

The Principles of Page Design

Designing with the Mind in Mind

"User-interface design rules and guidelines are more like *laws* than like *rote recipes*.

- *Jeff Johnson, Designing with the Mind in Mind, p. xii*

"Technology—especially computer technology—advances quickly. It is difficult to get a book out before [it's] obsolete.

On the other hand, the fundamentals do not change."

- *Jeff Johnson, Designing with the Mind in Mind, p. 173*

Perception

Basic Principles

"These principles are the underlying factors in every printed piece you see anywhere, on screen or anywhere else."

- *Robin Williams, The Non-Designers Design Book, p. 105*
(no, not that Robin Williams)

- Contrast
- Repetition
- Alignment
- Proximity

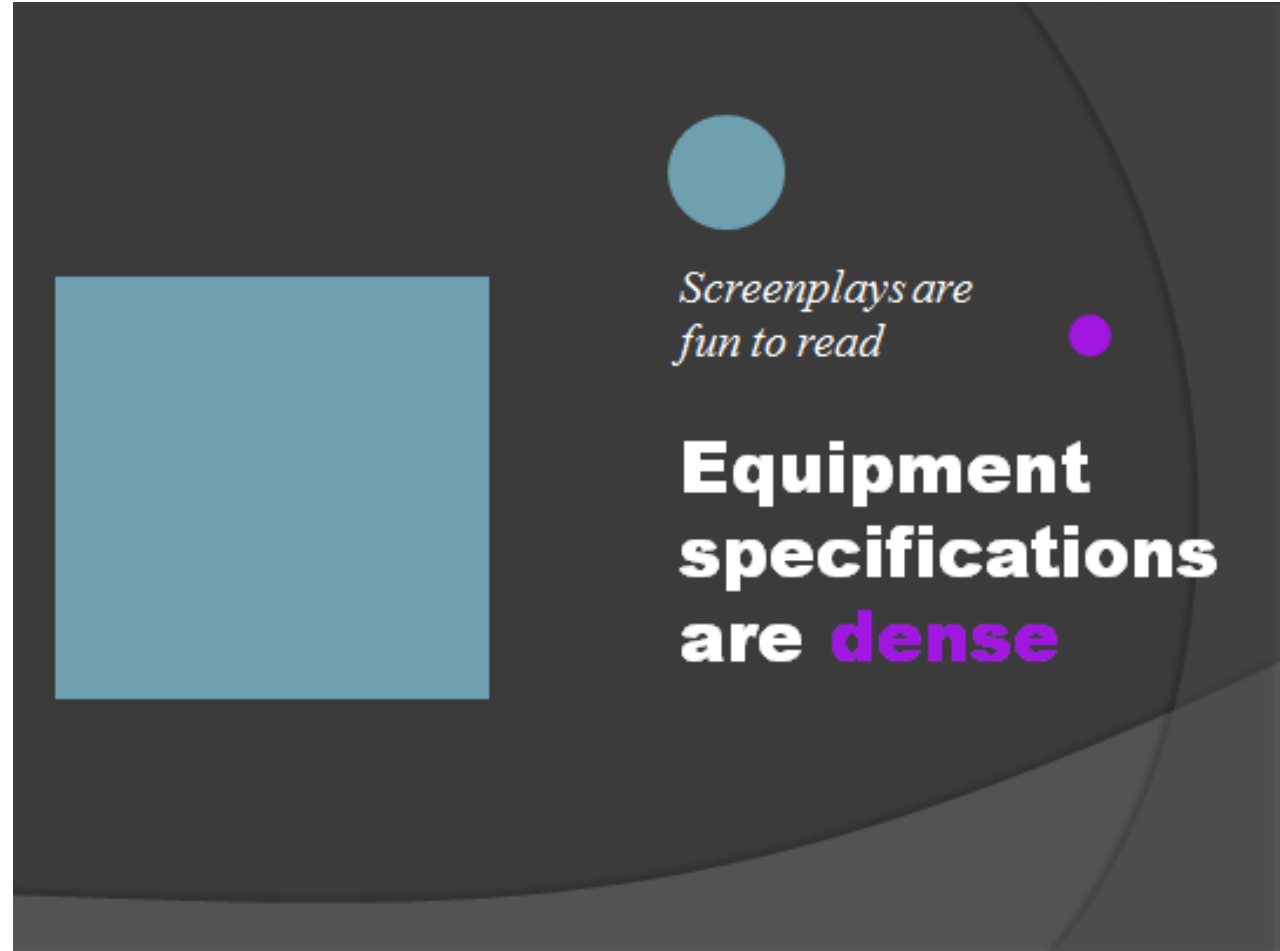
These four basic principles are a distillation of the ***Gestalt principles of visual perception***. (http://sixrevisions.com/web_design/gestalt-principles-applied-in-design)

Contrast

"Contrast draws your eye into the page, it pulls you in."

