or markers are also accepted); material: paper or card.

**Q5.** (a) **Media** are the manual and digital applications used to visually communicate ideas and information (for example pencil, ink or design software). **Materials** are the surfaces or substrates on or from which designs are made (for example paper, card, metal or a touchscreen). (b) **Printing** is a *process* used to make a design — that is a **method** (3A) — not an application the designer draws with, nor a surface the design is made on, so it is neither a medium nor a material (2 marks: *printing correctly classified as a method, plus the reason it fails each of the two definitions*).

**Q6.** (a) The manual medium currently used is **ink**. (b) Re-drawing the illustration in **digital illustration software** would replace the slightly uneven, hand-drawn ink line with crisp, uniform vector edges and flat, even colour. This would shift the aesthetic away from the warm, hand-made feeling toward a cleaner, more precise and contemporary look (2 marks: *manual→digital change tied to an aesthetic shift*).

**Q7.** The **touchscreen** is an *interactive* and *luminous* surface, and this shapes how the app communicates. Because the user can tap and swipe the surface directly, the app can respond in real time — opening screens, confirming a watering task, showing animated feedback — so communication becomes a two-way exchange rather than a one-way message. The back-lit screen also means the interface is read by its own light in any lighting, and information can update live. The material therefore lets FERNLY guide the user step by step, which a static printed surface could not do (4 marks: *the property of the material linked to how it communicates and is used*).

**Q8.** The app is made with a **digital medium** (interaction-design software), and this builds its clean, contemporary aesthetic. The software produces crisp vector icons, even flat colour, precise alignment on a layout grid and consistent, repeatable type — all of which read as ordered, modern and “digital”. Because every element is geometrically exact and uniformly coloured, the interface feels uncluttered and up-to-date, which is the clean, contemporary aesthetic expected of a current app and suited to its tech-comfortable audience (4 marks: *the digital medium's qualities shown building the named aesthetic*).

**Q9.** Both designs pair their media and material to their field, but to opposite ends. The **HEARTH & HOME poster** (Messages) uses a **manual medium** (ink) on a **card** material, suited to a printed message that is pinned up and read at a market — the hand-drawn ink and matte kraft build a warm, artisan character for a craft audience. The **FERNLY app** (Interactive experiences) uses a **digital medium** (UI software) delivered on a **touchscreen** material, suited to an on-screen product used one-handed on a phone — the crisp software and luminous, interactive screen build a clean, responsive character. The similarity is that each media-and-material choice fits its field, purpose and context; the difference is manual-and-printed versus digital-and-interactive, which is why the poster is static and tactile while the app is responsive and screen-based (6 marks: media and material of each named, congruent two-sided comparison across field/purpose/context, similarity and difference).

**Q10.** Manual media carry a hand-made, human quality into a printed design. A brushed **paint** stroke or an inked line varies in width and edge, and a **marker** lays down visible, slightly uneven colour, so the design reads as expressive, personal and crafted rather than machine-perfect. A designer can use this to communicate warmth, authenticity or playfulness to an audience — for example on a craft or children’s product — where a flat digital finish would feel too clinical (3 marks: named manual media + the quality they add + the effect on communication).

**Q11.** Two media are used. The **ink** the illustration is drawn with by hand is a **manual medium**, and the **illustration software** used to complete the artwork is a **digital medium**. One design can therefore combine manual and digital media, and a complete answer names both and classifies each. Note that the **paper** the artwork is finally printed on is the **material**, not a third medium (4 marks: 1 mark for each medium named — ink, illustration software — and 1 mark for each correctly classified as manual or digital).

**Q12.** The statement is incorrect because **card is not a medium** — a medium is an *application* used to make marks (pencil, ink, marker, paint or design software). Card is a **material**: a surface or substrate that a design is printed or made **on**. The correct classification of card is therefore a **material** (2 marks: the error identified + card correctly reclassified).

**Q13.** In the **Objects** field, designers develop three-dimensional products, so both the media and the materials must suit three-dimensional form. **Three-dimensional modelling and rendering software** lets the designer build and view the object from any angle and render its surfaces, light and shade before it is made — communicating the form to stakeholders far better than a flat drawing. The finished object is then made from a **material such as plastic or metal**, which can be moulded or fabricated into a durable, functional three-dimensional form. The media visualise the object and the material realises it, so both suit the Objects field, its purpose and its context (4 marks: the medium and the material each justified against the field).

