

# Introduction To **GRAPHIC DESIGN**

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# Introduction

Graphic design can be defined as the art and profession of selecting and arranging visual elements, such as types, images, symbols, and colours, to convey a message to a recipient. Sometimes graphic design is called visual communications, a term that emphasizes its function of giving form, e.g. the design of a book, advertisement, logo or web site, to information.

An important part of the designer's task is to combine visual and verbal elements into an ordered and effective whole. Graphic design is therefore a collaborative discipline – writers produce words and photographers and illustrators create images that the designer incorporates into a complete visual communication.

## **Common uses of graphic design include:**

identity (logos and branding)

web sites

publications (magazines, newspapers, and books)

advertisements and product packaging

A product package, for example, might include a logo or other artwork, organized text and pure design elements such as shapes and colour which unify the piece. Composition is one of the most important features of graphic design, especially when using pre-existing materials or diverse elements.

## **History of graphic design**

The evolution of graphic design as a practice and profession has been closely bound to technological innovations, societal needs and the visual imagination of its practitioners. Graphic design has been practiced in various forms throughout history.

Strong examples of graphic design date back to manuscripts in ancient China, Egypt and Greece. As printing and book production developed in the 15th century, advances in graphic design developed alongside it over subsequent centuries, with compositors or typesetters often designing pages in addition to setting the type.

In the late 19th century graphic design emerged as a distinct profession in the West, in part because of the job specialization process that occurred there, and in part because of the new technologies and commercial possibilities brought about by the Industrial Revolution. New production methods led to the separation of the design of a communication medium (e.g. a poster) from its actual production. Increasingly, over the course of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, advertising agencies, book publishers and magazines hired art directors who organized all visual elements of the communication and brought them into a harmonious whole, creating an expression appropriate to the content. In 1922 typographer William A. Dwiggins coined the term ‘graphic design’ to identify this emerging field.

Throughout the 20th century the technology available to designers continued to advance rapidly as did the artistic and commercial possibilities for design. The profession expanded enormously and graphic designers created, among other things, magazine pages, book jackets, posters, compact-disc covers, postage stamps, packaging, trademarks, signs,

advertisements and web sites. By the turn of the 21st century graphic design had become a global profession, as advanced technology and industry spread throughout the world.



In the 21st century graphic design is ubiquitous. It is a major component of our complex print and electronic information systems. It permeates contemporary society, delivering information, product identification, entertainment and persuasive messages. The relentless advance of technology has changed dramatically the way graphic designs are created and distributed to a mass audience. However, the fundamental role of the graphic designer — giving expressive form and clarity of content to communicative messages — remains the same.

### **Applications**

From road signs to technical schematics, from interoffice memorandums to reference manuals, graphic design enhances the transfer of knowledge. Readability is enhanced by improving the visual presentation of text. Design can also aid in selling a product or idea through effective visual communication. It is applied to products and elements of company identity like logos, colours, packaging and text. Together these are defined as branding. Branding has become increasingly important in the range of services

offered by many graphic designers, alongside corporate identity. Graphic designers will often form part of a team working on corporate identity and branding projects. Other members of that team can include marketing professionals, communications consultants and commercial writers.



Graphic design is applied in the entertainment industry in decoration, scenery, and visual story telling. Other examples of design for entertainment purposes include novels, comic books, DVD covers and opening credits and closing credits in film. This could also include artwork used for T-shirts and other items screen-printed for sale.

From scientific journals to news reporting, the presentation of opinion and facts is often improved with graphics and thoughtful compositions of visual information – known as information design. Newspapers, magazines, blogs, television and film documentaries may use graphic design to inform and entertain. With the advent of the web, information

designers with experience in interactive tools such as Adobe Flash are increasingly being used to illustrate the background to news stories.

## Skills

A graphic design project may involve the stylization and presentation of existing text and either pre-existing imagery or images developed by the graphic designer. For example, a newspaper story begins with the journalists and photojournalists, and then it becomes the graphic designer's job to organize the page into a reasonable layout and determine if any other graphic elements should be required. Contemporary design practice has been extended to the modern computer, for example in the use of WYSIWYG user interfaces, often referred to as interactive design, or multimedia design.

