

Web Design Elements

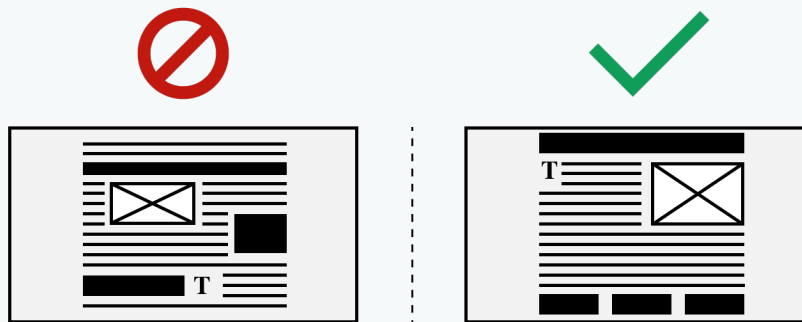
The design in web design is constantly evolving with the emergence of new trends and approaches. However, there is a standard checklist of elements that play a vital role in both effective design and user experience. These elements, such as color, typography, and alignment can package the content on your website in a way that is both aesthetically pleasing and functional.

As each of these areas is a specialty on its own, this assignment provides a brief overview of the core elements of effective design, including:

- Visual Hierarchy
- Whitespace/ Negative Space
- Color
- Alignment
- Typography

Please click on the following tabs to learn more.

▸ Principle #1: Visual Hierarchy



Visual hierarchy is one of the most important influences behind an effective web design. Visual hierarchy provides a logical order to the information on a webpage, organizing each element by order of importance. For example, high-priority content usually appears at the top of a webpage, followed by low-priority content. Headers appear above body text. Navigation menus appear to the top, bottom, left, or right side of the screen.

Humans process information visually, perceiving elements in the order in which they are emphasized. Web designers create emphasis by applying different visual characteristics to sections of content. The most basic example of this is using a larger font size for a header, and a smaller font size for the body text. This typographic hierarchy signals to the reader to read the header first and the body text second.

In addition to typography, visual emphasis is created using the following design elements:

Visual Hierarchy Design Elements

Size and Scale

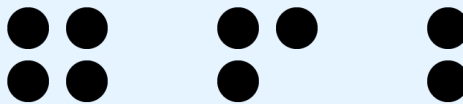
Larger images draw more attention than smaller images.

SCALE AND SIZE**Color and Contrast**

Bright colors stand out more than neutral or muted colors.

COLOR AND CONTRAST**Proximity**

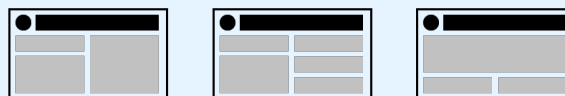
Elements that are grouped together appear related.

PROXIMITY**Alignment**

An element that breaks from the alignment of other elements will attract attention.

ALIGNMENT**Repetition**

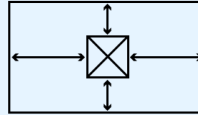
Repetition gives the impression that elements are related.

REPETITION

Negative Space

Negative space around an image gives it more emphasis.

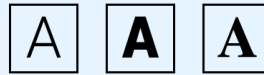
NEGATIVE SPACE



Weight and Style

Example: Bolded or italicized text stands out from regular text.

WEIGHT AND STYLE



Creating visual hierarchy also requires de-emphasizing — or even eliminating — unnecessary elements. Simplicity is an important, but often undervalued, ingredient of a good hierarchical structure. Simplicity in design incorporates visuals in a purposeful way, stripping away inessential elements to reveal a clean, easily scannable website. Further, it not only caps the number of ways emphasis is used in design, but also stays consistent in how they are used.

