

Institutional 401

Module 1 – Introduction to Graphic Design

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Elements of Design

What are the Elements of Design?

The elements of design are the building blocks of what a visual artist or graphic designer uses to make a successful composition.

Graphic designers use the elements of design to create an image that can convey a certain mood, draw the eye in a certain direction, or evoke a number of feelings. While the elements of design form the basics of any image, designers also lean on the principles of design, which are a set of practices of working with the elements of design that make a composition look pleasing to the eye.

There are a variety of graphic design elements to consider when creating any visual work of art, whether it be for interior design, a logo, an advertisement, or web design. The basic elements of design are:






- Line
- Shape & Form
- Size
- Space
- Color
- Value
- Texture

What is Line?

A mark between two points. There are various types of lines, from straight to squiggly to curved and more. Lines can be used for a wide range of purposes: stressing a word or phrase, connecting content to one another, creating patterns and much more. It is a continuous mark made on a surface or the edge created when two shapes meet. May be actual, implied, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, and/or contour.

Line refers to the way that two points in space are connected. Whether they're horizontal lines, diagonal lines, or vertical lines, lines can help direct the eye toward a certain point in your

composition. You can also create texture by incorporating different types of lines such as curved or patterned lines instead of just straight lines.










Straight	Curved	Zigzag	Diagonal	Broken
				

What are Shape and Form?

Shape refers to a two-dimensional element with area on a plane, while form refers to a three-dimensional element with volume in space.

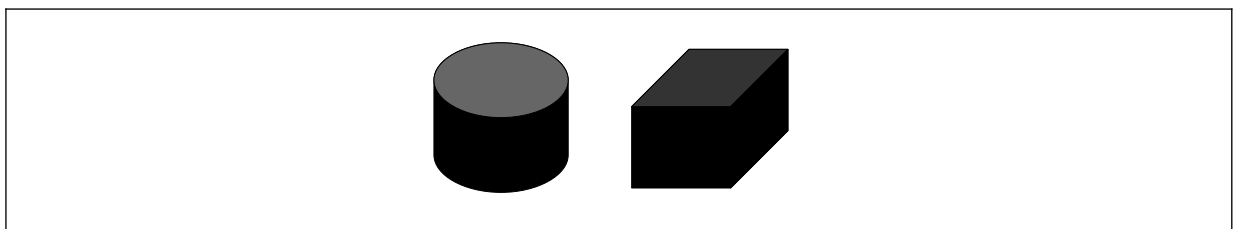
In its most basic form, a shape is a two-dimensional area that is surrounded by an outline. Graphic artists can use other elements including line, color, value, and shadow to give a shape the appearance of a three-dimensional shape. There are three types of shapes: organic shapes which occur naturally in the world, geometric shapes which are angular and mathematically consistent, and abstract shapes that represent things in nature but aren't perfectly representative.

Simply put, Shape = Height + Width.

Geometric	Natural	Abstract
  	  	  

On the other hand, form pertains to the way that a shape or physical configuration occupies space. Instead of creating form through three-dimensional physical shape, designers create the appearance of form on a flat surface by using light, shadow, the appearance of an object's contours, negative space, and the surrounding objects around the subject matter.

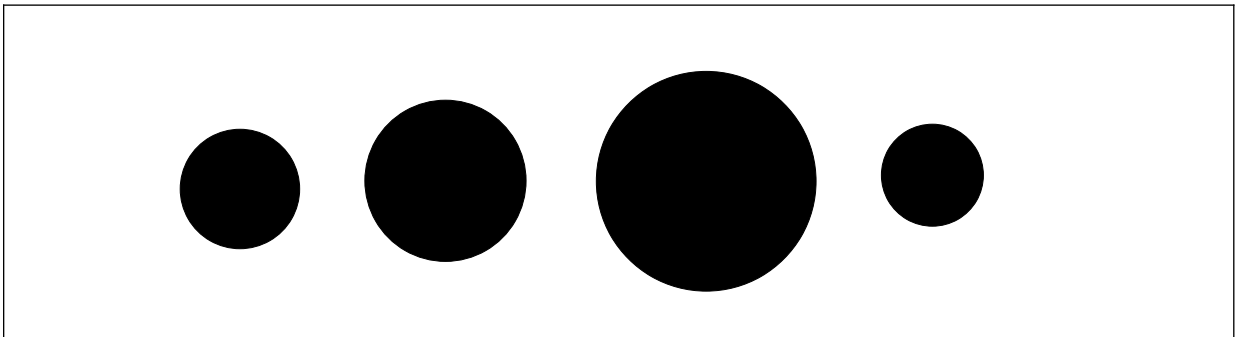
Simply put, Form = Height + Width + Depth.