## Typography

Typography is the art, craft and techniques of type design, modifying type glyphs and arranging type. Type glyphs (characters) are created and modified using a variety of illustration techniques. The arrangement of type is the selection of typefaces, point size, line length, leading (line spacing) and letter spacing. Typography is performed by typesetters, compositors, typographers, graphic artists and art directors. Until the Digital Age, typography was a specialized occupation.



## Page layout

The page layout aspect of graphic design deals with the arrangement of elements (content) on a page, such as image placement and text layout and style. Beginning from early illuminated pages in hand-copied books of the Middle Ages and proceeding down to intricate modern magazine and catalogue layouts, structured page design has long been a consideration in printed material. With print media, elements usually consist of type (text), images (pictures), and occasionally place-holder graphics for elements that are not printed with ink such as die/laser cutting, foil stamping or blind embossing.

## Interface design



Since the advent of the World Wide Web and computer software development, many graphic designers have become involved in interface design. This has included web design and software design, when end user interactivity is a design consideration of the layout or interface. Combining visual communication skills with the interactive communication skills of user interaction and online branding, graphic designers often work with software developers and web developers to create both the look and feel of a web site or software application and enhance the interactive experience of the user or web site visitor. An important aspect of interface design is icon design, the process of designing a

graphic symbol that represents a program, a function, data or a collection of data on a computer system.

## **TERMINOLOGY**

visual communication - communication through visual aid, described as the conveyance of ideas and information in forms that can be read or looked upon.

composition - the way that something is formed from separate parts or people

art director - someone who is in charge of the overall visual appearance and how it communicates visually, stimulates moods, contrasts features, and psychologically appeals to a target audience. He/she makes decisions about visual elements used, what artistic style to use and when to use motion.

readability - the ease in which text can be read and understood. There are various factors to measure readability, such as "speed of perception," "perceptibility at a distance," "perceptibility in peripheral vision," "visibility» etc.

screen-printing - a method of printing in which ink is forced through a cloth net onto paper

(page) layout - the way in which the words and pictures on a page are arranged

glyph - an element of writing; an individual mark on a written medium that contributes to the meaning of what is written. For example, in most languages written in any variety of the Latin alphabet, the dot on a lower-case "i" is not a glyph because it does not convey any distinction, and an "I" in which the dot has been accidentally omitted is still likely to be read as an "i". In Turkish however, it is a glyph,



because that language has two distinct versions of the letter "i", with and without a dot. In general, diacritic is a glyph.

blind embossing - an embossed image that is not stamped over a printed image, not foil stamped, and the resulting raised image is the same colour as the paper

foil stamping - the application of pigment or metallic foil, often gold or silver to paper where a heated die is stamped onto the foil, making it adhere to the surface leaving the design of the die on the paper.

die cutting - a manufacturing process used to generate large numbers of the same shape from a material such as wood, plastic, metal, or fabric

interface - the space where interaction between humans and machines occurs. The goal of interaction between a human and a machine at the user interface is effective operation and control of the machine and feedback from the machine, which helps the operator in making operational decisions. Examples of this broad concept of user interfaces include the interactive aspects of computer operating systems, hand tools etc.

## Design Elements and Principles (1)

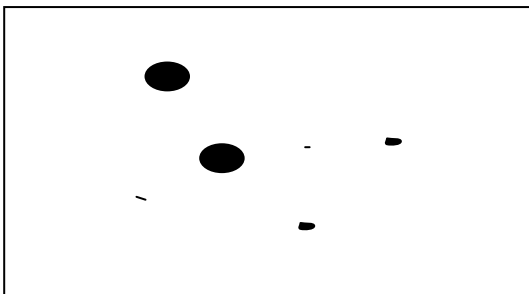
- Design elements and principles define the construction and make-up of visual communications.
- Knowledge of design elements and principles helps us to analyse visual communication pieces using a common language.
- Design elements are the things that are used to create pieces of visual communication while design principles are the things that we do with the design elements to communicate the information in a certain way.
- Perhaps the best way to think about these terminologies is to consider design elements as the basic building blocks of a visual communication while principles define the way the building blocks are arranged.

### Design Elements

- Design elements could be considered as the marks we make on the surface or page.

