

# Elements of Design



Design elements are the basic building blocks of a visual image.

## Space

Space is the area provided for a particular purpose. It may have two dimensions (length and width), such as a floor, or it may have three dimensions (length, width, and height). Space includes the background, foreground and middle ground. Space refers to the distances or areas around, between or within components of a piece. There are two types of space: positive and negative space. Positive space refers to the space of a shape representing the subject matter. Negative space refers to the space around and between the subject matter.

## Line

Line is the basic element that refers to the continuous movement of a point along a surface, such as by a pencil or brush. The edges of shapes and forms also create lines. It is the basic component of a shape drawn on paper. Lines and curves are the basic building blocks of two dimensional shapes like a house's plan. Every line has length, thickness, and direction. There are curved, horizontal, vertical, diagonal, zigzag, wavy, parallel, dash, and dotted lines.

## Shape / Form

A shape is defined as an area that stands out from the space next to or around it due to a defined or implied boundary, or because of differences of value, color, or texture. Shapes can also show perspective by overlapping. They can be geometric (defined and measurable) or organic (irregular). Form refers to three dimensional shape.

## Direction

Movement of the eye, usually along a line (real or implied).

## Color

Color is seen either by the way light reflects off a surface, or in colored light sources. Color and particularly contrasting color is also used to draw the attention to a particular part of the image. In a traditional color wheel there are primary colors (red, yellow and blue), secondary colors (orange, purple and green) and tertiary colors (red-orange, blue-green, etc.). Complementary Colors are colors that are opposite to each other on the color wheel. Complementary colors are

used to create contrast. Analogous colors are colors that are found side by side on the color wheel. These can be used to create color harmony. Monochromatic colors are tints and shades of one hue. Warm colors are a group of colors that consist of reds, yellows, and oranges. Cool colors are group of colors that consist of purples, greens, and blues.

## Value

Value is an element of art that refers to the relationship between light and dark on a surface or object and also helps with Form. Value is also referred to as tone.

## Texture

Texture is perceived surface quality. In art, there are two types of texture: tactile and implied. Tactile texture (real texture) is the way the surface of an object actually feels. Examples of this include sandpaper, cotton balls, tree bark, puppy fur, etc. Implied texture is the way the surface of an object looks like it feels. The texture may look rough, fizzy, gritty, but cannot actually be felt. This type of texture is used by artists when drawing or painting.

# Principles of Design



Principles deal with how the elements are utilized within a given design.

## Unity

Unity is the sense that all the parts of a design work together to create a singular whole.

Several techniques for achieving unity are listed below.

- REPETITION
- CONTINUATION
- CLOSURE

## Emphasis / focal Point

The visual hierarchy within a design that leads the viewer's eye through the composition with visual clues about the relative importance of various elements. Several methods for creating emphasis are listed below.

- CONTRAST
- ISOLATION
- PLACEMENT
- ABSENCE OF FOCAL POINT

## Balance

The distribution of weight within the defined space. Several approaches to balance are listed below.

- SYMMETRICAL
- ASYMMETRICAL
- RADIAL
- ALL OVER PATTERN

## Proportion / Scale

The size relationships between different elements of the design.

## Movement

The arrangement/combination of elements that encourages the viewer's eye to move through the design.

## Repetition / Rhythm / Pattern

1. Repeating the same element in a sequence.
2. Repeating similar elements with some variation in a sequence.
3. Repetition over a large area so that the individual element becomes subordinate to the overall texture.

## Contrast

Difference between elements, usually occupying different positions along a spectrum.

e.g light vs dark, hard vs soft

## Variety / Harmony

The relative degree of similarity or dis-similarity among elements of a composition.