

# Elements of Design

## Aesthetics & Function

Credit: Lesley Pearce (former Technology adviser Technology- New Zealand).

Taken from Google docs (via Wiki)

<https://technologynz.wikispaces.com/Lesley+Pearce>

chrome-extension://gbkeegbaiigmenfmjfcldgdpimamgkj/views/app.html

Images included by William van Zyl (2016) with some notes.

## Texture



Credit: 'Old Paint' .[https://pixabay.com/static/uploads/photo/2012/09/11/21/41/textures-56716\\_960\\_720.jpg](https://pixabay.com/static/uploads/photo/2012/09/11/21/41/textures-56716_960_720.jpg)

The look, and feel of a surface.

Adds richness and dimension, emphasises and suggests mood or feeling.

**You can use texture to:**

Relate an image to its background. (Run a floral pattern around a photo of an elegant, floral picture frame.)

Give the piece a mood or a personality. (A piece done on soft, textured paper stock gives a feeling of warmth.)

Create contrast for interest. (Run a solid colour around a very textural photo or illustration, or around a block of type.)

Fool the eye. (Create a wrapping paper pattern by repeating type to add dimension and visual texture.)

Provoke a particular emotion. (A piece with pictures of trees and flannel shirts produces a different reaction than a piece with pictures of chrome and glass objects.)

Create a feeling of richness and depth.

Add liveliness and activity. (Foil stamp- a work or two on a letterhead.)

# Colour



Credit: 'Colouring pencils'. See the use of the colour wheel for more theory behind colours. [https://pixabay.com/static/uploads/photo/2015/03/23/21/11/colored-pencils-686679\\_960\\_720.jpg](https://pixabay.com/static/uploads/photo/2015/03/23/21/11/colored-pencils-686679_960_720.jpg)

The ultimate tool for symbolic communication.

Colour conveys moods, attracts highlights important aspects of the design.

## **You can use colour to:**

Highlight important copy. (Run all subheads in red so they'll stand out.)

Attract the eye.

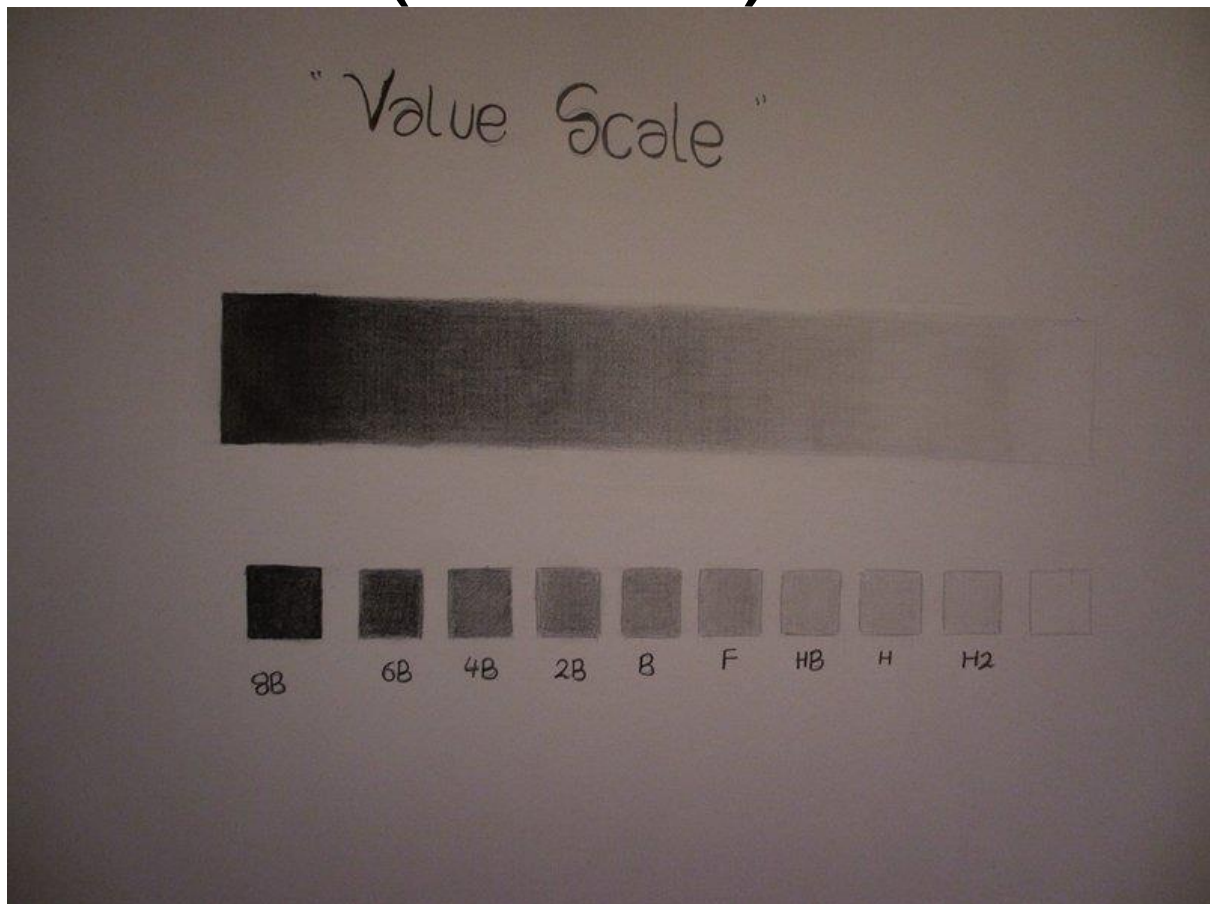
Tell the reader where to look first. (Copy in a red circle will be read first.)

