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Design

# 8 Basic design principles to help you make awesome graphics

Create cool designs and stunning graphics in minutes.



Adobe Express  
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Graphic design is a highly sought-after skill. People care about the way things look, and there is a constant need to produce quality designs, whether it's for advertisements, websites, logos, videos, **banners**, **social media**, product design, or web content. You don't need to be a pro designer to make highly shareable content — especially when adding design elements to photos you already have is as easy as a couple taps on your phone.

However, slick tools are only part of the puzzle. You still need to develop an eye for what design decisions improve your work and what detracts from your message. Here are eight basic design principles to keep in mind when working with visuals and creating graphics, plus templates to help you get started with great design.

**Design principle #1: Focus on alignment.**

**Design principle #2: Use hierarchy to help focus your design.**

**Design principle #3: Leverage contrast to accentuate important design elements.**

**Design principle #4: Use repetition to your advantage.**

**Design principle #5: Consider proximity when organizing your graphic elements.**

**Design principle #6: Make sure your designs have balance.**

**Design principle #7: Optimize color to support your design.**

**Design principle #8: Leave negative space.**

**Ready to create standout content?**

## **Design principle #1: Focus on alignment.**

Alignment is one of the most important design principles. It helps ensure a sharp, ordered

appearance for ultimately better designs by ensuring your various elements of design have a pleasing connection with each other. Center, right, or left-aligned text is the most common, but you can also go for asymmetry and align text to other objects in your graphic. If something looks not quite right in your design, check your alignment. Following are examples of designs with interesting alignment. Tap any of the following templates to customize them as you wish.



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In **Adobe Express**, it's easy to align elements in relation to each other or to your background photo thanks to the dotted line that appears when you move blocks of text or shapes. The app will let you know when you've lined up your text or shapes in the middle of your design or with the edges of other elements in your graphic.

## **Design principle #2: Use hierarchy to help focus your design.**

When you have multiple visual elements in a design, you want to make sure you're giving extra visual weight to your most important message. This way, when someone looks at your design, their eyes are drawn to the headings or areas you want them to focus on most. This is called hierarchy and it's more than good design — it's critical to the user experience. It can be accomplished in a variety of ways: using larger or bolder fonts for your typography, placing your most important message physically higher than other pieces of information, or using shapes to frame the central point.

Here are some examples of designs with well-established hierarchy, through a variety of

strategies. Tap any of them to customize them and make them your own.



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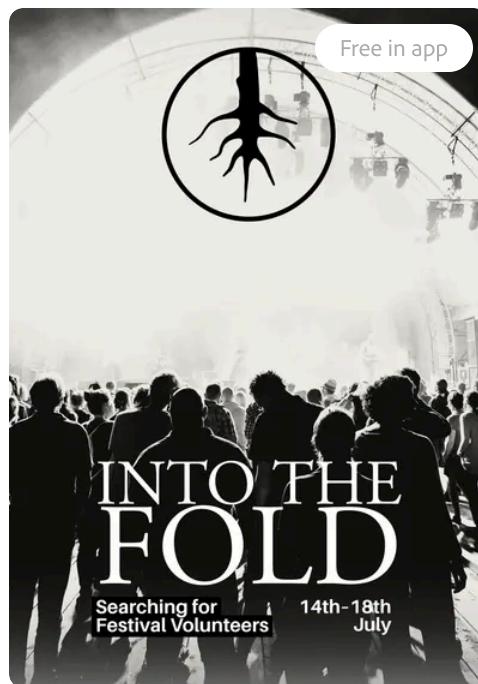
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Utilizing this fundamental principle of design starts with your message and the goals of your design. Figure out what the most important piece of info is first. Then make sure that is the focal point of your design. How do you know if you've accomplished the right visual hierarchy? Try squinting while looking at your design. Is your most important message the most readable? Still unsure? Ask someone who is not familiar with the content to identify which piece of information they read first and second.

## **Design principle #3: Leverage contrast to accentuate important design elements.**

Contrast is an important design principle because it lets you draw out the most important elements of a design and add emphasis. Contrast happens when two design elements are in opposition to each other, like **black and white**, thick and thin, modern and traditional, etc. High contrast can help guide the viewer's eyes to the most important parts of your design first.

