

Principles of Design: Alignment

Dailey 2004

New designers tend to put text and graphics on the page wherever there happens to be space, often without regard to any other items on the page. What this creates is the slightly-messy-kitchen effect- you know, with a cup here, a plate there, a napkin on the floor, a pot in the sink, a spill on the floor. It doesn't take much to clean up the slightly messy kitchen, just as it doesn't take much to clean up a slightly messy design that has weak alignment.

The principle of alignment states that **nothing should be placed on the page arbitrarily. Every item should have a visual connection with something else on the page.** The principle of alignment forces you to be conscious- no longer can you just throw things on the page wherever there happens to be room.

Unity is an important concept in design. To make all the elements on the page appear to be unified, connected, and interrelated, there needs to be some visual tie between the separate elements. Even if the separate elements are not physically close on the page, they can appear connected, related, unified with the other information simply by placement.

The basic purpose of alignment is to **unify and organize** the page. The result is similar to what happens when you pick up all the baby toys that were strewn around the living room floor and put them all into one toy box.

This text is flush left.
Some people call it
quad left, or you
can say it is left
aligned.

This text is flush
right. Some people
call it quad right, or
you can say it is
right aligned.

This text is centered.
If you are going to
center text,
make it
obvious.

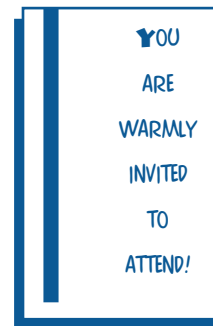
This text is justified. Some people
call it quad left and right, and some
call it blocked- the text lines up on
both sides. Whatever you call it,
don't do it unless your line length is
long enough to avoid awkward
gaps between the words.



Centered. Really rather dull.



If you're going to center text, then at least make it obvious!



Experiment with uncentering the block of centered type.



If you're going to center text, experiment by making it more dramatic in some other way.