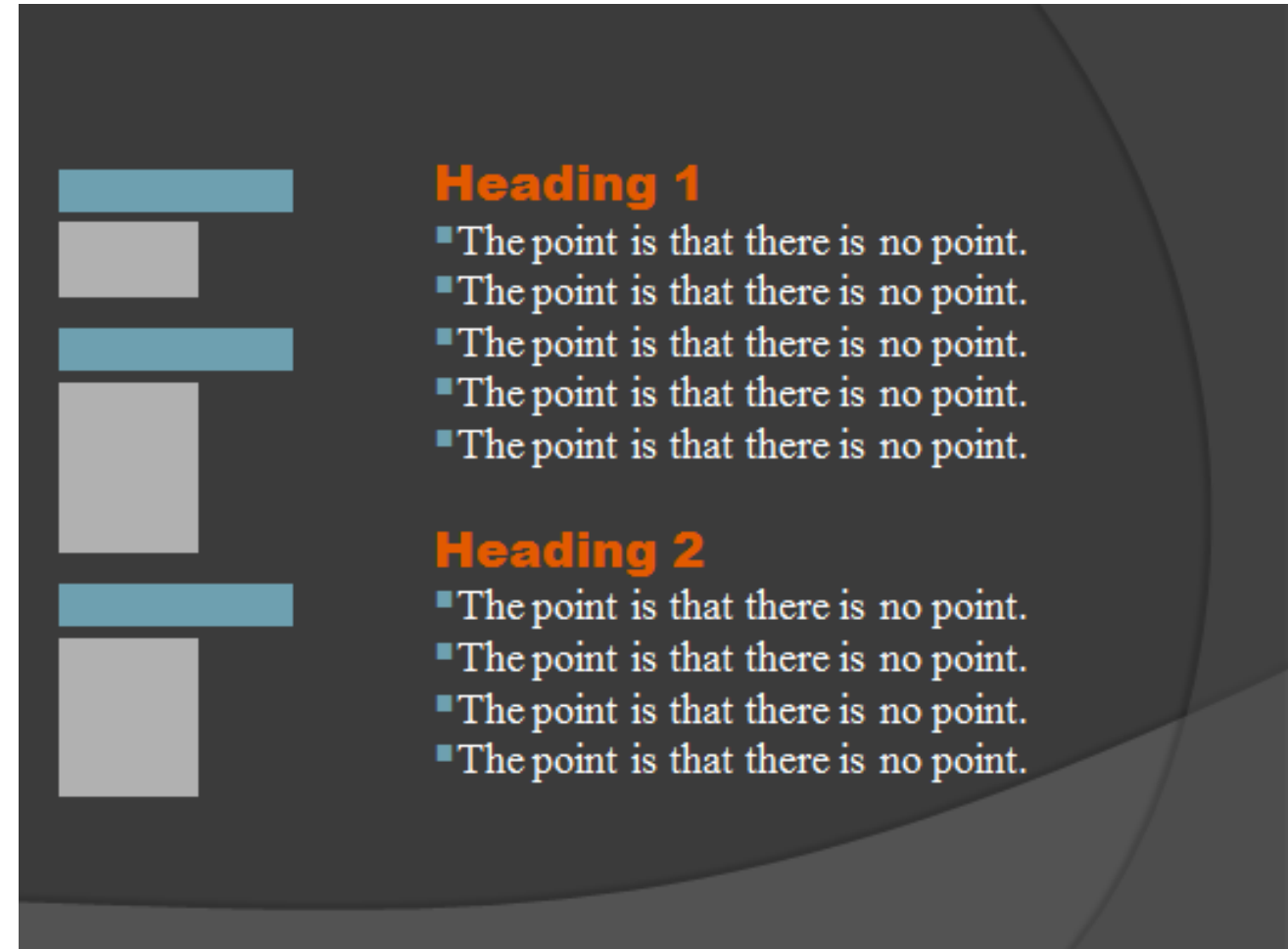
- *Robin Williams, The Non-Designers Design Book, p. 115*

- Simply: Elements are visually different from each other.
- The Rule: If two elements are not the same, make them very different.
- *Create a focal point and visual hierarchy. Lead.*



Repetition

- Simply: Certain elements are repeated in multiple places on your page/site.
- The Rule: Repeat elements throughout your site to unify disparate parts.
- *Each page in the web site should look like it belongs to the same site.*
- Elements to repeat:
 - Colors
 - Style
 - Illustrations
 - Format
 - Layout
 - Typography
 - Etc.



Alignment

- Simply: Items are lined up with each other.
- The Rule: Choose one alignment (probably *not* center) and use it on the entire page.
- *It's all about the way your eyes move.* Avoid the very left edge of the browser window... your eyes bump into it when they swing back to get the next line.

Careless writing or presentation of text can reduce skilled readers' automatic, context-free reading to conscious, context-based reading, burdening working memory, thereby decreasing speed and comprehension.

