# **Application of Design Principles in the Real World**

## **Applying Design Principles**

Making good art is tricky enough, but it's even harder when your art is supposed to convince people to buy a product. Graphic designers are often responsible for creating functional art that can be used directly (like a website) or indirectly (like an advertisement). Either way, your job is about more than just making pretty art, but this doesn't mean your art can't still be pretty.

An effective design should be aesthetically appealing. Like any artist, you start with the elements of art, which are the basic building blocks like color, line, and shape; however, it's the way you use these elements that makes your composition both appealing and user-friendly. We call the rules for organizing elements the **principles of design**. It's how you make a design that does its job but is still fun to look at.

## **Design in the Real World**

Graphic design is a little different from other forms of art because your composition won't be hanging in a gallery; it will be in a magazine or on a billboard or website. Because of this, there are some extra issues that graphic designers have to consider when applying the principles of design. First, there's the setting. If your design is going to be on a poster, a grey color scheme may not be the best way to catch people's attention. If your design is going to be on a billboard, people will be looking at it from a distance. If it's a website, consider how it will look on a laptop versus a phone screen.

The second key to real-world design is to remember that people are in a hurry. Your design needs to be accessible enough so that people can understand it quickly but exciting enough to keep their attention. So consider the audience. Who is your target demographic, and what do they like to see in a design? How do they communicate, and what catches their attention? Who you're trying to reach will change the way you utilize the principles of design.

## **Principles of Design**

So how do we actually go about creating a design that's appealing but functional? In graphic design, the focus of the principles of design is generally to create **focal points**, or areas that attract your eye first and order the image into a visual hierarchy. What do you want the viewer to see first, second, and third? By organizing the elements of the composition in a pleasing way, you create a natural flow that makes visual information accessible.

In that spirit, one of the key principles of art is **rhythm**, which is a sense of consistency in the way your eye moves across an image. If this was a song, we'd be talking about the beat, but in a visual design, we're looking at a deliberate repetition of shapes, colors, or lines to create a natural pace that defines the energy and visual tempo. Rhythm is often developed through **pattern**, a clear repetition of elements of the composition. For example, look at the Study.com website and consider how the repetition of colors helps create a sense of rhythm.

As you start to establish a visual rhythm, you want to make sure the design still maintains a sense of **balance**, or equilibrium. While your design can be symmetrical or asymmetrical, it should still feel balanced, without too much visual weight on one side.

## **Harmony**

Balance can be achieved through **harmony**, the principle that similarities and uniformity help create a more completed aesthetic. Harmony is increased through subtle repetitions, or accenting similar shapes, lines, and colors.

Harmony is visually pleasing but can also be boring if there's not enough contrast. **Contrast** comes from accenting differences in shapes, colors, and lines. Sometimes this can be a subtle contrast, as in a **gradation** from small to large or light to dark, or it can be an obvious juxtaposition of elements.

Finally, we come back to movement. **Movement** describes the ability of the design to draw the eye along a visual pathway. In graphic design, this largely comes from ensuring that all visual and textual information is organized in a logical and accessible way. How do lines, shapes, and colors provide a sense of organization, delineate space, and create focal points? Since the people using your design probably won't be interested in spending lots of time figuring it out, movement is crucial to the success of a great advertisement, website, poster, or other products graphic designers often work with. This helps make your design not only attractive but also useful, and that's what matters.

## **Lesson Summary**

Graphic designers are responsible for generating compositions that are visually appealing but also functional in their usability or potential to communicate information. As a result, the **principles of design**, or the rules for organizing elements in such a way that makes your composition both appealing and user-friendly, must be applied with a concrete focus. Before completing your design, consider the setting and the audience.

As we also learned, you can find the best ways to combine elements by considering principles like the following:

* **Focal points**, which are areas that attract your eye first and order the image into a visual hierarchy.
* **Rhythm**, which is a sense of consistency in the way your eye moves across an image.
* **Pattern**, which is a clear repetition of elements of the composition.
* **Balance**, or equilibrium.
* **Harmony**, which is the principle that similarities and uniformity help create a more completed aesthetic.
* **Contrast**, which comes from accenting differences in shapes, colors, and lines.
* **Gradation**, which is a subtle change from small to large or light to dark.
* **Movement**, which describes the ability of the design to draw the eye along a visual pathway.