



## Lesson A

# Elements and Principles of Design

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### In this lesson, you will:

- explore and analyze the use of the elements and principles of design as applied to home interiors.

Have you ever redecorated your bedroom or another space in your home? Some people seem to have a natural ability to put together fabrics and colours, furnishings and accents, to create an attractive look. Others find it challenging, but everyone can learn to decorate their home by using some simple design guidelines.

We will begin by looking at some of the elements and principles that are used by designers, including fashion, art, landscape design, and interior design and decorating. These guidelines will help you become a more accomplished decorator.

## Elements of Design: Line, Texture, Shape or Form, and Space

There are five elements of design: **line**, **texture**, **shape or form**, **space**, and **colour**. Because colour is such a large part of design, we will look at it on its own in the next topic. Here, we begin with **line**.

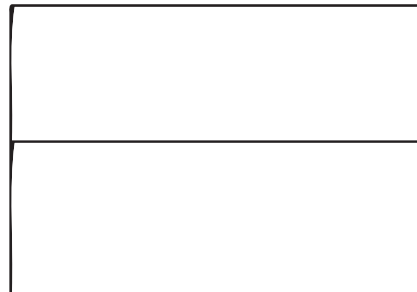
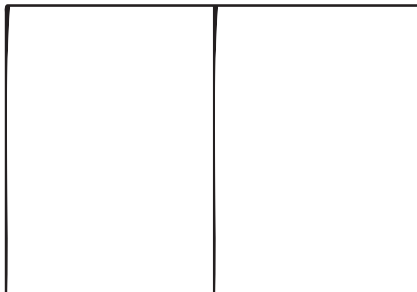
### Consider This...

Tone, sound, smell, taste are also known design elements.

### Line

Lines that are used in designing interiors give a feeling of movement. Because the eye travels along a line, lines can appear to alter the size or proportion of a room. For example, if two identical rectangles are divided in half, one horizontally and one vertically, they will seem to be different sizes.

The rectangle divided in half vertically appears to be taller and thinner than the rectangle, which is divided in half horizontally. The second rectangle appears to be shorter and wider.



**Vertical straight lines** tend to give height, strength, and dignity. The exterior columns on a building suggest strength and dignity. Vertical features such as bookcases, panels, wall units, and floor to ceiling fireplaces create a feeling of dignity. Vertical lines often give a formal feeling to an interior.



**Horizontal straight lines** give a feeling of solidness and stability. Examples seen in interiors include dressers, low bookshelves, and other long, low pieces of straight-lined furniture.



**Diagonal lines** give a feeling of movement or action in a room. Examples of diagonal lines include slanting ceilings, a staircase, and woven cane furniture.



**Curved lines** produce a flowing, graceful effect, which results in a feminine feeling in a room. Curved lines are found in archways, drapery swags, rounded and curved furniture, etc.



Too much line used in a room creates a feeling of instability and can be overpowering. Care should be taken to balance the use of curved and straight lines.

## Texture

**Texture** refers to the surface quality of objects—how they feel. For example, a marble tabletop is smooth and cold; tweed is rough and warm, and velvet looks warm, soft, and napped (it has what is known as a **pile**).

Textures can also produce feelings in a room. Plush carpet and soft fabrics provide a sense of comfort, while glass, metal and stone give a feeling of coolness. Rough, nubby materials give a feeling of ruggedness and stability, while smooth velvets and brocade suggest luxury. By having an understanding of texture, you can bring character to a room.

## Shape or Form

The contour of an object makes up its **shape**. For example, a tabletop can be round, rectangular, square, or oval. Shape is two-dimensional. In a room, walls, rugs, and pictures are all two-dimensional shapes. When a third dimension is added to a shape, it becomes form or mass because depth is added. A bookcase has form because it has height, width, and depth.

Furniture creates form and its arrangement in a room can create different effects. For example, large heavy objects like a piano or sofa can give a feeling of stability. If there is too much variety in shapes and forms in a room, the result is a feeling of confusion. If there is no variety of shape and form, the result is monotonous.

## Space

Next to colour, space is the most important element of interior design. Space is the area in which everything is arranged. An empty room is a space. Well-planned and well-organized space makes for a more efficient home; rooms that are free of clutter create a more restful feeling.

Different spaces may also convey different feelings. Large, open spaces give a feeling of freedom and sometimes luxury, as in a ballroom or the entrance to a theatre. Empty space may cause people to feel lonely and uncomfortable, like a room with a high ceiling and too little furniture.

These four elements of design, along with colour, form the background for applying the principles of design.

## Activity 1

### Elements of Design

**Instructions:** Fill in the blanks with the appropriate term, referring to the previous topic.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The element of design that refers to the look or feel of the surface of an object.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The element of design that the eye follows in a room.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The element of design that is the area where everything is arranged.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The element of design that may be two- or three-dimensional.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Type of line that creates a feeling of movement or action in a room.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Type of line that appears more feminine.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Feeling that may be associated with plush carpets and soft fabrics.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A type of line that provides a feeling of stability.



Go to the Answer Key at the end of this module to check your answers.



Go to **Section 3 Assignment** and complete **Part 1: Elements of Design (line, texture, shape or form, and space)**.

## Elements of Design: Colour

People use colour to make their environments pleasing. Your bedroom is the place where you are most likely to express your colour preferences. Your colour preferences are also evident in the clothing you wear. Is there any similarity between the colours you wear and the colours used in your bedroom?