

# Design Principles

The purpose of good design in a publication is to communicate your message in the best possible manner. Therefore, content determines your layout and design choices.

Essential elements of good design include:

- Hierarchy
- Eye Flow
- Simplicity
- Consistency
- Appropriateness
- Proximity
- Contrast
- Focal Point
- White Space
- Balance
- Unity
- Alignment
- Repetition
- Typography

## HIERARCHY

- Be understandable—it's okay to be obvious!
- The tool you use to prioritize your content.
- Helps to enhance the meaning of your message.
- Guides your reader to the messages you are sending in an organized fashion.

## FOCAL POINT

Every design needs a focal point. Make sure the element you use not only has strong visual interest but is appropriate for your material. Photos or graphics are visually appealing, but the use of dynamic fonts and letters can work equally well. A focal point:

- Should attract and draw your reader in.
- Is the element with the strongest visual interest.
- Is the element that you build your layout around.
- Appears on a page only **once**.
- Can be a photo, logo, graphic, or letter(s).
- Is emphasized by size, color, contrast, placement, isolation, and/or movement.

## EYE FLOW

This is how you visually guide the reader through the hierarchy of your document. Start with the focal point and then direct them where to go and what to read, using size and placement of elements.

- The focal point attracts viewers—eye flow leads them.
- Use eye flow to guide viewers through your content.

- Use direction and placement to encourage eye flow.
- Graphics, bullets, and rules help lead the eye.

## What elements encourage eyeflow?

A strong focal point, simplicity, graphic elements that move your eye along, size relationships, and visually interesting white space.

## What design elements impair eyeflow?

Clutter (lack of white space), too many focal points, too much text/too many graphics the same size, and similar spacing between all elements.

## WHITE SPACE

White (or negative) space is a design element too! To see white space as an element, try squinting at your document. You'll see shapes, not details. Use white space to accent your focal point, add to the logical grouping of the written content, and add to the overall artistic effect. Too little white space makes for a crowded, unappealing page. Too much white space overwhelms the intended focal point and breaks apart the relationships between design elements.

## Examples for creating good white space:

- Left aligned type: the right ragged edge invites white space into the page.
- Space between paragraphs (instead of indents in some cases).
- "Breathing room" between design elements.
- Flow: white space that flows into/around the design rather than being trapped.

## SIMPLICITY

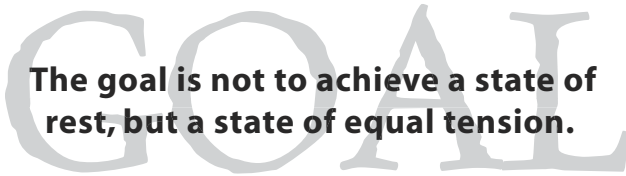
Want a clean professional look? Then remember the importance of a KISS (Keep It Simple Silly!) So seemingly easy—yet so difficult to achieve! Keeping your design simple and uncluttered let's your content come shining through. If an element does not help the content or the reader, remove it.

## BALANCE

How do you feel when you see a crooked picture on the wall? Remember, a lack of balance can irritate and impair communication.

How do you achieve balance? Here are two ways:

- Create two forces of equal strength that pull in opposite directions.
- Use multiple forces pulling in different directions so their strengths offset one another.



There are two different ways of handling balance: symmetry and asymmetry. Symmetry is achieved by repeating shapes, conveying a quiet sense of order, stability and tradition. To avoid static, boring symmetrical designs introduce contrast through value, texture, and shape. Asymmetry gives you a greater sense of movement and change. Stay on the verge of imbalance for a thrilling, visually exciting design.

## CONSISTENCY

The key to a unified and understandable design is consistency. Apply consistency to your layout, text, paragraph formatting, icons, lines, rules, etc. Each page should look like it belongs to the entire document.

### What elements create inconsistency?

Too many colors, too many graphics, inconsistent placement of important elements, inconsistent text styles, colors, and spacing.

### What elements create consistency?

Page layout, navigation scheme and location, color, heading and text size, fonts, paragraph space, and repetition of design elements (lines, rules, dingbats).