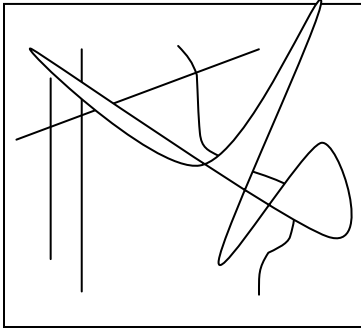
- In this study they are considered to be:

*point, line, shape, form, tone, texture, colour, letterform.*



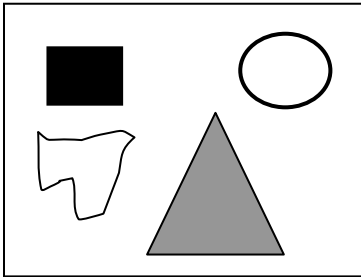
#### Point

This is a mark which may indicate position and location. It can represent a point of measure or be used in a purely decorative way.



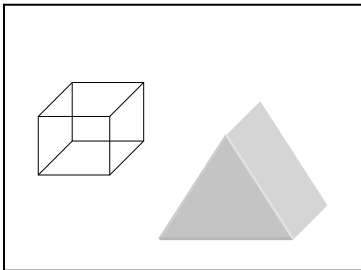
### **Line**

Essentially, line represents a single dimension, length. It can be straight, curved or irregular and combine with other elements. It can create shape, tone, form and texture. The weight and quality of the line may vary depending on its intended use.



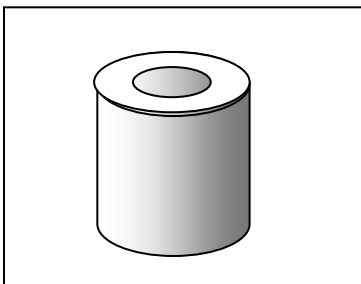
### **Shape**

Shape is the space contained within lines. Shapes can be organic or geometric and can be used in conjunction with other elements to create form. Shape is 2-D.



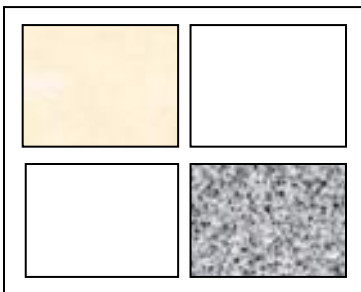
### **Form**

Form may be created by the joining of two or more shapes. It may be enhanced by tone, texture and colour. Form is considered 3-D.



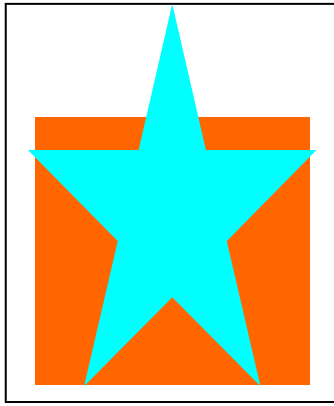
### **Tone**

Tone may be used to describe form in terms of its shadows and highlights, and to create the effect of volume two and three-dimensionally.



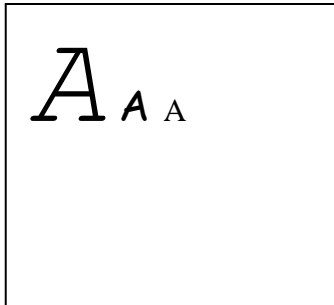
### **Texture**

Texture may be achieved by the combination of elements such as point and line. It may be applied in a realistic or abstract style to create an arbitrary pattern or to simulate the finish of a material.



### **Color**

Color should be considered in conjunction with the other elements. If used well it can add interest and excitement to a piece of visual communication. Color may be used to specify areas, distinguish form, and highlight compositional aspects such as hierarchy.



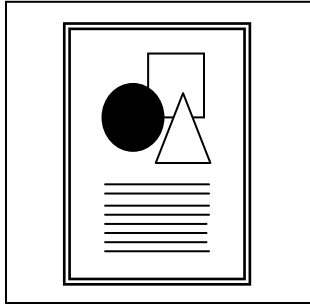
### **Letterform**

These are essentially abstract physical representations of the spoken word. The English language uses 26 characters and 10 numerals for communication. Letterform can be manipulated to have an impact on the quality of the visual message.