**Q14.** A suitable material is **metal** — specifically a powder-coated aluminium sign. The **context** is outdoors in a coastal park, where the sign is exposed to sun, wind, rain and salt air and must last for years. Metal is durable and rigid, and aluminium in particular does not rust in salt air, so the sign will survive these conditions and stay legible, whereas paper or card would quickly fade, warp and disintegrate. The material is therefore chosen to match the demands of the context (3 marks: material named + justification tied explicitly to the context).

**Q15.** (Model — Environments field.) For an exhibition space in the **Environments** field, a suitable **medium** is **three-dimensional modelling and rendering software**, and a suitable **material** is **card** for a scale model. The rendering software suits the field because it lets the designer build the space in three dimensions and show stakeholders realistic views of the layout, light and finishes before anything is built — matching the purpose of communicating a spatial experience. Card suits the context of early presentation because it is cheap, rigid and quick to cut and fold into an accurate scale model that the client can view from every side. Each choice fits the field (spatial), the purpose (communicating a resolved environment) and the context (design development and client presentation) (6 marks: a field chosen; a medium and a material each justified against field, purpose and context).

**Q16.** (Model — using the FERNLY app.) FERNLY pairs a **digital medium** (interaction-design software) with a **touchscreen** material, and each choice is shaped by the other. The software supplies crisp vector icons, flat unbroken colour, consistent type and an even grid, and the luminous touchscreen renders those qualities exactly as they were drawn, so the precision of the medium is not lost in the surface. Working the other way, the material disciplines the medium: because the surface is small, held in one hand and touched with a thumb, the designer restricts the palette to one green plus white and neutral grey, leaves generous space around the plant card, and draws the “Done” control large and rounded. Together the two build a *clean, calm and contemporary* aesthetic that suits an everyday care task and a tech-comfortable audience. What the pairing achieves that neither choice could achieve on its own is a mark that

is **both a graphic and a control**: the software alone could only draw the green “Done” shape, and the touchscreen alone could only register a press, but together they produce one element that is legible, attractive and operable at the same time — which is why the app can guide the user through a task rather than merely inform them *(6 marks: media and material identified, each shown shaping the other toward one named aesthetic, and one capability attributed to the pairing rather than to either choice alone)*.

## Chapter 3 Methods, media and materials — 3C Evaluating methods, media and materials in a resolved solution

### Theory

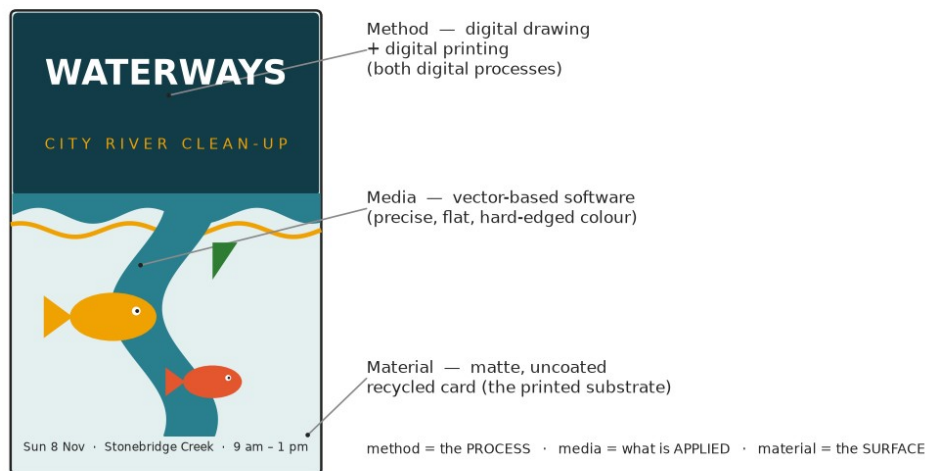
In the examination (Section A) you are given resolved **design examples** in the Resource Book and asked to **evaluate the application of the methods, media and materials** used in a design solution. This is an analysis skill, not a making skill: you read a finished design and judge how well its methods, media and materials have been used. Chapter 3A covered the **methods** and 3B covered the **media and materials** as knowledge; here you put that knowledge to work as an **evaluation** of a resolved solution.

**The three terms, in the Study Design's own words.** Keep them separate and use these exact meanings.

- **Methods** are the **manual or digital processes** used to evolve design ideas, concepts and solutions. They can include drawing, collage, printing, photography, model-making and prototyping.
- **Media** are the **manual and digital applications** used to visually communicate ideas and information. Manual examples include pencil, ink, markers, paint and analogue film; digital examples include software, apps and online platforms.
- **Materials** are the **surfaces or substrates** on or from which designs are made. Examples include paper, card, textile, metal, plastic, glass, and a touchscreen or digital interface.