## VISUAL UNITY / GESTALT

Without unity, your design is distracting and chaotic. With unity, your design will look and feel complete. Ask yourself: “Does my design come together as a whole?”

Unity rides on the coattails of consistency. Check your text formatting and spacing between elements. Ask yourself if you can strengthen or add repetitive

elements. Patiently examine the design—sometimes only small improvements are necessary to bring it all together.

## APPROPRIATENESS

Your design should be appropriate for your:

**Audience:** Who’s reading this stuff anyway? Consider age, income, education, culture, etc.

**Topic:** What are you talking about—what are you trying to say?

**Purpose:** What is the design intended to do: sell a product, convey information, entertain?

**Format:** Paper size and type, budget, printing process, amount of copy, graphics, etc.

Evaluate your design for appropriateness on a frequent basis—don’t leave it for the end.

## ALIGNMENT

Proper alignment refers to defining invisible visual lines and aligning design elements along them (horizontally and vertically). You don’t want to scatter elements arbitrarily all over the page or you lose the visual connection of your elements.

Choose one alignment (left, right or center) and use that throughout. Left or right creates a strong edge and more interesting white (negative) space. Justified text is most preferred for columns of text. Novices tend to use center alignments (which can be boring).

Follow these general rules for good alignment:

- Line up items along a strong edge on the page.
- Choose one alignment and use it on the entire document (don’t mix).
- Remember vertical alignment too.

## PROXIMITY

Proximity is necessary to establish logical relationships between design elements and communicating those relationships visually. Group related items and create visual separation between unrelated items.

Proximity is essential for organizing information and reducing clutter. The organization and content of your page should be instantly obvious to the reader.

## REPETITION

By repeating certain visual elements of the design throughout your piece you create consistency, improve organization, and strengthen the unity. Repeat type styles, color, shape, texture, spatial relationships, line thickness, sizes, etc. But don't overdo it! Too much of anything becomes obnoxious.

### What elements enhance repetition?

Color, graphics, icons, background, typefaces, type size, placement, and image treatment.

## CONTRAST

Contrast is the **key** to a dynamic design. It creates visual interest and enhances the organization and hierarchy of your content. Contrast involves making two or more elements very different (e.g. heading and text). Maximize the contrast—don't be a wimp!

At the same time, use contrast selectively—to enhance the meaning of the content, not just to be “cool.”

## TYPOGRAPHY

What is typography? The science and art of communicating through type. Science because there are rules about how to format and handle type to enhance readability. Art because type is a powerful communicator of mood and meaning. Every font has it's own unique personality!

Some general typographical rules to follow:

- Use proper punctuation (one space after periods, the right dashes, smart quotes, etc.).
- Avoid widows (words with less than seven characters in the last line of a paragraph) and orphans (a sentence or line by itself at the bottom or top of a column).
- When mixing type, never use more than three fonts on one document (two is better).
- For good contrast use a different font for headlines and body type, but don't use similar typefaces—best to use a sans serif font for your headline and a serif font for the body copy.
- Use proper spacing—watch your leading (space

between lines) and tracking (space between letters).

- Use effective contrast through size, weight, form, structure, color, texture, and/or direction.
- Make sure your type is legible (easy to distinguish individual letters).
- Make sure your type has good readability (easy for the reader to scan over paragraphs of type).

Guidelines for good readability:

- Avoid all caps (never use all caps with script).
- Use a reasonable point size.
- Don't use a line length too short or too long.
- Create even word spacing.
- Create even letter spacing.
- Think about your background (including type of paper).
- Provide ample leading (line spacing).
- Select the most readable type alignment (justified and flush left).
- Choose typefaces carefully.

LASTLY, proofread, proofread, proofread, and proofread again! Get someone else to proofread! Sleep on it and proofread again in the morning!

FINALLY, after you get all the rules down, remember the most important graphic design rule of all:

Sometimes, it's okay to ...

Break  
out  
Rules

# Basic Ideas for Successful Advertisement Design

Good design is communicative design. What's the point if the ad's message doesn't come across succinctly? Good advertising not only provokes a favorable response—it makes it easy for the consumer to respond. Often a good ad is memorable long afterwards.