Make elements appear to vibrate, creating a feeling of excitement. (Try purple and green together, or orange with blue.)

Tie a layout together. (Repeat a colour from a photo or an illustration for the background, or as coloured type.)

Organize. (Colour code parts of a manual or training document.)  
Set off different parts of a chart or graph.  
Create a mood. (Bright colours convey excitement while pastels soothe.)  
Group elements together isolate them. (Set off an important block of copy by putting it on a tint, or wrap a tint around several pictures.)  
Provoke an emotional response.

# Value (Value)



Credit: 'Values soft to dark- different pencils'.

<http://ichasingthemoon.deviantart.com/art/Value-Scale-H-W-327118504>

The darkness or lightness of an area.

Value separates, suggests mood, adds drama, and creates the illusion of depth.

**With value you can:**

Visually separate different kinds of copy. (Use large type and heavy leading for body copy-lighter value-and tightly packed, smaller type for sidebars-darker value.)

Lead the eye across the page. (Run a dark to a light graded tone or tint in the background.)

Create a pattern, such as a checkerboard effect.

Give the illusion of volume and depth. (Shade a shape to make it look three-dimensional.)

Give a piece an understated, subtle feeling. (Use only light values.)

Make a layout dramatic. (Use areas of black against areas of stark white.)

Emphasize an element. (Make the most important element very light and all the others dark.)

Make objects appear to be in front of or in back of each other. (Dark areas recede in space.)



# Size



Credit: 'Large pinchers of crab-out of proportion'.

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/54/Naturalis Biodiversity Center - RMNH.ART.5 - Carcinoplax longimana \(De Haan, 1833\) - Kawahara Keiga.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/54/Naturalis_Biodiversity_Center_-_RMNH.ART.5_-_Carcinoplax_longimana_(De_Haan,_1833)_-_Kawahara_Keiga.jpg)

How **big** or small something is.

Size shows what's most important, attracts attention, and helps to pull design together.

With size you can:

Size is showing which element is most important by making it the biggest.

Make elements come forward or recede on the page. (Larger ones tend to come forward.)

Give the reader a sense of scale. (In a photo, show a hand with an object for comparison of size.)

Make all elements easy to see. (Use bigger type and pictures on a poster that will hang on a wall.)

Give a piece noticed. (If you mail it in an envelope that's larger or smaller than a #10-regular business letter size-it will attract more attention.)

Contrast two elements to add interest. (Put a large photo beside a tiny line of type.)

Break up space in an interesting way.

Make elements fit together properly in the piece. (Set type in a small size to make room for more pictures.)

Establish a consistent look throughout a brochure or newsletter. (Make all heads the same size.)

# Space



Credit: [John smithson 2007](#) at [English Wikipedia](#) - Transferred from [en.wikipedia](#) to Commons by [PHansen](#).

Image taken from (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Rubin1.jpg>) and edited to show the negative space.

The distance or area between or around things

Separates or unifies highlights and gives the eye a visual rest.

## **You can use space to:**

Give the eye a visual rest. (Leave plenty of white space on a spread otherwise filled with copy.)