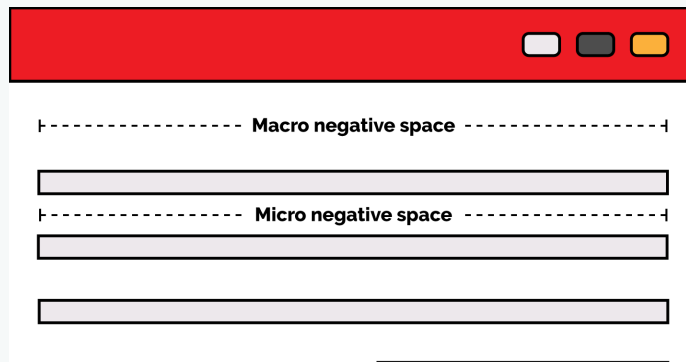
▸ Principle #2: Negative Space

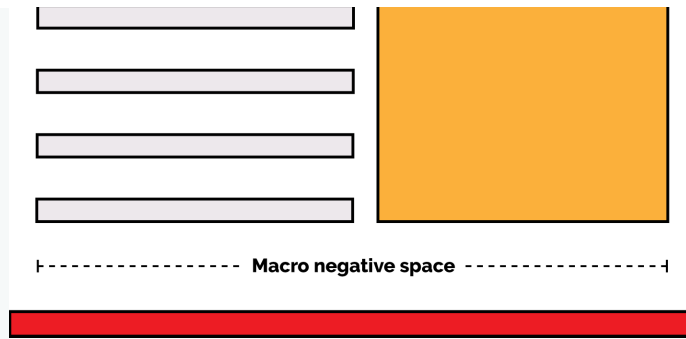
A common mistake for many web designers is filling every corner of a webpage with color, images, or content — also known as **positive space**. But this becomes problematic quickly, resulting in a cluttered webpage without any structure or flow. This is why negative space is an essential design component of web design.

Negative space, also known as white space, describes the empty areas between different elements on a webpage. Negative space in web design does not have to be white—this empty space can be a color, an image, or another background. Further, negative space not only exists around an element, but also inside an element.

There are two types of negative space:

1. Micro negative space
2. Macro negative space





Micro negative space is the area between smaller elements on a webpage, such as lines, letters, and words. Micro negative space plays an integral role in the readability of a webpage. For example, if two paragraphs overlap, they are almost impossible to read.

Macro negative space describes the space between larger elements in a layout. A common example is the space between blocks of content. Websites with a minimalist design often use more macro negative space than positive space.

Employing negative space in a web design can have a great impact on the following factors of user experience:

- **Content readability:** Using adequate space between lines, letters, words, and elements increases content readability and comprehension. For example, negative space can transform a long paragraph of text into short paragraphs or lists that are more inviting for the reader.
- **Visual hierarchy:** Negative space offers a break for the eye by cutting through clutter. Further, negative space can signify importance of certain elements and create relationships and bonds between certain elements.
- **Style and balance:** White space should balance the elements on a webpage, meaning that elements exist on a page without competing with one another for the reader's attention. This helps the reader to comprehend the information on a webpage without feeling overwhelmed.

A common misconception about negative space is that it requires less content to work. However, a text-heavy website can still leverage white space to create focus, drive the focus to important elements, and promote a feeling of sophistication and style.

▸ Principle #3: Color Schemes

Color has both an emotional and psychological effect on website visitors. For example, the color orange expresses energy and liveliness, while the color blue inspires feelings of calmness and safety. Because different colors evoke different emotions, it is important to use color strategically by putting the audience first.

Choosing the right color scheme is one of the most deliberate decisions of the design process. A color scheme includes one primary color and two or three secondary colors. The primary color typically matches the dominant color in your branding, such as the main color in your logo.

Matching the secondary colors to the primary color is often a difficult task that requires a process of trial-and-error. During this step, it is helpful to consider the four common color schemes:

Four Common Color Schemes

Monochrome:

A **monochrome color scheme** features one base color of different **hues, tints, shades, and saturations**. A well-executed monochromatic design creates a visually cohesive look. And because the variations of colors do not draw attention, the content on the webpage becomes the main focus of the visitor.

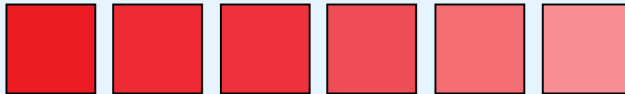
There are several ways to develop a monochrome color scheme, including:

- Taking a base color and darkening it with black
- Taking a base color and desaturating it with gray
- Taking a base color and lightening it with white

SHADE (Hue + Black)



TINT (Hue + White)



tone (Hue + Gray)



2. Complementary

A **complementary color scheme** features two colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel, such as red and green, yellow and purple, and orange and blue. The two colors can vary in shade, but they must remain within the original complementary colors.