Jeff Johnson, Designing with the Mind in Mind, p. 39

Center Alignment

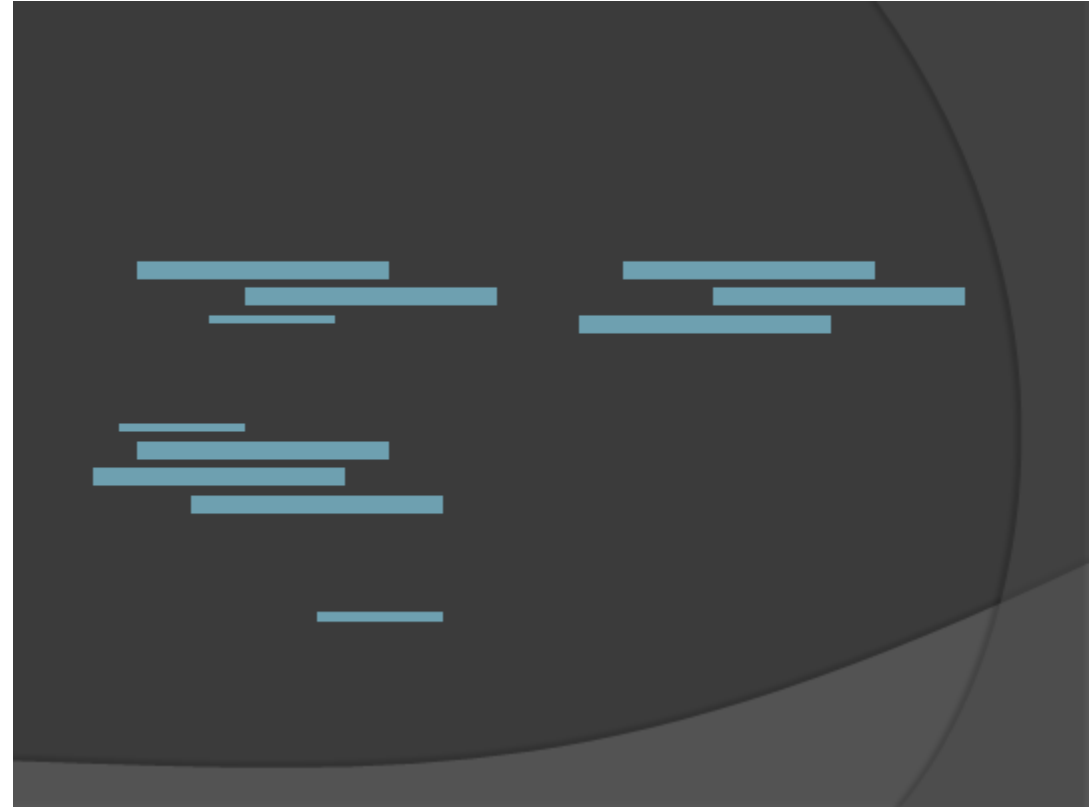
Center alignment should almost *never* be used in websites.

It's good for wedding invitations and poetry, and that's about it.



Proximity

- Simply: Items that are close together appear to have a relationship.
- The Rule: Group items together that belong together.
- *Check with a squint test*



Grid Systems

Grid Theory

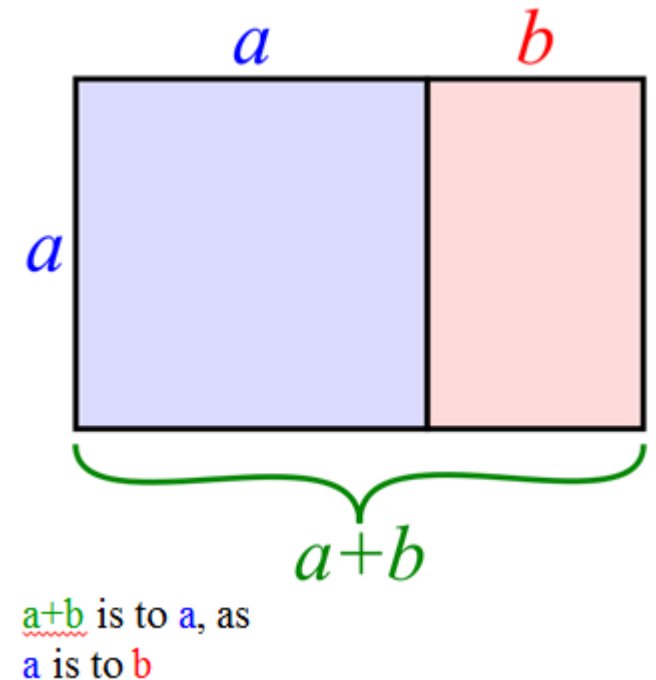
It isn't just about making things line up, it's about proportion as well.

Golden Ratio

- There is a "Golden Ratio", a mathematical pattern that occurs so often in nature that Pythagoras felt it was divinely inspired.
- When things are designed with that ratio in mind, they are more pleasing visually.

See: Visual Design Theory & the Web, Proportion, Golden Ratio and Rule of Thirds

(http://desource.uvu.edu/dgm/2740/IN/steinja/lessons/03/I03_03.html)



Rule of Thirds

- Divide page vertically and horizontally into thirds
- Locating content along these lines and at the intersections makes designs more balanced
- Users' eyes naturally follow the lines



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In practice, many websites use the Golden Ratio and the Rule of Thirds as starting points only.