Create ties between elements. (Put less space between elements to make them look related.)



Form positive and negative shapes.

Give a layout a three-dimensional quality. An element, that is overlapped by another looks as if it's farther back.

Highlight an element. (Put a lot of empty space around something important.)

Make a layout easy to follow. (Put ample margins around a piece.)

Create tension between two elements. (Place two photos so they are almost touching each other.)

Make a page dynamic. (Have unequal spacing between elements.)

Make type as legible as possible. (Allow comfortable spacing between letters, words and lines of type.)

# Line



**Credit: Illustration of line element in design.** Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn - <http://consultant.ur.ru/sunstranger/Lion,%20Rembrandt.jpg>

An extinct Cape Lion (*Panthera leo melanochaitus*) in a drawing of the Dutch artist Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (Detail). 138 x 204 mm. Location: Louvre, Paris

Any mark connecting any two points.

It can organise, direct, separate, or suggest emotion in a design.

**With line(s) you can:**

Organize information. (Place lines between the columns of numbers in a financial report.)

Highlight or stress words. (Set off a headline with a rule.)

Connect bits of information. (Link a caption to the photo it is describing with a line.)

Define a shape. (Arrange a line of type in the outline of a Christmas tree.)

Outline a photo to set it off from other elements. (Run a thick line around a photo as a border.)

Create a grid. (Separate items into columns for a catalogue.)

Create a graph. (Draw a line across a grid to show profit and loss over time.)

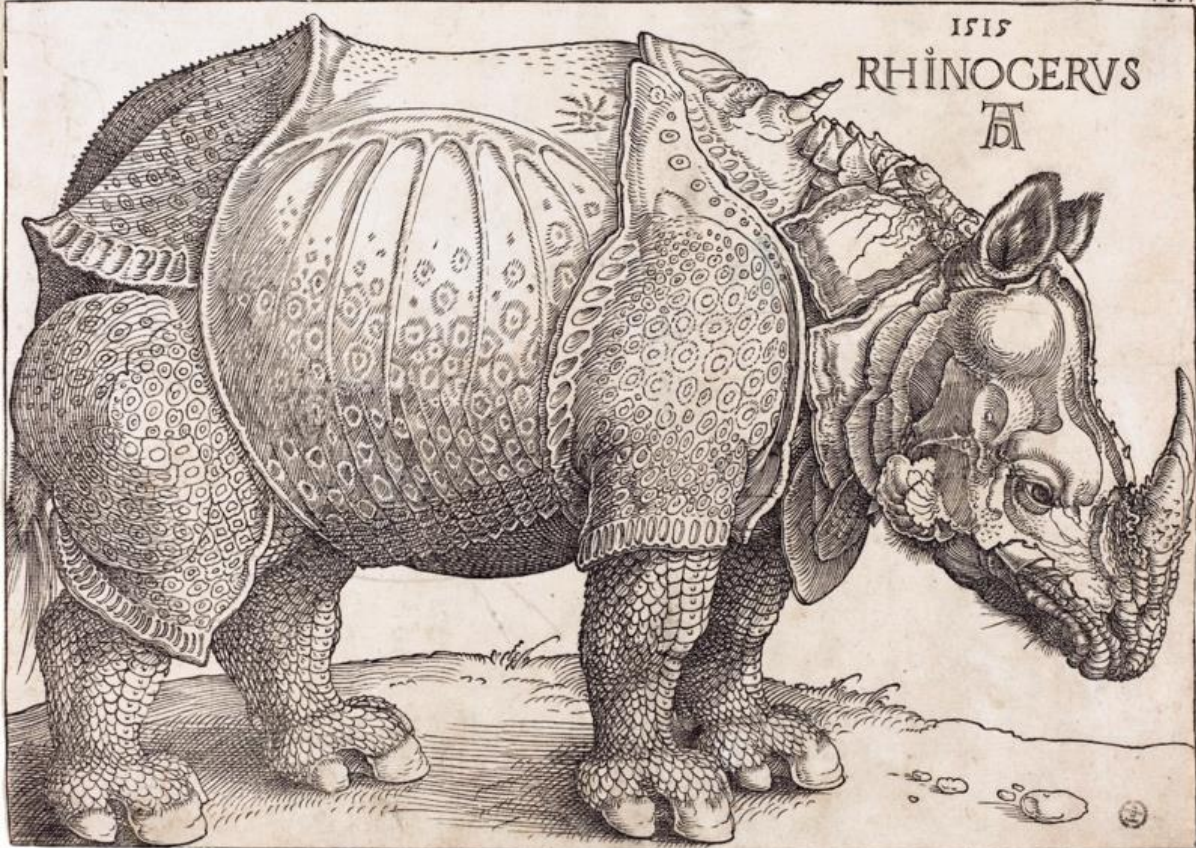
Create a pattern or rhythm by drawing many lines. (Vary thick and thin lines and the spaces between them.)