COMPLEMENTARY



The high contrast of complementary colors creates a vibrant look. However, when used in large doses, this type of color scheme can overwhelm the eye. As such, it is important to use complementary colors only when you want certain elements on your website to stand out, such as a call-to-action button, and avoid using these colors for text.

Analogous

An **analogous color scheme** uses three colors that are next to each other on the color wheel. The first color is the base color, followed by a second color to support, and a third accent color. An example is red, orange, and red-orange. The analogous color scheme ensures a harmonious and cohesive look. However, there must be enough contrast between the three colors—otherwise, the color scheme will appear too monotonous.

ANALOGOUS



Triad

A **triad color scheme** uses colors that are evenly spaced around the color wheel. This requires picking a base color and then outlining an equilateral triangle across the wheel to define the other two colors. To use this type of color scheme successfully, the colors should be carefully balanced, with one color as the base and the other two colors for accent.

TRIADIC



Color and Accessibility

When it comes to color and accessibility, the leading concern is contrast. This includes the contrast of colors in the background, the contrast of colors for text, and the contrast of colors for all website elements. The [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) provides the most up-to-date standards for web accessibility. Below are several key takeaways:

- Provide sufficient contrast between the background and foreground
- Use color and something else to draw attention to a certain element; for example, you could increase the font weight of the text inside a call-to-action button
- Ensure that interactive elements and navigation are identifiable
- Ensure that any forms on your website are designed in a color that is easy to read

▸ Principle #4: Alignment





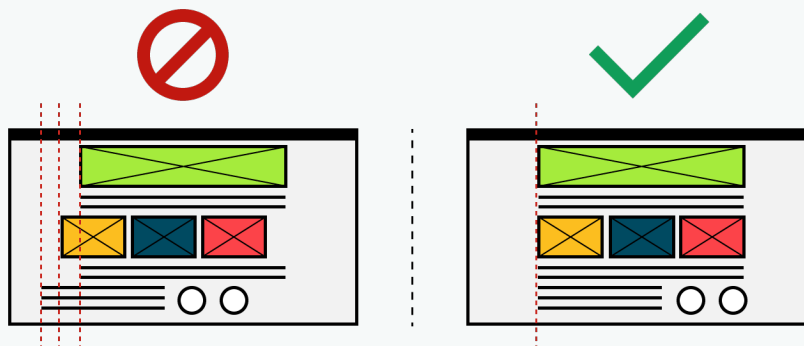
Alignment is an integral part of an effective website design that most people forget about — until it's not there. Alignment acts as the backbone for design and allows the web designer to make conscious decisions about how and where to place elements on the webpage.

Alignment covers everything from larger elements, including the header, the content, and the navigation, to smaller elements, including paragraphs, sub-headings, and images. This assignment will cover how to align three fundamental page elements: text, images, and element groups.

Text Alignment

Text appears in multiple areas on a webpage, from the navigation menu to the header and body text. The key to aligning these different elements is to develop a consistent style within each text element type. For example, header text should always align to the left, or the navigation text should always align to the right.

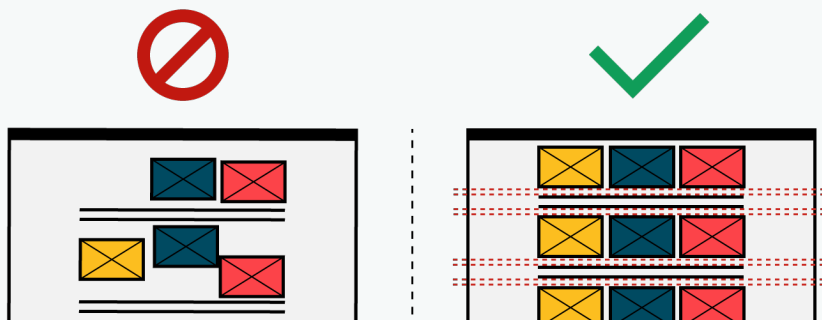
Consider how suitable each alignment is for different types of text. For instance, left aligned text is the default setting in most computer software. This is because those who read left-to-right often have difficulty reading long paragraphs of text that are aligned to the right. The same is true for long paragraphs of text that are aligned in the center. This is why left-aligned text is the standard for lengthy blocks of text.