## The Purpose of an Ad

- Attract attention
- Communicate a message
- Persuade an audience (in order to generate a response)

## What to consider before starting the design

- Audience: Define your target audience. Think what will attract them—bright colors, subdued pastels...types of images, appealing headline, appropriate typeface. Should the ad appear lively or quiet, startling or natural? An ad designed for teenage clothing will be quite different than an ad designed to attract senior citizens to a retirement home.
- Size and Limitations: What format are you working within? How much space is needed for copy? How much for the logo and company information? How will the final ad be produced?
- Organization: What do you want readers to see first...second...third? How will you get them to read the ad in that order? Consider the size of the headline, placement of graphics, location of company information, etc.

## What should a good advertisement do?

- Deliver the main message simply and directly (deliver and emphasize).
- Make it easy to respond (display company name, address and logo clearly).
- Emphasize the call to action (stimulate reader to make contact by using a catch phrase and making the phone number easy to read).
- Have a design that is appropriate to its content (vibrant, calm, etc.).
- Be easily distinguishable from all the other ads—particularly the competitors.

## What makes a successful ad design?

- Simplicity—makes it easy and quick to identify message and find pertinent information. Be sure to remove unnecessary distractions. **Everything on your ad should be there for a reason.**
- Organization—guides your reader in logical progression through the ad. First, it attracts reader to certain areas (e.g. focal point), next provides information, and lastly, stimulates them to take action. **Never forget the original goal.**
- Contrast—assists reader in understanding the organization and importance of different elements. It also provides visual interest. The reader will want to continue reading it.
- Lastly—blow away the competition!

*Ad Design*

# Principles Cheatsheet

## Design Goals

- Accurate, interesting content.
- Meeting client's needs: adhering to the goal and purpose of the design.
- Appealing to the target audience.
- Visual interest and clarity, simplicity.

## Design Principles

**Hierarchy:** Present the information in an organized fashion with the most important info first.

**Focal Point:** Give the design a vibrant, interesting focal point. One focal point is perfect!

**Eye Flow:** organize the design so that the reader is directed through it. For example: focal point leads to title which leads into text.

**White Space/Balance:** Don't overcrowd the page. Organize the information so that there is space between items, reduce text to the minimum amount of copy where possible.

**Simplicity:** KISS. Simple is elegant, overdone is burnt.

**Page Gestalt:** Squint at the page to see it for its graphic impact. Is it a pleasing interaction of positive and negative shapes?

**Unity:** Assess the page to see if it comes together as a whole. Check focal point, proximity, repetition, and alignment.

## Design Techniques

**Contrast:** Use contrasting fonts, and/or contrast in size, color, weight, form, texture, direction. Use color contrast effectively.

**Repetition:** Repeat (existing) elements as a way to unify the page/site.

**Alignment:** Stick to one alignment. However, flush left and flush right do complement each other in some layouts.

**Proximity:** Group information that belongs together and pay attention to the alignment of info that is separate but still related.

## Typographic Principles

**Legibility & Readability:** Choose a legible typeface, handle it in a manner than enhances its readability: point size, line length, background, etc.

**Selecting & Mixing:** Select a typeface that feels appropriate to the content and mood of the ad! If you use two typefaces, be sure they contrast well: serif and sans serif, old style and modern, etc. Times and Garamond do not contrast well, nor does Arial and Helvetica. Don't use two decorative fonts together such as Harrington and Desdemona.

**Typographical refinements:** kern headlines and subheads, dates and time. Use beautiful punctuation. Leave no widows or orphans.

**Proofread;** Proof until your eyeballs burn! Read backwards, check for one type of error at a time, check your copy against the original copy, have someone else proof your work too.

## Fine Art Principles

**Relationship & Synergy:** connecting force(s).

**Scale & Proportion:** relative sizes and balance.

**Closure:** invites reader participation.

**Direction, Movement:** conducts the eye flow.

**Cropping:** creates visual interest.

**Figure Ground:** the interplay between the foreground and background..

**Rhythm:** movement & flow, interplay of elements.

**Perspective:** sense of distances and sizes.

**Value:** interplay of dark and light and shades between.

**Texture:** adds richness, depth, "touchability."

# Cheatsheet