A quick way to hold them apart: the **method** is the *process* (a doing word — printing, drawing, photographing); the **media** is *what is applied* to communicate (the tool or application — ink, marker, vector software); the **material** is the *surface* the design lives on (paper, card, touchscreen). **Methods** and **media** are each either **manual or digital**, and naming which is part of a correct answer. A **material** is not sorted that way: it is a physical surface or substrate (paper, card, textile, metal, plastic, glass) or a touchscreen / digital interface.

A RESOLVED SOLUTION · ready to evaluate



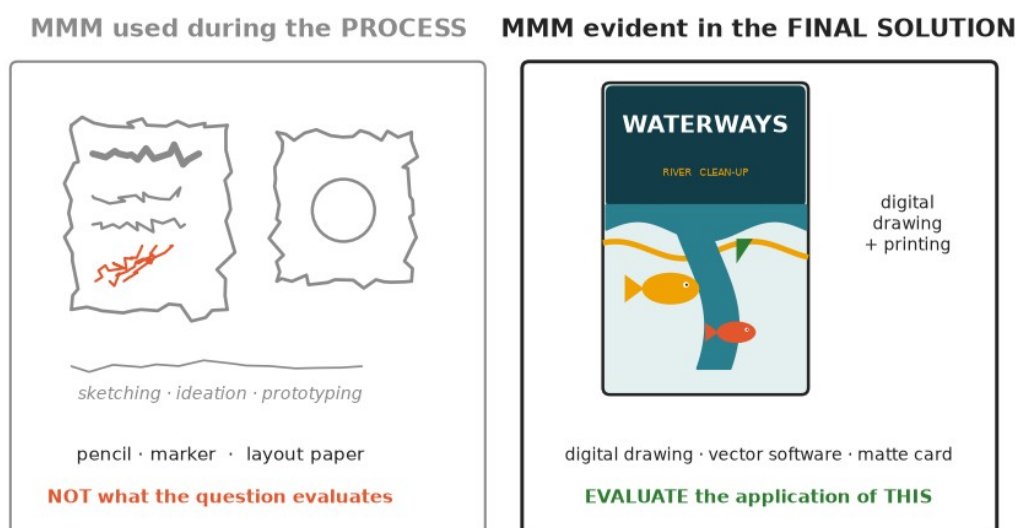
The original poster above — the *WATERWAYS City River Clean-Up* poster — is a resolved solution. Its **method** is **digital drawing** (the illustration was drawn in software) together with **digital printing** — both digital processes; its **media** is vector-based software, which produces the flat, hard-edged colour; and its **material** is the matte, uncoated recycled card it is printed on. Notice that naming is only the first step — the question asks you to **evaluate the application** of each.

**The evaluative move.** A strong evaluation of methods, media and materials does four things:

1. **Identify** the method(s), media and material(s) that are **evident in the final, resolved solution** — read only what you can see in the finished design.
2. **Categorise** each correctly (method / media / material — and, for the method and the media, **manual or digital**) using the Study Design's exact terms.

3. **Evaluate the application** — make a judgement about *how effectively, appropriately or clearly* each was used, and give the reason (a strength, and a limitation where relevant). Naming alone is not evaluation.
4. **Support** the judgement with **specific evidence** drawn from the design solution.

**Evaluate the final solution, not the process.** This is the single most common error in this question. A resolved design is the end point of a long process of sketching, ideation and prototyping, but those earlier activities are **not** what the question asks about. The methods evident in a *final* solution are typically the **documentation and presentation drawings** and the production process (such as printing) that produced the resolved artefact — not the development drawings used to explore ideas.



On the left are the methods, media and materials of the **process** (rough manual sketching on layout paper); on the right are the methods, media and materials **evident in the final solution** (digital drawing, vector software, matte card). A Section A question evaluates only the right-hand side.