## **Design Principles**

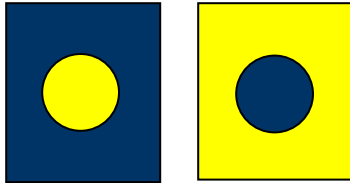
- Just like the Design Elements, the Design Principles are an important part of the vocabulary of visual communication.
- Design Principles are simply ways of arranging or organising design elements.
- In this course they are considered to be:

*Composition, figure, ground, balance, contrast, cropping, hierarchy, scale, proportion and pattern (repetition and alternation).*



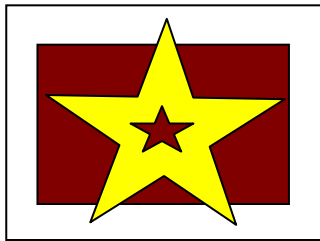
## Composition

Composition refers to the interaction and relationship of the design elements and principles in an open or closed layout. In technical drawing, organisational conventions of composition must be adhered to.



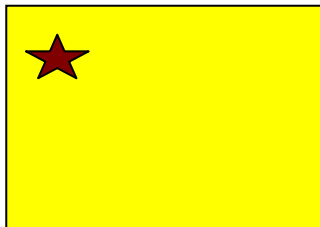
## Figure/Ground

Are terms that are used in conjunction to describe how elements are placed on the page.



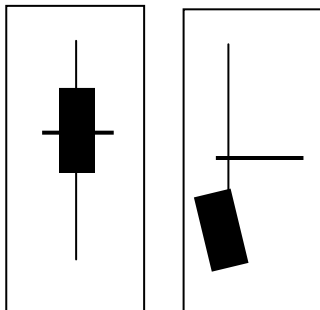
## Figure

This usually refers to images which become more visually dominant than the ground on which they are placed within a composition. It may also mean 'positive space'.



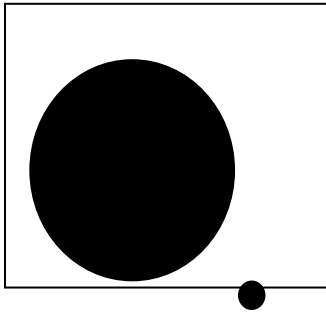
## Ground

The ground is the 'background' or 'negative space', which is clearly defined and at times may be dominant within the composition.



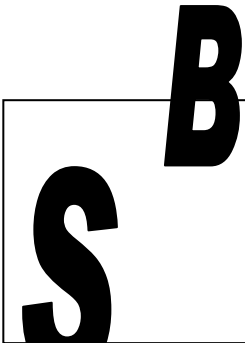
## Balance

This may be 'symmetrical' where elements are mirrored on opposite sides of a visual axis to create a stable and formal composition, or 'asymmetrical' where balanced elements, not mirrored on opposite sides of a visual axis, create a dynamic informal composition.



## Contrast

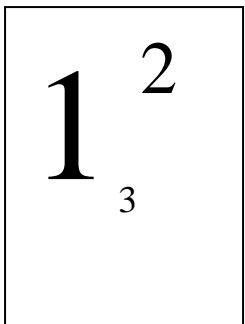
All effective combinations of forms are based on qualitative contrasts. Contrast should always be thought of in terms of creating tension between opposites: large-small, light-dark, soft-hard, etc.



## Cropping

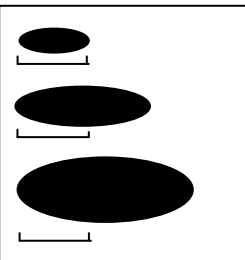
An image can be modified by selecting an area of interest to; emphasise, create dominance, or simply to clarify information.

Cropping an image can further imply an extension beyond the picture plane.



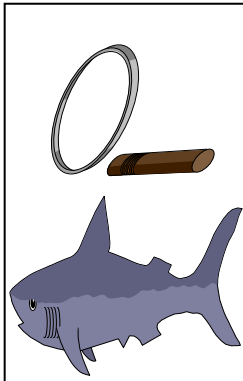
## Hierarchy

Visual information can be arranged in order of importance. Factors determining the hierarchy may be the size, colour or placement of the visual components and/or the arrangement of the information. For example, the focal point of a composition draws attention to specific information.



