# *Design Glossary*

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# Hierarchy

A document's hierarchy is created so that the process by which the author wants their users to understand their document is maintained. In design, there are several different ways for an author to create a visual hierarchy, such as font, color, spacing and many more. When executed properly, the user will understand the multiple messages a document presents and take away an order of importance to them.

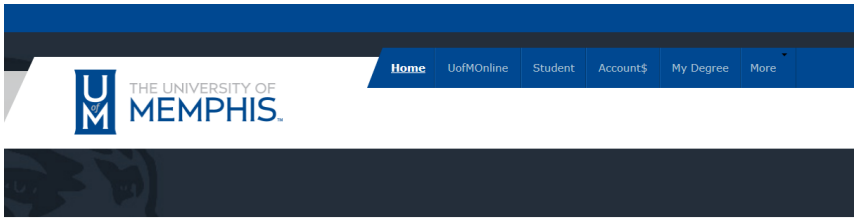
The ways in which an author indicates a hierarchy is often regulated though. "Emphasizing a word or phrase within a body of text usually requires only one signal" (Lupton, 132). If an author were to use too many stylistic cues, the user may not understand the exact order of emphasises they are attempting to convey.

Another way in which hierarchy can be regulated is by the type of indication the author chooses. In order to for it to be as effective as possible, a document should avoid mixing stylistic and structural types, and sometimes choose one over the other specifically. "Designers and editors should organize content structurally rather than stylistically, especially in digital documents" (Lupton, 132).

This is because, in the digital age, hierarchy is intertwined with accessibility. A structurally focused approach allows certain users to read the document as intended, that stylistic choices wouldn't have. "Structural hierarchies allow designers to plan alternate layouts suited to the software, hardware, and physical needs of diverse audiences" (Lupton, 136).

In Billboard art, hierarchy is frequently carried out in order to emphasize the music and de-emphasize the business. Primarily the major goal of music billboards is to advertise an artist's name, their new song, an upcoming album, or a concert performance. Yet, to reach be as effective as possible and inform users, they often must include secondary information such as the publishing company, the venue location or even the platform their releasing music on. Other forms of subordinate information can even include legal requirements, that may be simultaneously necessary and unwanted. By using hierarchy, the designer can make sure that the user mainly ascertains the information about the music that leaves them the most excited and entertained.

As Lupton mentioned, with web design a structural approach to hierarchy often reigns supreme. Here, the University of Memphis places the important navigation bar, which users use to explore their account, at the very top of the page ,making it the first thing they see. Photo from University of Memphis's MyMemphis portal.




Ameer Vann's billboard in Hollywood, California for his EP *Emmanuel*. Photo from his Instagram @ameervann

Here, the designer chose to use a larger font size and incrase in boldness for the artist's name and their newly released EP. The decision establishes a heirarchy of importance on the music itself, then leaves the reader with the secondary information, that they can listn to it now. This heirarchy exists often in music, for simpler and more complex reasons. As this is Ameer's first project since 2017, and the photo on the billboard is a picture of himself, it seems apparent that the emphasis is on him as an artist.

# Repetition

Consistency is key, and repetition is how documents achieve it. Through repetition, or the duplication of design elements, the designer can create a document that is appealing, unified and organized. There are plenty of different aspects of a document that can be repeated, such as colors, spacing, margins and alignment.

Repetition isn't a term one has to learn, since most writers already use it in just type. "When you make headlines all the same size and weight, or add a rule a half-inch from the bottom of each page, or use the same bullet in each list throughout the project, you are creating repetition" (Williams, 68)