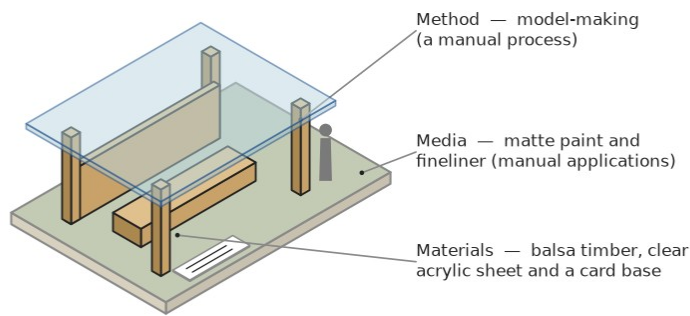
**Evaluate the application — don't just name.** “Digital software was used” earns no evaluation marks. You must say **how** the choice worked: how the software enhanced **precision, clarity, colour quality** or **user engagement**; how the printing reproduced colour cleanly; how the material's surface suited legibility, durability or the message. The worked evaluation table below models the difference between *identifying* a term and *evaluating its application*.

| Category        | Identified in the final solution                               | Evaluation of the application                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Method</b>   | Digital drawing and digital printing — both digital processes. | Effective — the digital drawing gives crisp, scalable linework and printing reproduces the flat colour cleanly and consistently across the run. |
| <b>Media</b>    | Vector-based software (a digital design application).          | Enhances precision and colour control; the flat, hard-edged fills stay sharp and legible at poster scale and from a distance.                   |
| <b>Material</b> | Matte, uncoated recycled card — the printed substrate.         | Appropriate — the non-reflective surface keeps type legible under lighting, and recycled stock reinforces the clean-up campaign's message.      |

**Manual solutions are read exactly the same way.** Not every resolved solution is digital, and telling a **manual** method from a **digital** one is where responses most often come unstuck. The *BREEZEWAY* courtyard shelter below is a resolved solution in the **environments** field, presented as a scale presentation model. Its **method** is **model-making** — a manual process; its **media** are matte paint and a fineliner (manual applications); and its **materials** are balsa timber, clear acrylic sheet and a card base. Evaluate it in the same four moves: identify, categorise, evaluate the

application, support with evidence. Note too that the materials **evident in this communication** are the model’s own — balsa, acrylic and card — not the steel and glass the shelter would be built from once approved.

A RESOLVED SOLUTION · made by MANUAL methods and media



BREEZEWAY courtyard shelter · hand-cut presentation model 1:20 · proposed build: steel frame, glass roof

**Relating the choices to purpose, context and audience.** As with all Section A analysis, the strongest evaluations tie the methods, media and materials back to what the design is **for**, where it is **used** and **who** it addresses — for example, matte recycled card suits an environmental campaign both practically (no glare) and symbolically (it signals the clean-up values).

**Watch-out — evaluate the FINAL solution, not the process.** Do not discuss sketching, ideation or prototyping done earlier in the design process. Evaluate only the methods, media and materials that are visible in the resolved solution you have been given.

**Watch-out — keep the three categories straight, in the Study Design’s terms.** A software application (for example a vector illustration program) is **media**, not a method. Vague labels such as “digital process” or “manual techniques” do not meet the requirement — name the actual method (drawing, printing, photography, collage, model-making, prototyping). Words like “illustration”, “interface design” or “graphic design” are not on that list: write **digital drawing**, **manual screen printing**, **model-making**, and so on.

**Watch-out — distinguish digital from manual.** State whether each method and medium is digital or manual, and let that inform your evaluation (for example, digital vector media gives precise, repeatable colour; manual ink gives an expressive, hand-made quality).

**Watch-out — name, then EVALUATE.** “Digital software was used” is description, not evaluation. Say how the application enhanced precision, clarity, colour quality or engagement, and support it with evidence from the solution.

**Watch-out — read the material that is EVIDENT in the communication.** Identify the surface the resolved design actually uses (paper, card, textile, touchscreen), supported by evidence — not an assumed manufacturing material you cannot see in the solution. The BREEZEWAY model communicates in balsa, acrylic and card, even though the shelter it proposes would be built in steel and glass.

## Worked examples

### Example 1 — scaffolded

Identify one method, one example of media and one material evident in the final WATERWAYS poster, then evaluate the application of the material. (4 marks)

| Working                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Method:</b> digital drawing (with digital printing). <b>Media:</b> vector-based software. <b>Material:</b> matte, uncoated recycled card.</p> <p>Each is correctly categorised: the <i>process</i> is drawing/printing (method), the <i>application</i> is the software (media), the <i>surface</i> is the card (material).</p> <p><b>Evaluating the material:</b> the matte card has been</p> | <p>Identify one of each, all <b>evident in the resolved solution</b> — not sketches or prototypes from the process.</p> <p>Keep the three vocabularies separate and use the Study Design’s exact terms — “drawing”, not “illustration”.</p> <p>Evaluation needs a JUDGEMENT (“applied</p> |