Direct the reader's eye or create a sense of motion. (A diagonal line looks more active than a horizontal one does.)

Suggest an emotion. (Use a curved line in a ballet poster to suggest elegance.)

# Shape

Nach Christi Geburt 1492. Jar. 28. 4. May. Hat man den großmüthigen König von Portugall Emanuel gen. Lyfsona pacht auß India/ ein sollich lebendig Thier. Das nennen sie Rhinoceros. Das ist hie mit aller seiner geß. alt. 28. conderter. Es hat ein fard wie ein gepunctet. Schildekrot. Und ist vñ dicken Schalen vberlegt fast fest. Und ist in der größ als der Schfande. Aber nyderrechter von paynt/ vñ fast wech. affig. Es hat ein scharff starck Horn vorn auff der nase/ Das begynde es alßeg zu wegen wo es bey staynen ist. Das doßig Thier ist des Schf. fang. rodt. fende. Der Schfande fürcht es fast vñd/ dann wo es In antumbe/ so laufft In das Thier mit dem kopff zwischen dyc forden payn. vñ reyt der Schfande vñden am pauch auff vñ erwirgt In. des mag er sich nit erren. Dann das Thier ist also gewapent/ das In der Schfande nichts kan thun. Sie sagen auch das der Rhinoceros Schnell/ Fraydig vñd Lufftig sey.



Credit:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%BCr%C3%A9r%27s\\_Rhinoceros#/media/File:The\\_Rhinoceros\\_\(NGA\\_1964.8.697\)\\_enhanced.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%BCr%C3%A9r%27s_Rhinoceros#/media/File:The_Rhinoceros_(NGA_1964.8.697)_enhanced.png)

See how the artist uses 'armour plate shape' to represent a rhino. Dürer's woodcut is not an entirely accurate representation of a rhinoceros. He depicts an animal with hard plates that cover its body like sheets of armour, with a gorget at the throat, a solid-looking breastplate, and rivets along the seams. He places a small twisted horn on its back, and gives it scaly legs and saw-like rear quarters. None of these features are present in a real rhinoceros,<sup>[5][6]</sup> although the Indian rhinoceros does have deep folds in its skin that can look like armor from a distance.

Anything that has height and width.

Shapes define objects, attract attention, communicate ideas and add excitement



## **With shape you can:**

Crop a photo in an interesting way. (Drop it into an oval.)

Symbolize an idea. (A heading symbolizes love.)

Make a block of copy more interesting. (Set the copy for Fourth of July ad in the shape of a star.)

Create a new format. (Make the whole brochure the shape of a triangle.)