What is Size?

Size refers to the relationship of the area occupied by one shape to that of another. Used size to define importance, create visual interest in a design (via contrasting sizes), attract attention and more.

Size refers to the physical dimensions and proportions of an element within a composition. It can be expressed in various ways, such as height, width, diameter, length, or area, depending on the context and the specific element being considered. It is a fundamental aspect of visual hierarchy and can be used to create emphasis, hierarchy, balance, and contrast within a design.



What is Space?

Space is the distance or area around or between elements in a work. Space is the area around or between elements in a design. It can be used to separate or group information. Use it effectively to: give the eye a rest; define importance; lead the eye through a design and more.

Making proper use of space can help others view your design as you intended. White space or negative space is the space between or around the focal point of an image. Positive space is the space that your subject matter takes up in your composition. The spacing of your design is important because a layout that's too crowded can overwhelm the viewer's eye.



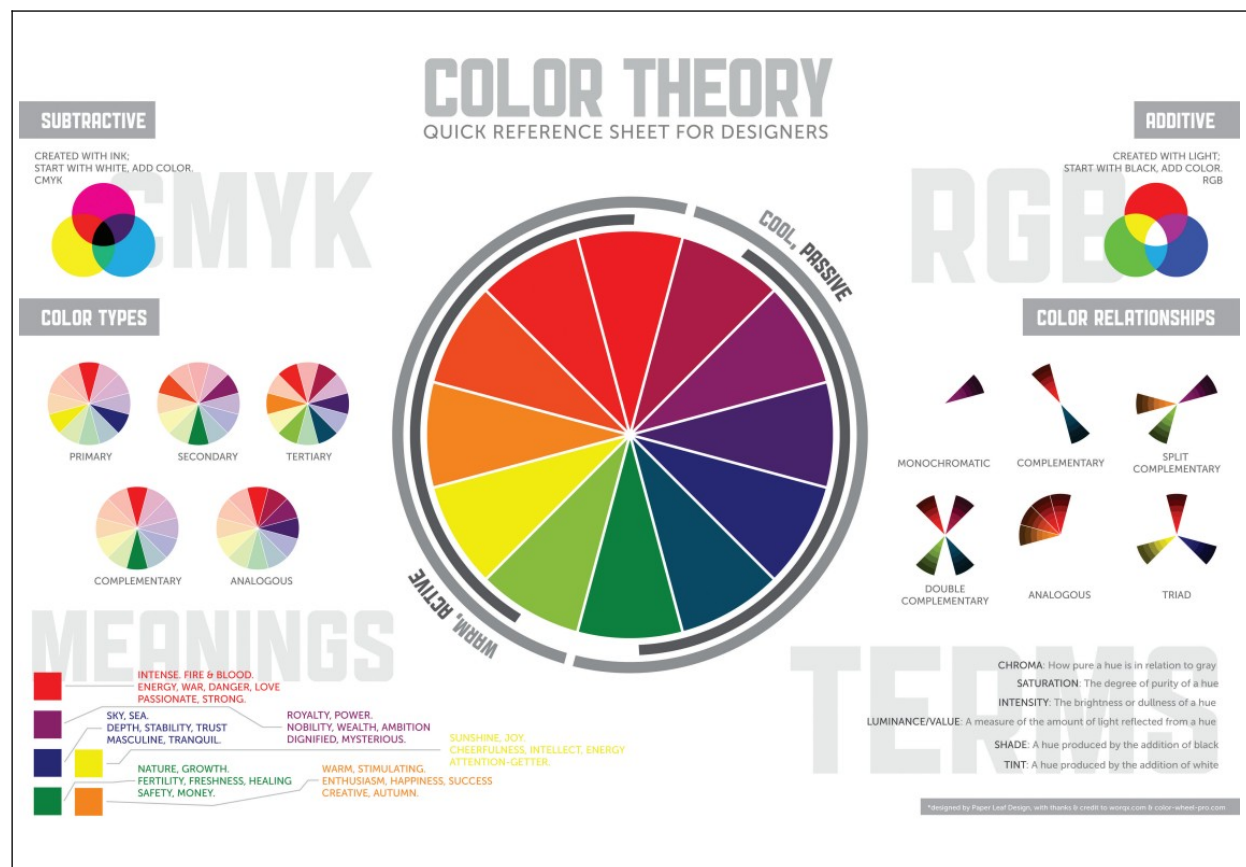
What is Color?