| Working                                                                                                                                                                      | Comment                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| applied effectively. Its non-reflective surface prevents glare, so the reversed white title stays legible under bright light.                                                | effectively”) plus a mechanism (non-reflective → legible).                                            |
| The recycled stock is also appropriate to the poster’s purpose, reinforcing the environmental message of a river clean-up.                                                   | Tie the material back to purpose/context to lift description into evaluation.                         |
| A limitation is that an uncoated stock absorbs ink, so the colours sit a little flatter than they would on a coated card; for a poster read at a distance this costs little. | Even in a short evaluation, one limitation alongside the judgement shows you have weighed the choice. |

### Example 2 — scaffolded

*Evaluate how effectively the media has been applied in the WATERWAYS poster. (4 marks)*

| Working                                                                                                                                                                                          | Comment                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The <b>media</b> is <b>vector-based software</b> (a digital application).                                                                                                                        | Identify the medium and correctly categorise it as media, not a method.                                       |
| It has been applied effectively: the software produces flat, hard-edged fields of colour, so the fish, waves and title have crisp, clean edges.                                                  | Do not stop at “software was used” — state the effect (crisp, flat colour) that the medium produces.          |
| Because vector artwork scales without loss, the flat colours stay sharp and readable at poster scale and from a distance.                                                                        | Explain HOW the digital medium enhances precision/clarity — this is where the “no evaluation” trap is dodged. |
| A limitation is that the flat vector look is less expressive than hand media such as ink or paint; but for a bold, legible public poster this precise, high-contrast application is appropriate. | A complete evaluation gives a limitation and an overall judgement tied to purpose.                            |

### Example 3 — unscaffolded

*A student writes: “The designer sketched ideas in pencil and made a prototype on layout paper.” Explain why this would not gain marks for evaluating the methods, media and materials of the final solution, and give a corrected evaluation of the method. (4 marks)*

The response describes methods and materials used **during the design process** — sketching and prototyping on layout paper — rather than what is evident in the **resolved solution**, so it does not answer the question and would not gain marks. It also merely names activities without evaluating how they were applied. A corrected evaluation identifies a method evident in the **final** poster and judges its application: the method is **digital drawing**, the illustration having been drawn in vector software, and the poster is then reproduced by **digital printing**. This has been applied effectively — the digital drawing gives precise, repeatable flat colour and clean linework, and the printing reproduces those colours consistently across the run, which suits a bold campaign poster printed in quantity.

### Example 4 — unscaffolded

*Evaluate the application of the methods, media and materials used in the resolved WATERWAYS poster. (6 marks)*

The **method** evident in the resolved poster is **digital drawing** combined with **digital printing** — both digital processes. This has been applied effectively: the digital drawing produces crisp, scalable linework for the fish and river motifs, and printing reproduces the flat colour cleanly and consistently, which is appropriate for a poster produced in quantity. The **media** is **vector-based software**, a digital application. It enhances precision and colour control, so the hard-edged shapes and reversed type stay sharp and legible at poster scale and from a distance; a limitation is that it lacks the expressive, hand-made quality of manual media such as ink, though that precision suits the clear, functional purpose here. The **material** is matte, uncoated recycled **card**. This is appropriate on two counts: the non-reflective surface keeps the type legible under bright lighting, and the recycled stock reinforces the clean-up campaign’s environmental message. **Overall**, the methods, media and materials have been applied effectively, because

each digital and material choice supports the poster's purpose of communicating a community river clean-up boldly, clearly and sustainably to a broad public audience.

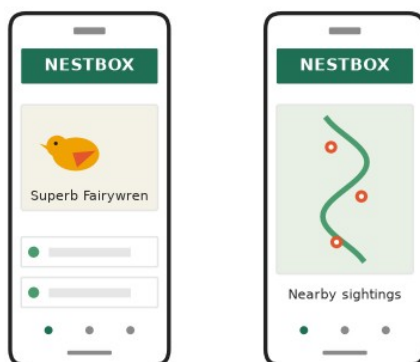
## Practice questions

### Scaffolded

- Q1.** Using the resolved WATERWAYS poster: (a) Name one method evident in the final solution. (1 mark) (b) Name the media used. (1 mark) (c) Name the material. (1 mark)
- Q2.** Using the process-versus-final diagram: (a) State which panel shows the methods, media and materials that a Section A question asks you to evaluate. (1 mark) (b) Explain why the methods, media and materials in the other panel would not gain marks. (2 marks)
- Q3.** Using the WATERWAYS poster: (a) State whether the production of the poster is mainly digital or manual, and give one piece of evidence from the solution. (2 marks) (b) Explain how effectively the **printing** method has been applied, using evidence from the poster. (2 marks)
- Q4.** A student writes: "The method used is a vector illustration app." Identify the error in this statement and correct it, using the Study Design's terms. (2 marks)
- Q5.** Evaluate how effectively the method of **model-making** has been applied in the resolved BREEZEWAY presentation model. (3 marks)
- Q6.** Distinguish between **methods**, **media** and **materials**, giving one example of each from the WATERWAYS poster. (3 marks)