Smaller amounts of text, on the other hand, can work well with a center alignment. Further, most website headers are aligned either to the left or center, and occasionally to the right. This is a great technique to create emphasis and draw the eye to a particular line of text.

Image Alignment

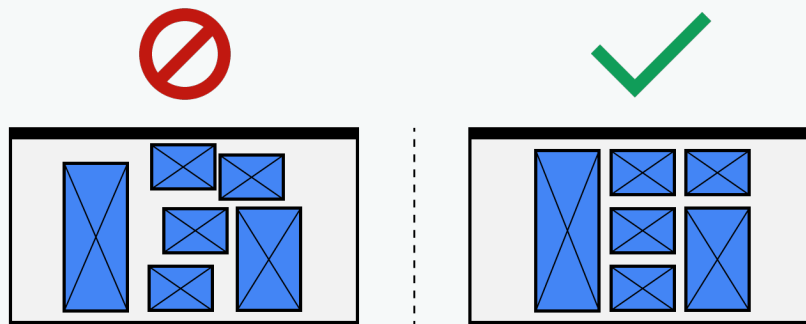
Consistency is an important factor in image alignment. For example, the space between an image and a block of text should remain consistent around the image. Further, there should be equal space between one image to the next.



Like text elements, images can be aligned to the left, right or center. Typically, a display image in the header is centered for maximum impact. Or, it may align to the left or right depending on how it interacts with the text or other elements in the header area.

Element Group Alignment

Most websites are divided into sections that display groups of elements. For example, the elements in a header section may include a navigation menu, a logo, and a display image. The footer section may include contact information or additional links. These are element groups.



Aligning the elements in each group adds another level of organization and overall cohesion to a website. For this reason, it is a good idea to establish margins and spacing with the help of gridlines. Gridlines ensure the elements inside each section do not bleed outside the intended margin—unless it's an intentional part of the design.

It is important to note that alignment is not organizing elements into perfect squares. Elements of different shapes and sizes can be aligned within its respected group. For example, smaller images can alternate between the left-side and right-side of a particular section. This is a great way to add emphasis to a particular element.

▸ Principle #5: Typography

Typography is the art of arranging letters and text in a way that is both legible and visually appealing to the reader. Typography involves font style, color, structure, contrast, and hierarchy to bring plain text to life.

Typography is an integral component of user interface design (UI) since good typography optimizes readability and accessibility, which positively contributes to user experience.

The Rules of Typography

1. Pick Two or Three Typefaces

What is the difference between a typeface and a font? A **typeface** consists of a family of fonts, such as Arial or Times New Roman. A **font** is a member of a typeface and usually refers to the weight or style of a particular typeface. For example, Arial Black, Arial Narrow, and Arial Nova are fonts within the Arial typeface.

To keep a clean look to the website, a designer should only stick to two or three fonts and remain conservative with decorative fonts. Further, most UI designers will pair the traditional serif fonts with the modern sans-serif fonts rather than sticking with one category.

2. Choose a Typeface that works in Various Weights, Styles, and Sizes

Instead of selecting a handful of typefaces, stick to two or three typefaces that provide a variety of fonts within its family. The variety of weights and styles can be used strategically throughout the website.

Additionally, choose a typeface that is clear and legible in multiple sizes. This is important because the website will be viewed by visitors using various devices with different screen sizes and resolutions. For example, fonts that use a cursive script are difficult to read on a mobile device.

3. Play with Line Height

Negative space is a vital component of good typography. **Leading**, otherwise known as line height, is the negative space between two lines of text. Increasing the line height will increase the space between lines of text, which can help to improve legibility and comprehension. Decreasing the line height will minimize the space between lines of text, which can have a negative effect on readability.

4. Ensure Sufficient Color Contrast

When using color to create contrast, ensure there is enough contrast between the background and the text color. Otherwise, you will experience legibility issues. For example, red text over a blue background is difficult to read.