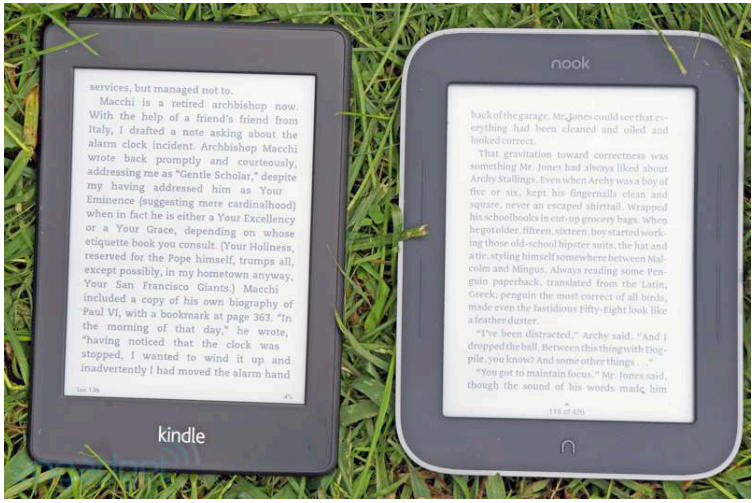
Repetition can act as a tool for appealing the document's user in a couple of ways. One way is by adding in odd items that make the design pop. If you do this with multiple items, they become unified and thus fit the design.

Repetition is also a useful tool to unify a document's design. One example is from cross examining related documents, such as resumés and business cards. If you can repeat keywords or font choices in the two different designs, it can unify the documents into a single group for the user.

A key factor to keep in mind for repetition is to avoid overuse. While it can aid a document, it could also make a design seem extremely mundane, or too confusing. "Just make sure you have enough repetitive elements so the differences are clear, not a jumbled mess." (Williams, 53)

A common example of repetition, that Hawkins uses to outline its importance, is page numbers. "Print documents often use similarity in their design of page numbers. To work efficiently, page numbers need to be similar in these visual variables" (Hawkins, 28). She goes on to list the stylistic cues of shape, size, color and value, as well as the structural cue of position. In books, repetition is used so readers can easily navigate through pages through their expectation of it to be in a certain spot. Yet, this expectation can differ for academic papers and eBooks. In papers, the user expects the designer to also include their last name next to the number, and to place it specifically in the top right of the page. In eBooks, the user often expects a percentage mark instead of an actual number, letting them know how much is left in the book. These marks are still uniformed through repetition, in the same spot and represented as percentiles in the glossary and index.

Here, there are popular eBook readers, which are both displaying page numbers in seperate ways. On the left is the Kindle, which shows page numbers as a unified percentile in the bottom right. On the right is the Nook, which shows the page numbers, centered to the bottom. Each device repeats this choice throughout the books in order for the design to be organized and unified for the user. (Photo from Brian Heater at Engadget)




A billboard on the Sunset Strip, in West Hollywood, California in 1980. Photographed by Robert Landau.

Repetition is used here in the sense of unification, and to be alluring. The white bricks that make up much of the billboard are constantly repeated in most areas. This unification creates a backdrop for the text *Pink Floyd The Wall* to rest on. The bricks also create areas that break out from this repetition cause, when they stop, which causes the art to stand out more.

# Proximity

Proximity is a design principle that is used to highlight relationships between separate sections of text. The greatest addition proximity can bring to a document is a more organized feel for the reader, but it can also help manipulate white space and attract readers. When utilizing proximity, it is critical to recognize the actions of the reader, and what you need to avoid.

When we read documents, in the English language at least, we normally read from left to right, and from top to bottom. Proximity can take advantage of this, by grouping the related texts in an order that the reader would usually read. A designer can do this by placing information in groups and coordinating the groups into that order. Williams calls this organizing "both intellectually and visually. And thus communicates more clearly" (Williams, 17)

It is important to note, that when utilizing proximity, the designer often has to change aspects of the document. Specifically, typeface, space and size are normally in need of adjustment after moving texts closer together. If not, then the document can seem extremely cluttered, and thus in a worse state than before. Another distinction to make regarding proximity is its literal definition, of being closer together. This isn't necessarily what it always means in design, as it technically only means that "elements are intellectually connected, those that have some sort of communication relationship, should be visually connected" (Williams, 20).

White space is often a fun tool, and it comes in handy when utilizing proximity.