### Unscaffolded

NESTBOX — native-bird spotting app



a resolved interactive experience (touchscreen / digital interface)

Questions 7–12 refer to the NESTBOX native-bird spotting app shown above, unless otherwise stated. It is a resolved interactive experience presented on a smartphone.

- Q7.** Identify one method, one example of media and one material evident in the resolved NESTBOX app. (3 marks)
- Q8.** Evaluate the application of the **media** used in the NESTBOX app. (4 marks)
- Q9.** Evaluate how effectively the **method** has been applied in the NESTBOX interface. (4 marks)
- Q10.** The material of the NESTBOX solution is a touchscreen / digital interface. Evaluate how appropriately this material suits the app's purpose and users. (4 marks)
- Q11.** Evaluate the application of the **methods, media and materials** in the resolved NESTBOX app. (6 marks)
- Q12.** Compare the methods, media and materials evident in the WATERWAYS poster with those evident in the NESTBOX app. (6 marks)

**Q13.** (*Using the BREEZEWAY presentation model.*) A student writes: “The materials are steel and glass, because that is what the shelter will be built from.” Explain why this does not answer a question about the materials evident in the resolved solution, and give a corrected identification and evaluation of the materials. (4 marks)

**Q14.** The Study Design lists drawing, collage, printing, photography, model-making and prototyping as methods. Choose **two** of these that are **not** evident in the three resolved solutions in this subtopic. For each, describe a resolved solution in which the method would be evident, and name the media and the material that would be evident with it. (4 marks)

**Q15.** Using any **one** of the three resolved solutions, evaluate whether the choice of **manual or digital** methods and media was appropriate for the solution’s purpose, referring to evidence. (4 marks)

**Q16.** Evaluate the application of the **methods, media and materials** in the resolved BREEZEWAY presentation model, and make an **overall judgement** about how well these choices communicate the proposed shelter to its client and community audience. (6 marks)

## Answers

**Q1.** (a) Digital drawing (or digital printing). (b) Vector-based software. (c) Matte recycled card. **Q2.** (a) The right-hand “final solution” panel. (b) See solutions — the left panel is the process (sketching/ideation/prototyping), which the question does not evaluate. **Q3.** (a) Digital; evidence = flat, hard-edged vector colour and reversed type. (b) See solutions. **Q4.** Error: software is **media**, not a method; corrected — the method is digital drawing/digital printing, the vector app is the **media**. **Q5.** See solutions (model-making, a manual method — shows form, scale and structure in three dimensions). **Q6.** Method = process (digital drawing/printing); media = application (vector software); material = surface (card). **Q7.** Method = digital drawing; media = digital design/prototyping software; material = touchscreen / digital interface. **Q8–Q16.** See fully-worked solutions.

## Fully-worked solutions

**Q1.** (a) Digital drawing (accept digital printing). (b) Vector-based software. (c) Matte, uncoated recycled card. *(1 mark each — only the first answer to each is marked; all must be evident in the final solution.)*

**Q2.** (a) The right-hand panel — the methods, media and materials **evident in the final solution**. (b) The left panel shows the methods, media and materials used **during the design process** — sketching, ideation and prototyping in pencil and marker on layout paper. The question requires an evaluation of what is present in the **resolved** solution, not what may have occurred during development, so process methods such as these would not gain marks *(2 marks: process vs final distinction made explicit)*.

**Q3.** (a) The production is mainly **digital**: the flat, hard-edged fields of colour and the reversed white type are characteristic of vector artwork produced in digital software, not of hand media. (b) The **digital printing** method has been applied effectively — it reproduces the flat, hard-edged colours cleanly and consistently, so every copy of the poster carries the same crisp, high-contrast image, which suits a public campaign poster printed in quantity *(2 marks: method identified + an explanation of the effect it achieves)*.