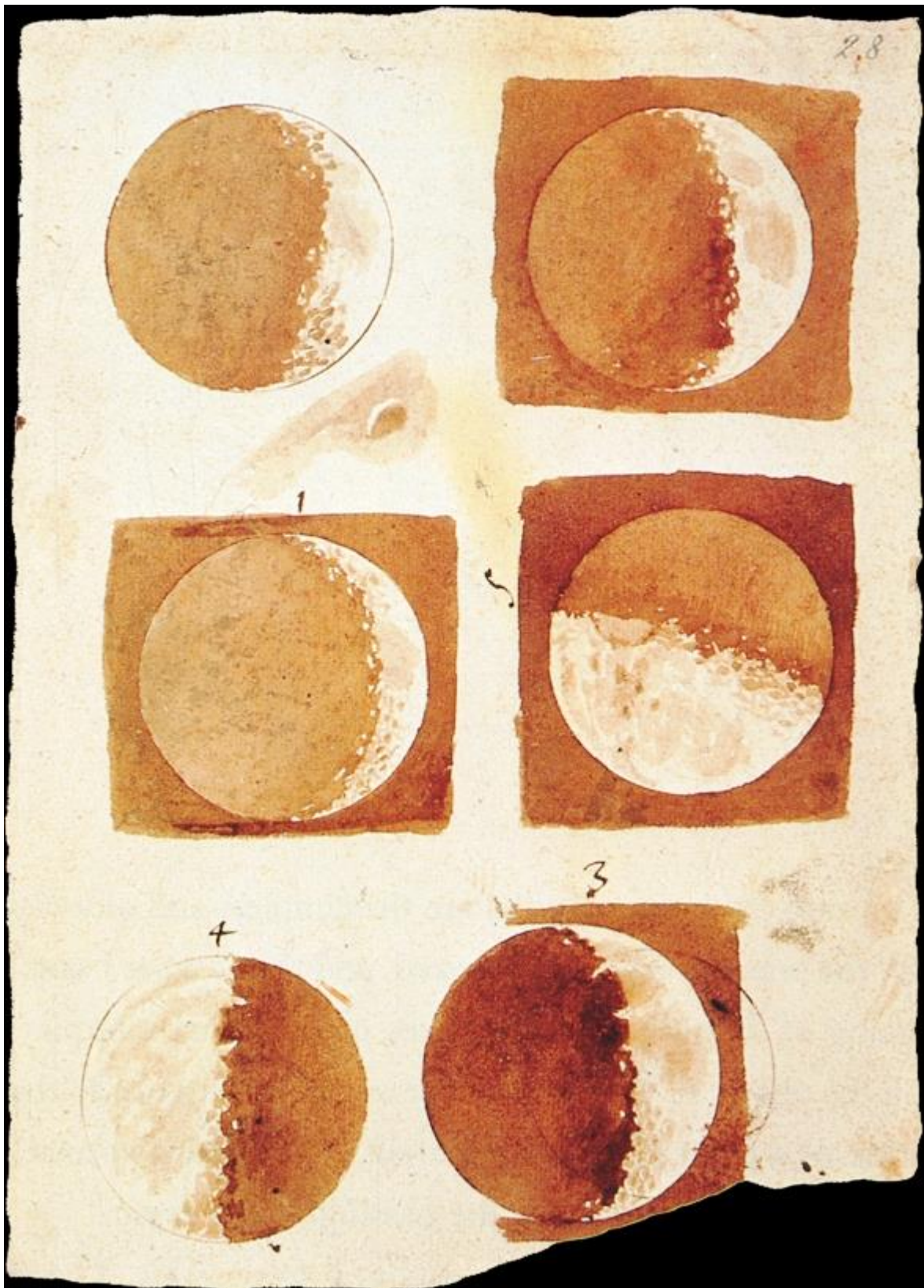
Highlight information. (Rule a screened or tinted shape behind important copy.)

Imply letterforms. (Use a triangle to represent the letter a.)

Tie the piece to the subject matter. (Use geometric shape on an architect's brochure and natural, curvy shapes on zoo brochure.)

Tie together all the elements on a layout. (Use square bullets and square copy blocks and crop photos square.)

# Balance



Credit: Light versus dark—Symmetrical

(50% and 50%), and asymmetrical (80% and 20%) sketches of the moon by Galileo. [Galileo Galilei. \*Phases of the Moon\*. 1616.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drawing#/media/File:Galileo_moon_phases.jpg)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drawing#/media/File:Galileo\\_moon\\_phases.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drawing#/media/File:Galileo_moon_phases.jpg)

Balance is an equal distribution of weight.

If a layout isn't balanced, the reader feels uneasy.

There are two approaches to balance. You can arrange elements so they're evenly distributed to the left and right of the centre, symmetry. This communicates strength and stability.

Or asymmetry, arrangement of dissimilar shapes, objects of equal weights. You can use colour, value, size, shape and texture as balancing elements in an asymmetric design. Asymmetry brings contrast, variety, movement, surprise and informality to a page.

### **To create balance you can:**

Repeat a specific shape at regular intervals, either horizontally or vertically. (Make the photos the same size no angles and set them the same distance apart.)

Centre elements on a page.

Put several small visuals one area to offset a single large visual or block of copy.

Use one or two odd shapes and keep the rest "regular" shapes. (Put two photos in ovals and keep all the copy square blocks.)

Lighten a text-heavy picture with bright, colourful visuals.

Leave ample white space around large blocks of copy with very dark photos.

Have a large light area the centre of your piece..... Putting a small dark area ..... the edge.

Offset a big, dark photo illustration with several small bits of copy, each surrounded by plenty of white space.