Color is the visible spectrum of radiation reflected from an object. Color is also sometimes referred to as hue.

Color is used to generate emotions, define importance, create visual interest and more.

Color helps establish a mood for your composition. When light waves strike an object and reflect back to the optic nerve in a human's eyes, the sensation they perceive is called color. Artists and designers use color to depict and describe the subject. Color is used by designers to portray mood, light, depth, and point of view. Designers use the color wheel and the tenets of color theory—a set of guidelines for mixing, combining, and manipulating colors—to create color schemes.

Some colors are warm and active (orange, red); some are cool and passive (blue, purple). There are various color types (primary to analogous) and relationships (monochromatic to triad). CMYK (cyan/magenta/yellow/black) is subtractive; RGB (red/green/blue) is additive.



What is Value?

In design, value refers to the lightness or darkness of a color. The values of a color are often visualized in a gradient, which displays a series of variations on one hue, arranged from the lightest

to the darkest. Artists can use the various values of color to create the illusion of mass and volume in their work. It can also be used to create depth and light; to create a pattern; to lead the eye; or to emphasize.

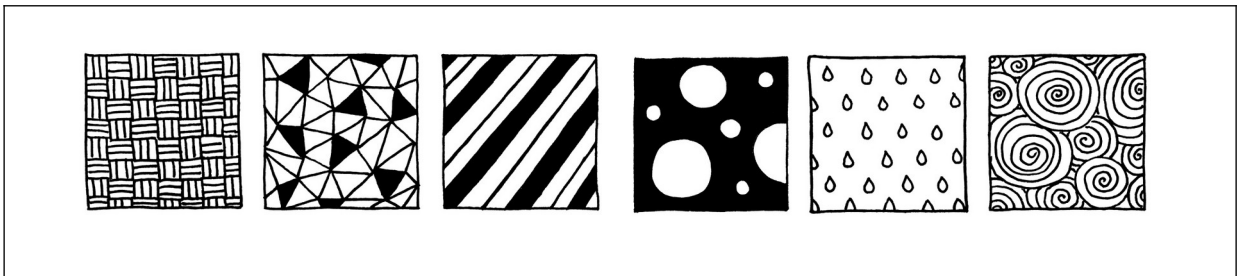


What is Texture?

Texture is the surface quality of a shape, or how it appears to feel: rough, smooth, spiky, soft, hard, and glossy, etc. Texture can be actual or implied. Printed material has actual, textile texture while screen material has implied texture.

Texture relates to the surface of an object; the look or feel of it. Concrete has a rough texture; drywall has a smooth and subtle texture. Using texture in design is a great way to add depth and visual interest.

Texture is one of the elements of design that is used to represent how an object appears or feels. Tactile texture is a physical sense of touch, whether it's rough, smooth, or ribbed. Visual texture, on the other hand, refers to the imagined feel of the illustrated texture, which can create more visual interest and a heightened sensory experience.