**Q4.** The statement mislabels the medium as a method. A “vector illustration app” is a digital **application used to communicate**, so it is **media**, not a method. Corrected: the **method** is **digital drawing**, reproduced by **digital printing**; the vector app is the **media** used to apply it *(2 marks: error identified + corrected with the Study Design’s terms)*.

**Q5.** The method is **model-making** — a manual process, evident in the hand-cut, hand-assembled 1:20 model. It has been applied effectively: building the solution in three dimensions lets the client walk around it and judge the proportion of the roof to the seating, the height of the posts and how the shelter would sit on its site — relationships a flat drawing cannot show at once — and working to an accurate scale makes those judgements reliable. A limitation is that a hand-cut model cannot convey the finished surfaces, colour or weight of the built shelter as convincingly as a rendered drawing. Overall, model-making is an appropriate and well-applied method for presenting a small structure to a client *(3 marks: method named and categorised as manual + evaluation of the application with evidence + a limitation and judgement)*.

**Q6.** A **method** is the process used to produce the design — here, digital drawing and digital printing. The **media** is the application used to communicate — here, vector-based software. The **material** is the surface or substrate the design is made on — here, matte recycled card. Each is a distinct category: the method and the media are each either manual or digital, while the material is the physical surface (or digital interface) the design is made on or from *(3 marks: three terms distinguished with a correct example of each)*.

**Q7.** The **method** is **digital drawing** — the screens, icons and bird illustration have been drawn and laid out in software (a digital process). The **media** is digital design or prototyping software (an app or platform). The **material** is the **touchscreen / digital interface** on which the resolved experience is presented *(3 marks: one correctly categorised term each, all evident in the resolved app)*.

**Q8.** The **media** — digital design software — has been applied effectively in the NESTBOX app. It produces flat, consistent colour and clean iconography, so the green brand bar, the bird illustration and the navigation icons are crisp and instantly readable on a small screen. The software also allows the same visual system (colour, type and icons) to be applied consistently across both the home and map screens, which helps the user recognise that the screens belong to one app. A limitation is that a flat digital style can feel impersonal, but for a functional wildlife app this clarity and

consistency is appropriate (4 marks: medium identified + how it enhances clarity/consistency + evidence + a limitation).

**Q9.** The **method** — **digital drawing** — has been applied effectively. Drawing the icons, the bird illustration and the screen layouts digitally allows the interface to be set out precisely, with the app bar, content card and navigation bar aligned and repeated across both screens, so the layout is consistent and easy to learn. It also lets the designer place the interactive elements (the sighting pins, the navigation icons) exactly where a user expects them, and redraw them at the sizes a small screen needs. A limitation is that a digitally drawn interface can look generic, since the same drawn components are reused screen to screen, so little of the designer's hand shows in the solution. Overall the method is appropriate, because the resolved solution is an interactive experience used on a touchscreen, where consistent, tappable layouts matter more than expressive mark-making (4 marks: method named as a digital process + evaluation of precision/consistency with evidence + a limitation + judgement tied to purpose).

**Q10.** The **touchscreen / digital interface** material is highly appropriate for the app's purpose and users. Because the solution's purpose is to help people identify and log native birds while out in the field, a touchscreen material lets users tap, scroll and interact directly — viewing a bird card, then opening a map of nearby sightings. The interface is also portable and updatable, so sighting data can stay current, which a printed material could not do. The main limitation is that a screen depends on device battery and outdoor visibility, but overall the digital interface suits an on-the-go, interactive birding audience (4 marks: material identified + appropriateness to purpose and users + a limitation).

**Q11.** The **method** evident in the resolved NESTBOX app is **digital drawing** — a digital process — and it has been applied effectively, giving a precisely drawn, consistent interface across the home and map screens. The **media** is digital design/prototyping software, which has been applied to produce flat, consistent colour and clear iconography, so the brand bar, bird illustration and navigation icons read instantly on a small screen. The **material** is the touchscreen / digital interface; this is appropriate because it lets users tap and scroll through bird cards and a live sightings map, suiting an interactive, in-the-field purpose. A limitation is that this wholly digital, screen-based combination depends on a charged device and is harder to read in bright outdoor light — the very conditions a birdwatcher uses it in. **Overall**, the methods, media and materials have been applied effectively: together they deliver a clear, consistent, interactive experience appropriate to a wildlife-spotting audience (6 marks: all three identified and categorised + evaluation of each application + evidence + a limitation + overall judgement).