Divide your page into an equal number of columns with horizontal rows.



# Emphasis



Credit: Emphasis on the stars and the moon. [Vincent van Gogh, \*The Starry Night\*, 1889, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Post-Impressionism.](#)  
Link: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape\\_painting#/media/File:VanGogh-starry\\_night\\_balance1.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_painting#/media/File:VanGogh-starry_night_balance1.jpg)

What stands out most gets noticed first.

In order to attract viewers every layout needs a focal point. If there are too many points of interest the reader won't know where to look first and will give up.

Therefore it is important to emphasize the most important element based on the message you're trying to communicate. As a general rule, a focal point is created when one element differs from the rest. E.g. if all is vertical a horizontal element will differ from the rest. A small detailed illustration surrounded by a large area of flat colour would form a focal point.

## **To create emphasis you can:**

Place a small element, say as a line of reversed type on small photo, in the middle of large area of black or white.

Surround an illustration with a lot of text.

Use a series of evenly spaced, square photos next to an outlined photo with an unusual shape.

Put an important bit of copy on a curve or an angle while keeping all the other type in straight columns.

Use bold, black type for head or subhead and much lighter type for all other text.

Place a large picture next to a small bit of copy.

Put a shape that appears to be three-dimensional or a black-and-white photo against a field of flat colour.

Reverse the headline out of a black or coloured box.

Use coloured type or an unusual face for the most important information.

Put a list of benefits or a sidebar (a short article that supports a longer one) in a tinted box.



# Unity



Credit: Blake's *The Lovers' Whirlwind* illustrates Hell in Canto V of [Dante's \*Inferno\*](#) (artist-William Blake). Use of colour and shape of humans to produce unity in this piece of art.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Blake#/media/File:Blake\\_Dante\\_Hell\\_V.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Blake#/media/File:Blake_Dante_Hell_V.jpg)

All the elements look like they belong together

Readers need visual clues to tell them a piece is a unit. Does the headline, copy, photo caption go together? If there is no organisation or some relationship between the elements on a page, the reader will get lost. You can group images or type, elements close together look like they belong together. Repeating: a colour, shape or texture repeated in the design pulls it together. Use a colour from a photo for the background colour. A grid establishes a framework for spacing and proportions of type and pictures in a piece. Variety keeps unified layouts from being boring.

Use unity to hold a layout together and variety to give it life.

**To create unity you can:**

Repeat a colour, shape or texture in different areas spread or throughout a brochure.  
(Make all the photos circular or oval.)

Group elements, such as related headline, body copy, picture and caption, together.

Pick visuals that share similar colour, theme or shape.

Line up photos and copy along the same grid line(s) throughout a piece.

Stick to one or two types of families, varying only size and weight for contrast throughout a brochure or newsletter.

Keep the type style you select for heads, body copy, photo captions and callouts consistent throughout.

Use the same colour palette throughout.

Place callouts (quotes or sentences that summarize piece, also called “pull quotes”) near the section type from which they were taken or to which they appear.

Put a border around a poster, page or spread.

To create unity you can group elements with light screens or tints.



# Rhythm



Credit: Mixed Media Painting (Detail) by Choichun Leung / Dumbo Arts Center: Art Under the Bridge Festival 2009 / SML.20090926.10D.54933.P1.L1. See the rhythm of the horizontal broad lines (top to bottom), and the rhythm of the writing on the right and left hand side.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/seeminglee/3990108219>

Rhythm is Communicating a feeling or mood. For example a regular, calm, relaxing mood.

Abrupt changes in size, establishes an exciting mood

A pattern created by repeating elements that are varied.

Repetition: repeating similar elements in a consistent manner.

Variation: a change form, size, or position of elements.

To create rhythm you can:

Repeat a series of similar shaped elements along the same baseline, with even white spaces between each (regular rhythm).

Repeat a series of progressively larger elements with larger white spaces between each (progressive rhythm).

Make the entire test the same size (in the same-sized columns or boxes) but make the pictures different sizes (repetition with variation).

Alternate dark, bold type, and light, thin type.

Alternate dark pages (with lots of types or dark pictures/ with light pages with less type or light-coloured pictures in a brochure).

Repeat a similar shape in various areas of a layout.

Repeat the same element in the same place on every page of a newsletter so the reader moves steadily through it. (Repeat a reduced version of the nameplate at the top.)

Use a lot of elements with tight spacing between them or a few elements with loose spacing between them.