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Graphic Design Foundation: Layout and Composition

Layout Elements
- Shapes in a composition do not need to be overt
- Simple and dynamic shapes provide a nice sense of unity
- Warm colors advance in space, cooler colors recede
- Bright colors attract attention
- Tread lightly with picking colors. Everyone has a different meaning for colors
- The meaning of color sometimes overrides the emotional response
- Subtle shades on a layout implies less obvious messages
- Common typography errors include text that repeats what the image already implies. Headlines should add to the image, not repeat what it's saying or showing
- When a page is cluttered with information, nothing will stand out
- Negative space can clarify information by avoiding distracting elements

Composition Principles
- Balance and tension
- Don't cut the page in half
- Don't create donut designs (where elements are pushed away to the edges)
- Think of elements having gravity → large objects will pull more attention
- Contrast creates strength. When a piece lacks contrast, it lacks interest
- Repetition in design can create excitement
- Harmony is achieved when disparate elements come together and make a good design
- By providing a sense of hierarchy, you are telling the ready what's first next and last

Proportion
- Good symmetrical design relies on balance, tension, and harmony
- Think of a chandelier when creating symmetrical design
- Asymmetrical designs feel more casual than symmetrical layouts
- Similar proportions give you a sense of energy
- Using the golden section creates designs that are pleasing to the eye
- The longer you can keep a viewer interested, the more they will retain information
- The rule of thirds helps create images that are not dull

Grids
- A grid is a diagram of guides
- You have to find the right grid for the right project
- It is good to make columns no more than 52 characters or 2 alphabets
- Information graphics work best with complex grids
- Newspapers use structured grids since they have to put out lots of information
- Switching grid structures will keep the attention of the reader
- To create a grid, first determine the size of the piece. Then sketch out variations

Attributes

- Simplicity in graphic design makes things look effortless
- Simple solutions stand out more than busy designs
- If everything is in excess, then the message can be lost
- Initial flyers are used to just promote and introduce a subject
- Too much of the same thing can become boring like wallpaper
- Rhythm is about consistency, surprise, and tone
- Have a multipage layout that has peaks and valleys
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Images and Words

- Images are the most impactful tool for a designer
- The most important thing about images is knowing how and when to crop it
- Never crop a person at a joint, it's better at mid-limb
- Focus on the subject and make sure there aren't elements that are distracting
- Make sure to look at each edge and crop out unnecessary elements
- Images and words combined will change the meaning or enhance it. Avoid just 'captions'
- Beware of hidden meanings that are unintended
- It's good for others to look at your work for opinions
- Messages can be lost if the type is too hard to read