**Q12.** Both solutions were produced by **digital methods and media** — digital drawing, using digital software — so both achieve flat, precise, consistent colour and clear type. They differ in their **materials**, and this drives the comparison. The WATERWAYS poster's material is a physical **matte recycled card**: it is printed, non-reflective and fixed, which suits a bold public poster seen at a distance and reinforces an environmental message. The NESTBOX app's material is a **touchscreen / digital interface**: it is interactive, portable and updatable, which suits an on-the-go birding experience. So while their methods and media are similarly digital and precise, the poster applies them to a fixed printed surface for one-way communication, whereas the app applies them to an interactive screen for two-way use (6 marks: congruent two-sided comparison — a similarity in method/media and a clear difference in material, tied to purpose).

**Q13.** The student has named the materials the shelter would be **manufactured** from once it is built, not the materials **evident in the communication** they have been given. The resolved solution here is a presentation model, so the materials to identify and evaluate are the model's own: **balsa timber**, a **clear acrylic** sheet and a **card** base. These have been applied appropriately — the balsa is light and easy to cut cleanly, so the posts, bench and roof frame read as accurate structure at 1:20; the clear acrylic stands in for the glazed roof, so the client can see through it to the seating below and understand how the shelter encloses space without hiding its interior; and the rigid card base keeps the model flat and gives the structure a ground plane. A limitation is that these materials only *represent* the steel and glass of the finished shelter, so they cannot communicate its real surface finish, colour or weight (4 marks: the error explained as manufacturing vs communication materials + materials correctly identified + evaluation with evidence + a limitation).

**Q14.** The methods evident in this subtopic are drawing and printing (WATERWAYS), drawing (NESTBOX) and model-making (BREEZEWAY), so the answer is any **two** of **collage**, **photography** and **prototyping**, each placed in a plausible resolved solution with a correctly categorised medium and material. For example: **collage** — a resolved music-festival poster in which torn and cut papers have been arranged and pasted by hand; the **media** are found papers and glue with hand-applied ink (manual applications), and the **material** is the paper the finished poster is printed on.

**Photography** — a resolved product catalogue in which photographed images carry the communication; the **media** is photo-editing software (a digital application), or analogue film if shot manually, and the **material** is the coated paper the catalogue is printed on. **Prototyping** — a resolved high-fidelity prototype of a ticketing kiosk; the **media** is digital prototyping software and the **material** is the touchscreen / digital interface (4 marks: 2 marks per method — a resolved solution in which the method is genuinely evident + media and material correctly categorised).

**Q15.** (Model, using the BREEZEWAY presentation model.) The choice of **manual** methods and media is appropriate for this solution's purpose. The model exists so that a client and a community committee can understand a proposed shelter before it is built, so a hand-cut balsa and acrylic model, finished with matte paint and fineliner labelling, lets a group standing around a table view the structure from any angle and read its proportions at true relative scale — something a rendering on a single screen cannot do as directly. The manual media also suit the stage of the work: paint and ink can be adjusted by hand as soon as feedback is given. A limitation is that manual methods cannot produce the photo-real surfaces, lighting or walk-through views a digital rendering offers, and the model cannot be sent to a stakeholder who is not in the room. Overall, for a face-to-face presentation of form and scale the manual choice is appropriate and well applied (4 marks: manual/digital choice judged against purpose, with evidence and a limitation; accept a NESTBOX- or WATERWAYS-based answer arguing that the digital choice suits an interactive experience or a precisely printed public poster).

**Q16.** (Model, using the BREEZEWAY presentation model.) The **method** is **model-making**, a manual process, and it has been applied effectively: the shelter is hand-built at 1:20, so the client sees the roof, posts and bench in three dimensions and in true proportion to one another and to the scale figure. The **media** are matte paint and a fineliner — manual applications — used sparingly to colour the base and label the model; the flat, unglossy finish keeps attention on the form rather than on decoration, and the hand-lettered label identifies the project and its scale. The **materials** are balsa timber, clear acrylic and card: the balsa cuts cleanly into fine structural members, the acrylic reads convincingly as the glazed roof while letting the eye through to the seating, and the card base gives the model a stable ground. A limitation is that the model's materials only stand in for the steel and glass of the built shelter, so its surfaces cannot show how the finished structure will weather or feel. **Overall judgement:** the choices communicate the proposal very effectively to a client and community audience — a physical, hand-made model is the format non-designers read most easily, and every choice is directed at making the shelter's form, scale and openness understood at a glance (6 marks: all three evaluated with evidence + a limitation + an overall judgement about communication to the audience).