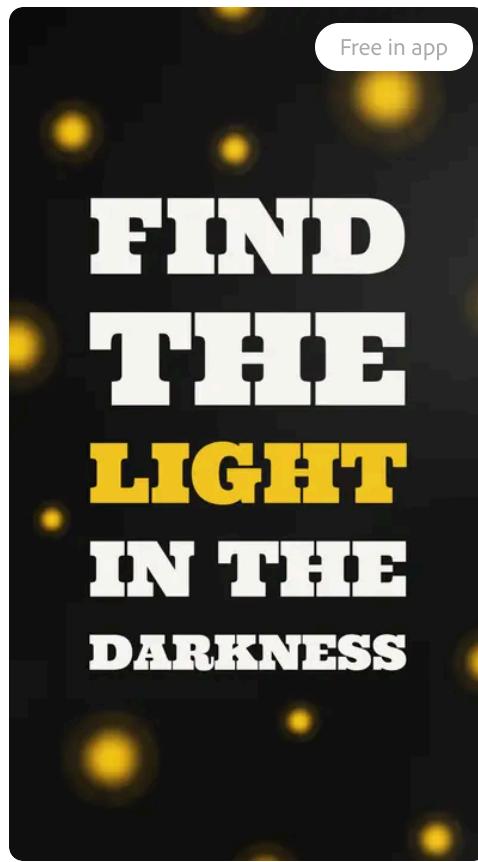
When making decisions, consider using contrasting colors or pairing bold typefaces with delicate fonts to add variety in your design work that strategically emphasizes parts of your design. The following templates are great examples of a good use of contrast. Tap one of them to customize it.



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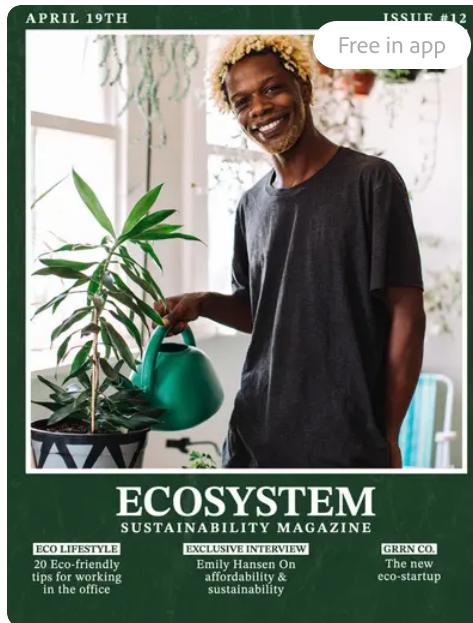
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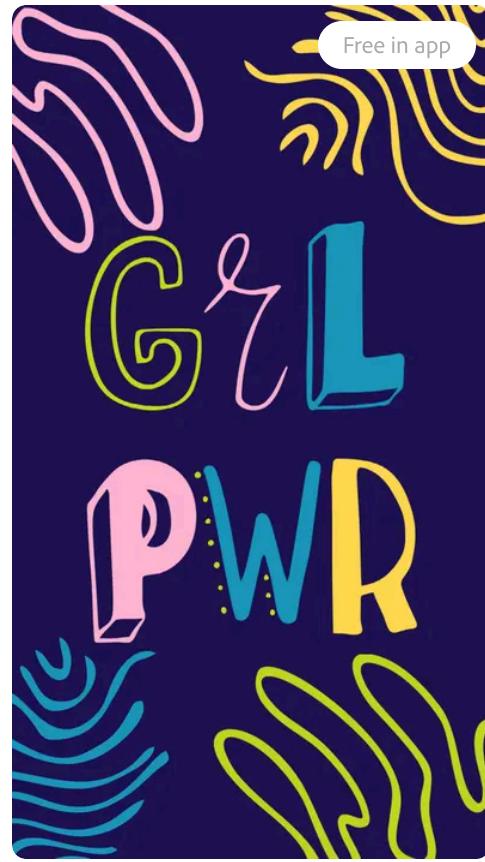
Whether you're using contrasting colors or pairing bold typefaces with delicate fonts, using this principle of design helps to create variety in your graphic that allows you to embolden specific parts of your design.