Since this sentence is two lines below the last, the reader visually reads it in an intellectually disconnected sense from the previous, yet it is the following sentence.

Williams lists some important mistakes that designers need to avoid when utilizing their proximity in their document's, stating: Don't separate too many elements. Don't leave the same amount of white space between two intellectually connected sets of text. Avoid confusion. Avoid creating connections between text that don't belong. Avoid misusing the extra white space you obtain from using proximity. (Williams, 32)

The document groups the band's name at a horizontal impact with the tours title, right above the second most prominent informartion group on the advertisment. That is, the dates, cities and venue names of where they will be. The third group is the ticket seller and the text *Tickets Available*. The reader reads these three groups in that distinctive order because of the designer's use of proximity.


Tour poster for *The National*, from Ben Kaye at *consequenceofsound.net*


The 1975's billboard for their single *TOOTIMETOOTIMETOOTIME*
Photo from Tim Peacock at UDiscovermusic.com

By playing with spacing, size and typeface, the designer of this billboard was able to create an extremely unqi-ue design. The proximity of the band, song name and release date at the top place a group set of info, that is almost always the primary attraction for an ad such as this, as sec-ondary. The user is actually drawn in by the words *Too Time* repeated over and over again, in close proximity with only changes in font size to create an optical illusion.

# KERNING

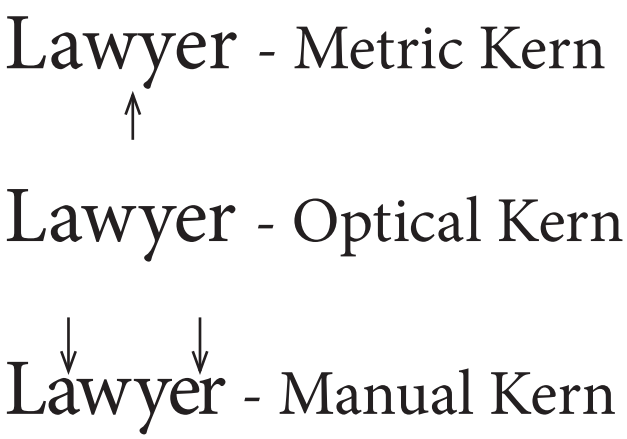
You place the tallest people in the back of the photo, and the shorter people near the front, that way the photo looks more consistent. That's kind of like what Kerning is, except it's a little bit more complicated with its process. Kerning, or the act of taking out whitespace between certain letter pairs, is meant to increase visual fidelity, and it is often done automatically on word processors. The creators of fonts determine the amount of kerning they apply to each tricky combo, so whenever you type, it's already there.

Some of the letters that require Kerning are the ones "whose forms angle outward or frame an open space" (Lupton, 102). As Williams says, the tricky ones are those that are angled, rounded, or vertical, and they specifically mention combos such as HL, HO, OC, OT, AT, We, and To (Williams, 163)

In design programs (like Adobe InDesign) and some word processors, users can opt to manually kern their letters. Yet, it is often the case that the designer will choose between two forms of kerning available to them, optical kerning and metric kerning. In optical kerning, the spacing is executed by the program you are using, instead of by the typeface's creator. This design technique is used often used for headlines by designers. The other form, metric kerning, is that which is enabled by the typeface's creator, and it is often used by designers for the main text (Lupton, 102).

At first, it may seem inconsistent to use two different forms of kerning on one single document, almost against the rules of design. Yet, there is a reason, and it has to do with font size. Designers often use larger fonts for headlines, and the larger the font, the more that the variance between the two kerning types becomes visible.

An important capability for a designer dealing with text is to be able to manually kern, since sometimes messing with InDesign's optical and metric settings isn't enough…




I think it is safe to say no one should trust me to kern their typeface yet, but as you can still see, there is an obvious difference between the three levels of kern. The original level, metric kern, what you would see in a word processor or program like InDesign before adjusting, seems awfully squished. Optical kern adds much needed space, but it is almost too much. My attempt was to space out the areas that I thought needed it (specifcially *w and y*) and to close the gaps on large over-hanging letter combos (*a and w*, as well as *e and r*).