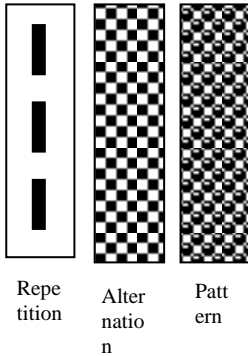
## Scale

Scale generally refers to the size of the figure on the ground. Its relative size and scale will determine the hierarchy of visual components within the presentation.



## Proportion

This is the comparative relationship between the size of components or parts of components within a visual presentation. Depending on the intention of the piece, consideration needs to be given to the accuracy of relative proportions, or the exaggeration of proportions, to achieve the desired effect.



## Pattern

Pattern is the repetition or alternation of one or more components to create a visual unit. Any visual element can be used to create a pattern. Repetition can be very powerful in creating a sense of order in a piece. Alternation can create more complex patterns than those created by repetition alone.

## Design Elements and Principles (2)

### Elements of Design

#### Color

Name the colors (hue.)

Are the colors bright or dull (intensity)?

Are the colors light or dark (value)?

How do the colors make you feel?

Why do the colors look good together?

#### Line

Describe the lines – curved, straight, thick thin, bold fine, horizontal, vertical, dotted, zigzag, etc.

Do the lines lead your eye? Explain

Do the lines show direction or outline an object or divide a space? Explain

Do the lines create a mood? Explain

#### Texture

Describe the texture – smooth, slick, shiny, rough, raised, bumpy, fuzzy, soft, hard, grainy, etc.

Can you feel the texture or is it just visual?

#### Shape/Form

Shapes are 2-dimensional. Are the shapes geometric or realistic or abstract?

If your design has 3-dimensions it has form – describe the form (balls, cylinders, pyramids, boxes.)

## **Space**

Space is the amount of room you have.

Describe the negative space (background)?

Describe the positive space – the design?

## **Principles of Design**

### **Balance**

Are both sides of the design the same (symmetrical)?

If they are not the same, they may be asymmetrical, but do they feel balanced? Why?

Or is the design radial – arranged around a center point like a pizza, daisy or tire?

### **Emphasis**

What is the first thing you see? Why? (Examples are contrasting color, line or shape; larger or smaller shape; contrast from plain background)

### **Rhythm**

What makes your eye move around the design? (repeating, gradually bigger, alternating?)

### **Unity**

Why do parts of the design feel like they belong together? (such as textures have similar feel, lines or shapes repeat, colors are harmonious)

### **Proportion**

How does the design fill the space?

How do parts of the design relate to each other?



## **Elements of Design**

Design has individual elements, which are a part of every item. These include color, texture, line, shape, and form.

**Colors** have hues, intensities, and values. They affect each other. They affect how you think, feel, and act. Hue refers to the name of the color. Value tells the lightness or darkness of a hue. Intensity refers to the brightness or dullness of a hue.

**Line** can be horizontal, vertical, dotted, zigzag, curved, straight, diagonal, thick, thin, bold, or fine. Lines can show direction, lead the eye, outline one object, divide a space, communicate, or create a mood.

**Textures** are the feel or look of every surface. Textures create a mood. Terms include smooth, slick, shiny, rough, raised, bumpy, fuzzy, grainy, soft and hard.

**Shape and form** are created when a line comes around and meets itself. Shapes are geometric (round, square, rectangular) or free irregular shapes. Forms are three-dimensional, or can be seen from all sides (spheres, cylinders, cubes).

**Space** is the amount of room you have. It can be defined as positive or negative. Positive space is made up of the shapes and forms that make up design. Negative space is the background.

## **Principles of Design**

Principles of design are the directions or guidelines for mixing the elements. Principles included are balance, rhythm, emphasis, scale, proportion, and unity or harmony.

**Balance** is the placement of visual weights. It creates a feeling of steadiness and of things looking as if they belong where they are. Balance can be formal (symmetrical) or informal (asymmetrical)

– sides are different, but looks balanced).

**Rhythm** is organized movement. It allows the eyes to move from one part of a design to another. It can be achieved through repeating, graduating, and alternating.

**Emphasis** is making a center of interest in your design. It is the part of design which catches your eye first.

**Scale** refers to the size relationship of two or more objects to each other and the space that they fill.

**Proportion** refers to the relationship of parts within an item and that the parts relate well with each other.

**Unity or harmony** is the feeling that all parts belong together.