## **Design principle #4: Use repetition to your advantage.**

Repeating colors, fonts, words, or shapes can help tie your design and overall look together — it also helps people remember your brand or other important information. Employ repetition in your overall content strategy by using consistent colors, fonts, and brand imagery to reinforce your brand's aesthetic. Ready to try it out? Tap one of the following templates to make it your own.

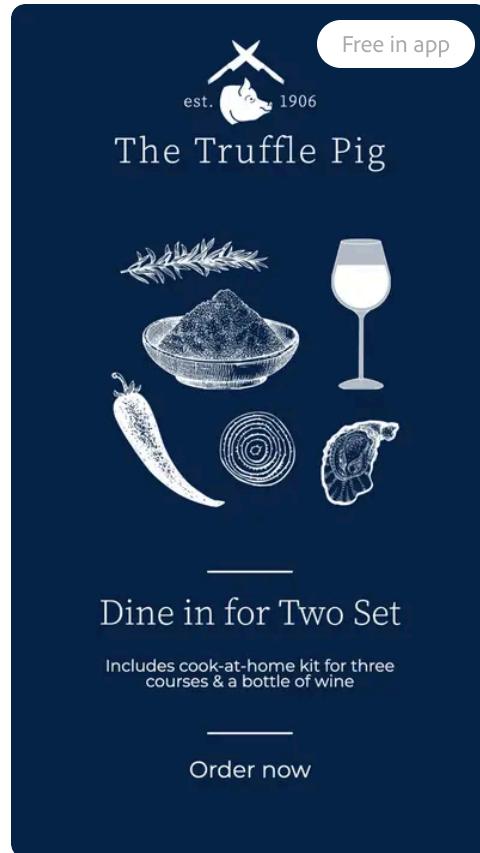


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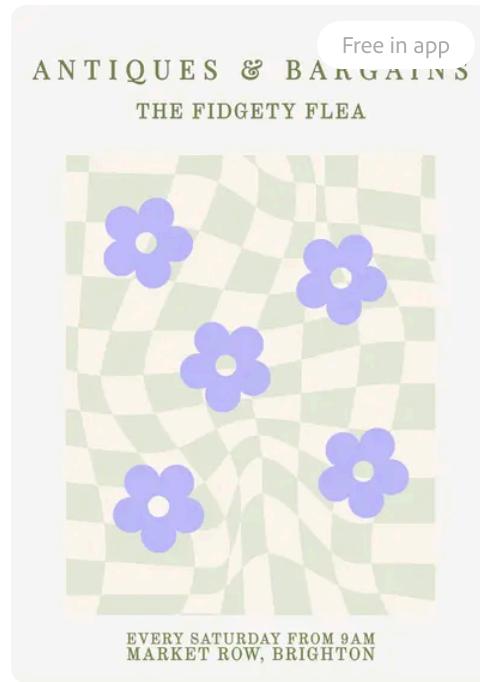
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# **Design principle #5: Consider proximity when organizing your graphic elements.**

Proximity is also helpful in creating organization on a design, since similar or related elements should be grouped together to create a relationship between them. Ideally, you cluster the elements together in a way that helps to declutter the overall design and supports the comprehension of the information. You'll most often see proximity employed in lists, menus, and invitations.



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## Design principle #6: Make sure your designs have balance.

Balance gives a design its form and stability. But it doesn't mean elements need to be the same size, or that you must make symmetrical designs.

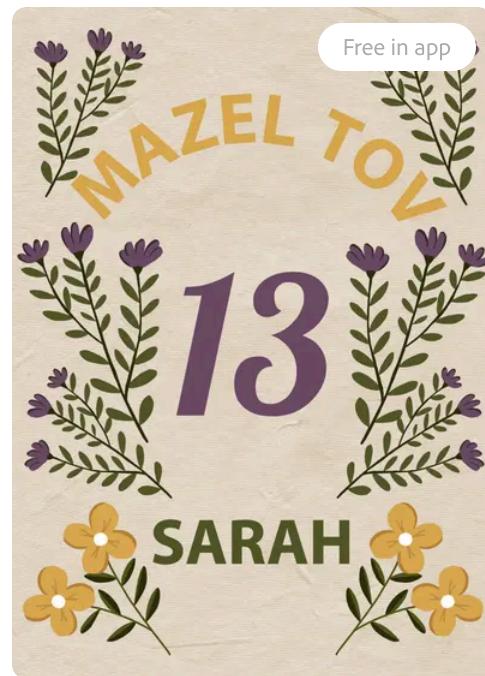
Rather, it's about helping the viewer's eye travel through the content in a way that aids comprehension. Symmetrical balance weights the elements evenly on either side of the design, while asymmetrical balance uses contrast to even out the flow of design (e.g., dark elements are balanced out by light ones).