An infamous design from the 1970s in Southern California, The Doors's L.A.Woman billboard demonstrates a level of kerning that appears to be similar to optical kerning. The probelm though, lays in the way the .W pair and WO pair appear on the right side of the picture. If the billboard had a designer who manually kerned it, the extra space between those two spots would've helped improve readability. It's still a damn cool billboard though.


Billboard for The Doors's album *L.A.Woman* on the Sunset Strip in West Hollywood, California. Photo by Robert Landau

# ALIGNMENT

When placing text, a designer cannot haphazardly choose where it goes. Understanding alignment as a key design principle is important for the unity and organization of text and media in a document. There are four different ways of which a designer can align text.

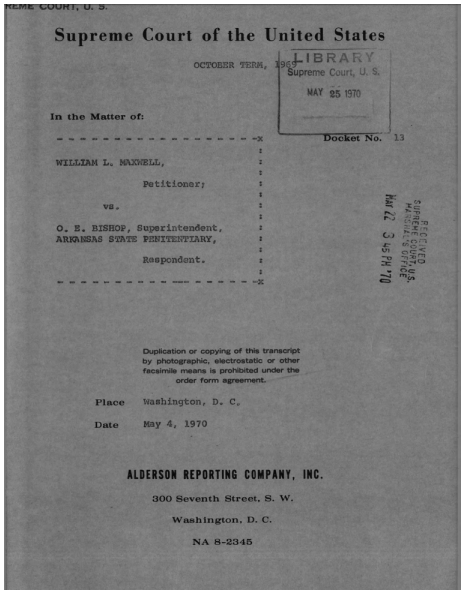
First is a centered alignment, which is an extremely common, yet overly amateur way of placing text. “A centered alignment creates a more formal look, a more sedate look, a more ordinary and oftentimes downright dull look” (Williams, 36). This is due to the fact that the sides of the text have no straight vertical line connecting them, leaving the reader a harder path to follow while reading. Centered alignment is best used in addition to different design choices, such as a wide, landscape layout.

The preferred way to align text in a document is by flushing it, either to the left or to the right. A strong-left flush is what most readers are used to in formal text, but other forms of documents can use a right flush in their design, such as flyers and business cards. When using flushing, a straight vertical line is created that connects the text, not matter how much space is between them.

The fourth way to align text is by justifying it, or making it so that the “left and right edges are both even” (Lupton, 112). It is a much more difficult and unusual way of alignment, but it creates more whitespace and offers a vertical connection similar to flushing.

The key to successfully using alignment in a document is for a designer to limit it to one form, and to combine it with an appropriate font. Font choices can affect alignment due to their innate size, and alignment is often used to give a document a professional feel, leaving a professional typeface the designer’s best option. Using multiple types of alignment on one page can also leave the page looking clunky for readers, as it disrupts their flow of reading.

While transcirpts of modern Supreme Court cases are now introduced via a centered alligned syllabus, that wasn’t always the case. Some oral argument transcripts, like the one seen here, used to have front pages that were alignment nightmares. The title of the court at the top is neither centered nor flushed ot the left, it’s just in the leftish area. While the important info of the case name is flushed to the left, the partys’ labels are oddly indented below. The legal protection info is centered, above the location and time which are not, and then above the transcript’s company’s name which is centered. Just because it’s from the high court, doesn’t make it right, and this page is an alignment nightmare.



Supreme Court of the United States

OCTOBER TERM, 19[illegible]

LIBRARY Supreme Court, U. S. MAY 25 1970

In the Matter of:

Docket No. 13

WILLIAM L. MAXWELL,

Petitioner;

vs.

O. E. BISHOP, Superintendent, ARKANSAS STATE PENITENTIARY,

Respondent.

RECEIVED SUPREME COURT, U.S. MARSHAL'S OFFICE MAY 27 3 45 PM '70

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Place Washington, D. C.