Principles of Design

What are the Principles of Design?

The principles of design are a set of primarily visual concepts that designers use to make aesthetically pleasing work that works in an organized and functional way. These principles are often interrelated, complementing and influencing each other. The list varies depending on the speaker and what branch of design is being considered.

The principles of design are the following:

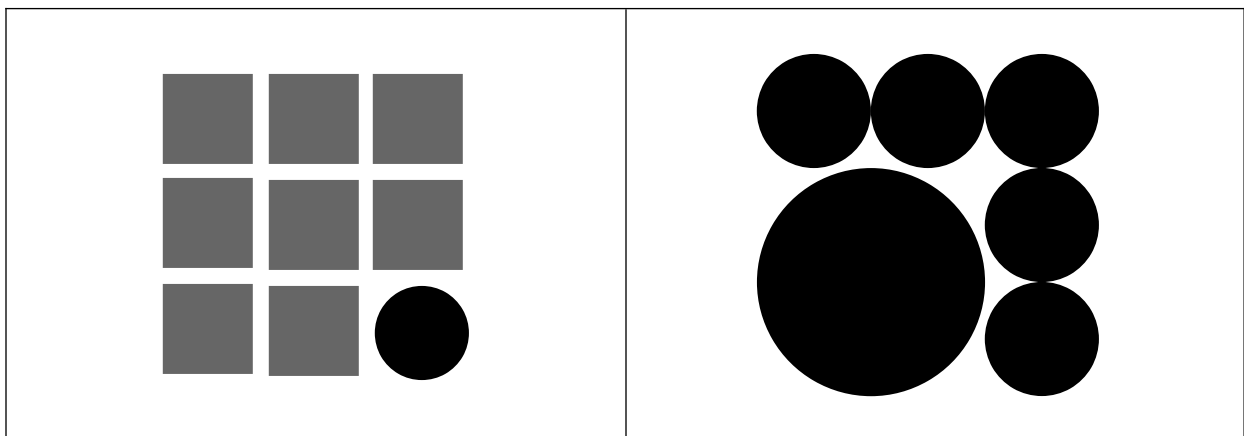
- Emphasis

- Balance
- Contrast
- Repetition
- Movement
- Harmony
- Unity

What is Emphasis?

Emphasis refers to drawing the viewer to a focal point by manipulating an element of a design to make it stand out. Distinguished aspects of a design will naturally attract a viewer's attention. By adding visual weight to an aspect of a design, you are emphasizing it. This can be done in a number of ways including with color, texture, font, or scale. You can also achieve emphasis by manipulating other principles of design, like scale or contrast.

Emphasis is created by visually reinforcing something we want the viewer to pay attention to. This is often used to train the viewer's eyes on the center of interest, or a focal point – the area of interest the viewer's eye naturally, instinctively skips to. Some of the strategies employed to create degrees of importance are contrast of values, use of color, placement, variation, alignment, isolation, convergence, anomaly, proximity, size, and contrast.

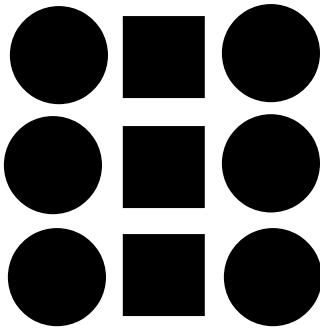
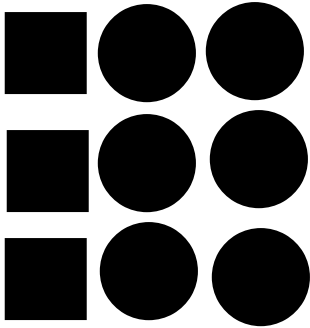


What is Balance?