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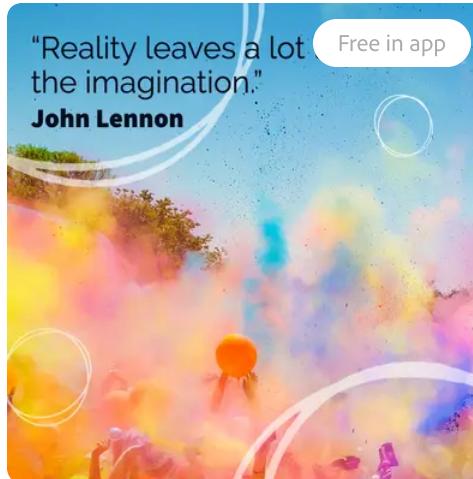
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## Design principle #7: Optimize color to support your design.

Color is a powerful design principle because it helps you communicate on an emotional and subconscious level. Understanding the **basics of color theory** can help you use color to your advantage. For instance, blue tends to make people feel calm or trusting, while red can help rile up emotions and get people to take action. It's why stop signs — and often, buy buttons in web designs — tend to be red. Check out **101 winning color combinations**.



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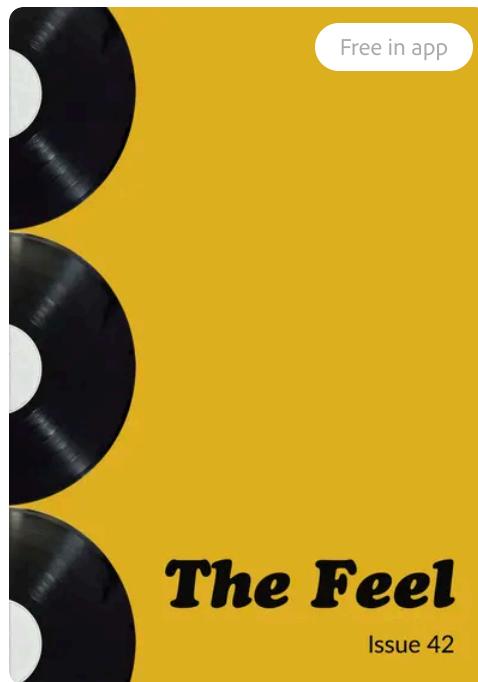
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You can also make sure you're **using color effectively** by sticking to your brand colors. Pick three shades and define how you use them to ensure consistency in your content.

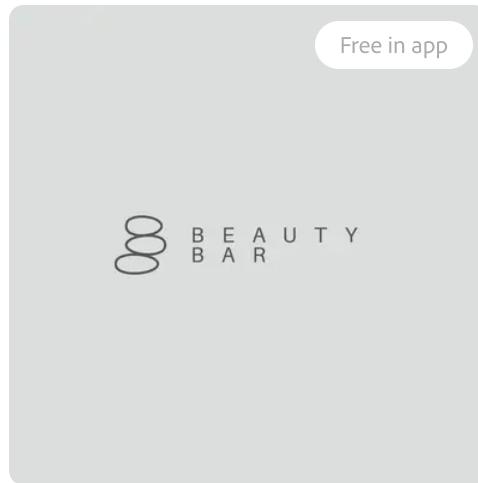
# Design principle #8: Leave negative space.

The parts of your design you choose to leave blank are just as important as the ones you're filling with colors, text, and images. Negative space, otherwise known as white space, creates shapes and can help highlight the most important pieces of information in your design. Never underestimate the power of simplicity.

Now that you're armed with the critical basic principles of design, apply them to all your visual design projects. Soon, it'll become second nature.



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Just as developing an ear for good storytelling comes down to recognizing what resonates in other people's work, developing an eye for visuals

starts with identifying these basic design principles. What makes you engage with a piece of content or out in the world? What elements pique your visual interest and what missteps turn you off? Think about these questions and you'll be on your way to creating **cool designs**.

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