Date May 4, 1970

ALDERSON REPORTING COMPANY, INC.

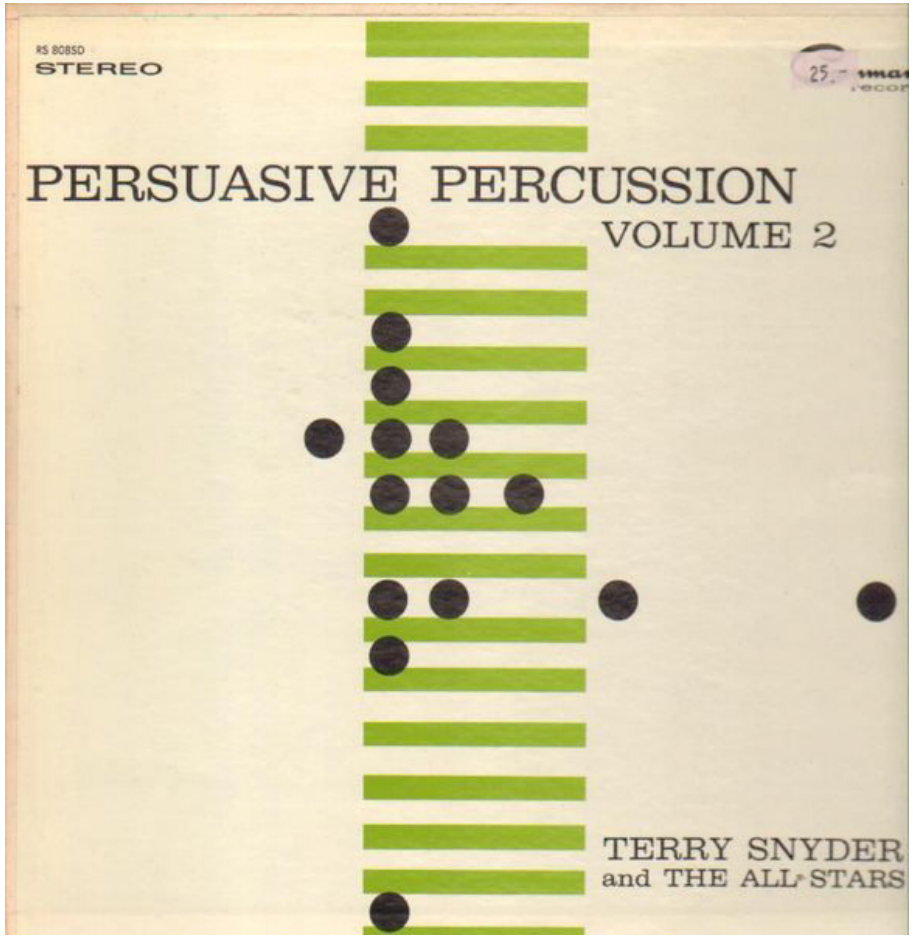
300 Seventh Street, S. W.

Washington, D. C.

NA 8-2345

*William L. Maxwell vs. O.E Bishop, Superintendent, Arkansas State Penitentiary 13 U.S (1970)*

Just as though there is a rhythm to music, there's a rhythm when reading this vinyl sleeve from the late 50s. This time, the text's alignment comes in 3 different spots, and there is also an alignment for the art. The title of the LP is strong flushed to the left, with a right flush underneath it for the volume number. Then in the top left corner, there is another strong left flush for the sound type (Stereo LPs were new and an important marker back then). Lastly, in the bottom right is the band's name with a right flush. The reader's eyes go from the title, to the band, but actually go back to the art before anything else. That's because the art is centered directly in the middle, between each of the two primary texts. It's a simple design of black dots and green bars, but it catches the reader's eye because of its perfectly symmetrical center alignment.




Terry Snyder and the All Stars's Persuasive Percussion Volume 2 LP sleeve from 1959, the artwork was created by Josef Albers.

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