Balance is the distribution of interest or visual weight in a work. A balanced work will have all the elements arranged such that the work will have a sense of visual equilibrium or stability. Balance can be symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial. Objects, values, colors, textures, shapes, etc. can be used in creating balance in a composition. Two dimensional visual designs have both a horizontal

and vertical axis. Each element in a design adds visual weight and thus, a successful composition requires balance.

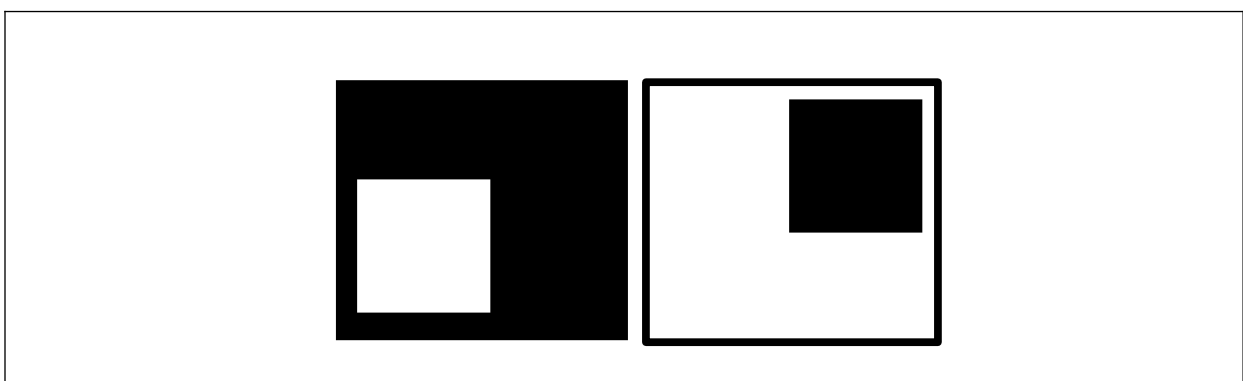
Balance can be achieved both symmetrically and asymmetrically. Symmetrical balance requires that weight be applied equally across axes. Asymmetrical balance uses mismatched placements that have equal visual weight. As an example, a title on a poster flushed left may require an image to appear on the right side to create asymmetrical balance.

Symmetrical Balance	Asymmetrical Balance
	

What is Contrast?

Contrast is the juxtaposition of opposing elements (opposite colors, value light / dark, direction horizontal / vertical). The greater the contrast, the more something will stand out and call attention to itself.

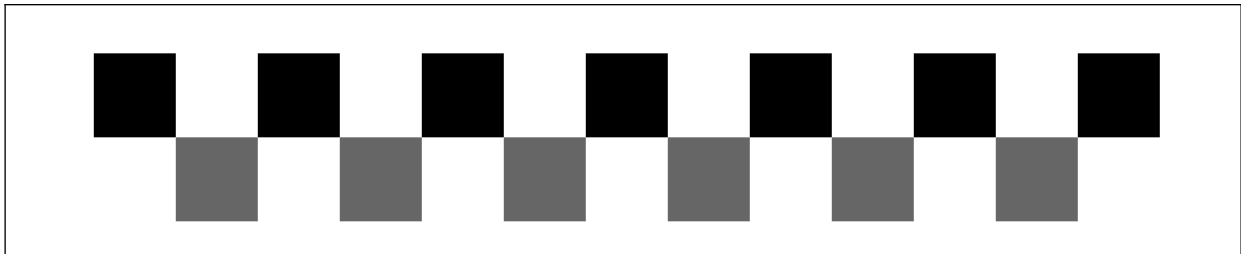
Contrast deals with how elements in a design differ or are opposed to one another. By using contrast, you can make aspects of a design more distinct. It can also be a point of emphasis that communicates difference in a narrative way. In that way, it can importantly figure into visual hierarchy. High contrast often makes things pop. Color is one important consideration here, as proper color contrast enables a clearer and more legible visual experience.



What is Repetition?

