# **Basic Graphic Design Elements Overview**

Color, shape and line. Texture and space. These things are used in advertisements and branding that's all around us. In this lesson, learn about some basic important elements of graphic design.

## **What Is Graphic Design?**

**Graphic design**, sometimes also called **visual communication** or **communication design**, is the art of combining words and pictures to convey ideas and experiences. Graphic design is an essential component of things like advertising, print media, and digital platforms. It's also used for branding and creating images like those logos that identify your favorite shoes or preferred brand of cereal. **Graphic design** even helps you find your way on the highway. It's used to maximize the effectiveness of all those exit and attraction signs.

**Graphic design** is used for many purposes and in many different industries. **Graphic designers**, people who work in graphic design, are skilled professionals who learn how to use a wide variety of elements, combining them to create effective designs.

**Line & Color**

It's all about communicating a message or idea by using them in combination.

**Line**, in its most basic sense, is any two connected points. A line may be long or short, thick or thin. It can also be broken into dots or dashes. Lines can be straight but also curved and looping, circling and surrounding important elements of a design. In design, lines are often used to divide important areas and surround elements like text.

**Color** creates a sense of emotion or mood. Combining bright colors or pastels results in completely different feelings in graphic design. Graphic designers will often use contrasting colors to highlight elements, and it's helpful for them to know a thing or two about **color theory**, the understanding of how colors relate to one another and how we see them.

**Color wheel**, which shows the colors in relation to each other. For example, complementary colors (those opposite each other on the color wheel) create a very different effect than using pops of neon pink or green against black.

## **Shape, Texture, & Value**

**Shape** includes geometric figures like squares, circles, and triangles. It also includes **abstract** shapes that don't look like anything in the real world as well as more organic or natural-looking shapes. For the latter, think of things like leaves or flowers. Shapes often use elements like line and color to define their boundaries.

**Texture** is interesting surfaces, perhaps with patterns or designs on them or surfaces that resemble substances like brick or a textile. In this case, texture doesn't convey something you touch, but rather an appearance of a surface. You'll often see texture incorporated into graphic design through interesting backgrounds.

**Value** means the lightness and darkness of a given part of a design. Think of how much contrast can be created with areas of white images and letters placed against a dark black background. Effective use of contrasting values can heighten a design's impact.

## **Space, Size, & Scale**

**Space** is the idea of where elements are placed on a page or screen.

**Negative space**, areas that don't have words or images in them. Think of negative spaces as those areas that surround and connect design elements. Effective use of negative space can really pull a design together.

**Size** is a specific number or measurement of an element, say a letter that's one inch tall.

**Scale** is how that letter relates to other text that might be larger or smaller. In other words, scale is how varying-sized elements relate to each other.

Designers use scale to create a **visual hierarchy**, where some ideas are more important than others. The main idea of a design might be in larger text than less important points.

These important elements together help designers create effective graphic designs.

## **Lesson Summary**

**Graphic design**, also called **visual communication** or **communication design**, is the art of using words and pictures to convey ideas. It's done by **graphic designers**, people who work in graphic design. Good graphic design uses several important elements. These include **line**, or any two connected points that might be straight or curved. **Color** creates emotion and engagement. Designers need to know **color theory**, the understanding of how colors relate to one another and how we see them, and how to use the **color wheel**, which shows how colors relate to each other.

Graphic design is full of **shapes**, geometric figures like squares, circles, and triangles. It also includes **abstract** shapes that don't look like anything in the real world. Graphic design uses interesting **textures**, or the appearance of a surface, sometimes as background. Contrasting **values**, or degrees of dark and light, can make for effective graphic design.

Another important element is **space**, the idea of where elements are placed on a page or screen, and the concept of **negative space**, areas that don't have words or images in them. **Scale** is how large and small elements relate to each other and **size** is the specific number or measurement of an element. Designers use scale to create **visual hierarchy**, which shows how some ideas are more important than others. All of these elements are considered in good graphic design.