Effective Layout Design: The Rule of 'Three Clicks'

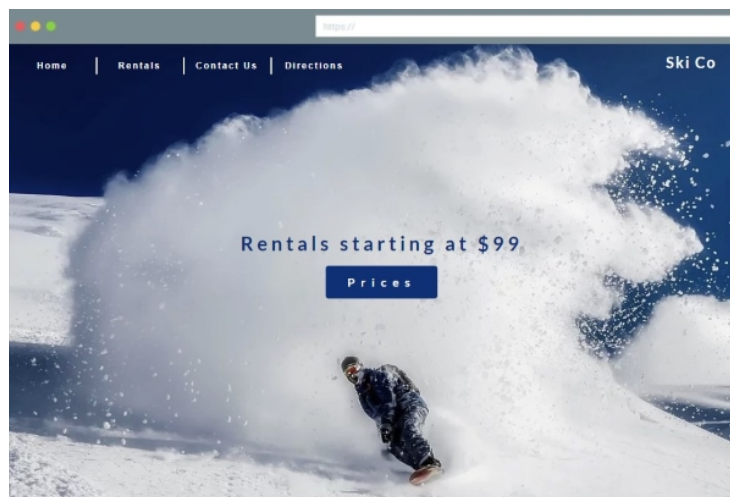
All the necessary information that a site visitor needs should be *no more* than three (3) clicks from the homepage.



Exercise: Evaluating Design Effectiveness

Consider how the web page relates to the principles of readability, arrangement, consistency, color, and contrast.

Example Website #1



Select a few features from the web page above that you believe are examples of good or bad design, based on the principles discussed throughout this course. Describe those features in the textbox provided below and click *Submit* to view a sample response.

Your response

Edit

It has a high-quality background picture for the main photo. Has a clean menu and with the company name in the upper right-hand corner. Centered text and button which lines up with the skier in the photo.

However the company name is not in the center above the rental price.

Suggested/Sample Response

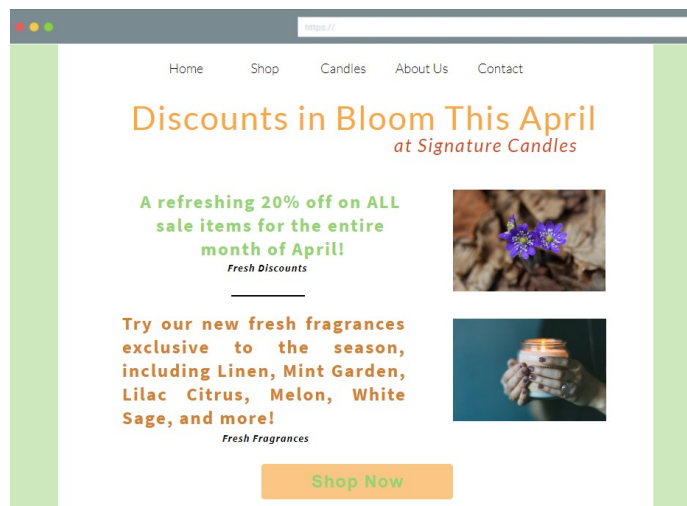
GOOD:

- Compelling featured image
- Image contains whitespace
- Text is legible and visually appealing.

BAD:

- Small logo

Example Website #2



Select a few features from the web page above that you believe are examples of good or bad design, based on the principles discussed throughout this course. Describe those features in the textbox provided below and click *Submit* to view a sample response.

Your response

Edit

Overall decent design but the text in the button is hard to read.

Suggested/Sample Response

GOOD:

- High-quality images
- Straightforward navigation menu

BAD:

- Headers should appear above body text
- Bright text color contributes to low readability
- Lack of text alignment for headers, subheaders, and paragraph text
- No cohesive, visually-appealing color scheme
- Clashing colors in the call-to-action button, resulting in low readability

Review Checkpoint

To test your understanding of the content presented in this assignment, please click on the Questions icon below. If you have trouble answering any of the questions presented here, you are always free to return to this or any assignment to re-read the material.



1. True or False?

A web designer should only stick to two or three fonts for a website.

a. True

Correct. This statement is true. Instead of selecting a handful of typefaces, a designer should stick to two or three typefaces that provide a variety of fonts within its family.

b. False

Incorrect. Try again.

2. Which color scheme uses colors that are next to each other on the color wheel?

a. monochrome

Incorrect. Try again.

b. complementary

Incorrect. Try again.

c. analogous

Correct. An analogous color scheme uses three colors that are next to each other on the color wheel.

d. triad

Incorrect. Try again.

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