Repetition of elements in regular or cyclic fashion creates interest. Repetition strengthens a design by tying together individual elements and bringing a sense of consistency. It can create rhythm (regular, alternating, flowing, random, progressive) and patterns. Variation introduced to repetition increases the level of interest.

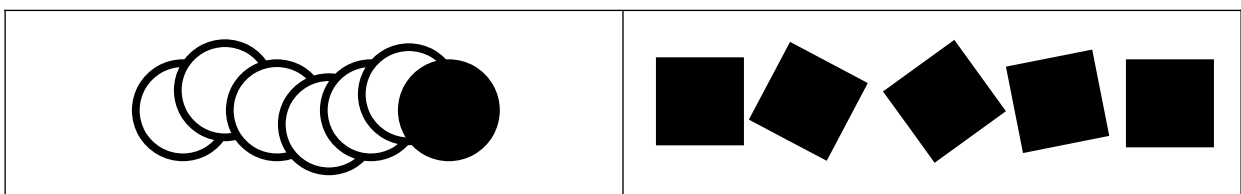
Repetition simply refers to elements of a design being repeated. Some repetition is not highly noticeable because it is simply the repeated use of something like font or color. Some repetition is more apparent because it exists as an intentional pattern, like a checkerboard. Other usage serves to create emphasis. By repeating elements of a design, we can create familiarity and understanding, uniting elements together. Repetition also can be a factor across designs, in the case of logo or color. A motif is established, uniting disparate pieces as connected, whether it be for a body of work or to forge a brand identity.



What is Movement?

Movement is a visual flow through the composition. In some works, movement is implied by the use of static elements to suggest motion and direct a viewer's eye along a path through the work. In a still image, aspects such as lines, diagonals, unbalanced elements, placement, and orientation can play the role of active elements. In others, movement can be real, giving some elements the ability to be moved or move on their own.

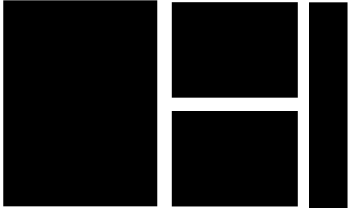

Together with rhythm, movement is concerned with the flow of a composition and how the eye is encouraged to move. How does the composition impact visual attention? Rhythm can be created through repetition, as well as how things are spaced. There are numerous ways elements can exist at a given interval, whether that be regular, random, organic, or more clearly progressive.



What is Harmony?

Harmony brings together a composition with similar, related elements (adjacent colors, similar shapes, etc.). Harmonious elements have a logical relationship, connection, alignment, or progression. They work together and complement each other.

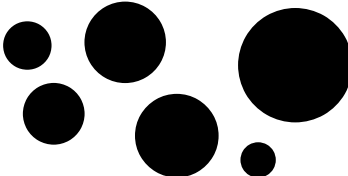
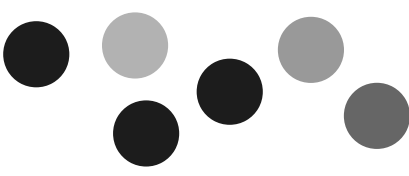
Harmony involves using similar visual elements to create a cohesive and visually pleasing whole. This design principle can be achieved through repetition, rhythm and pattern. Repeating elements such as fonts and colours create a sense of unity, while rhythm and pattern add visual interest and variety. Just as positive and negative space must work together, harmony balances complexity and simplicity.

Good Harmony	Bad Harmony
	

What is Unity?

Unity refers to how various elements of a design work when put together. It concerns designs having visual harmony in which all the disparate elements exist in relationship to each other in an organic and cohesive way. In other words, the parts create a clear and effective whole. Within unity, there is both the concerns of visual unity and conceptual unity. Visual unity is about making visual sense. Conceptual unity is about the purpose of visual elements and the effectiveness of a composition's message.

Unity is created by using harmonious similarity and repetition, continuance, proximity, and alignment. It is the visual linking of various elements of the work. This allows the disparate elements and principles to create a unified whole that can be greater than the sum of its parts.

Unity in Color	Unity in Size
	

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