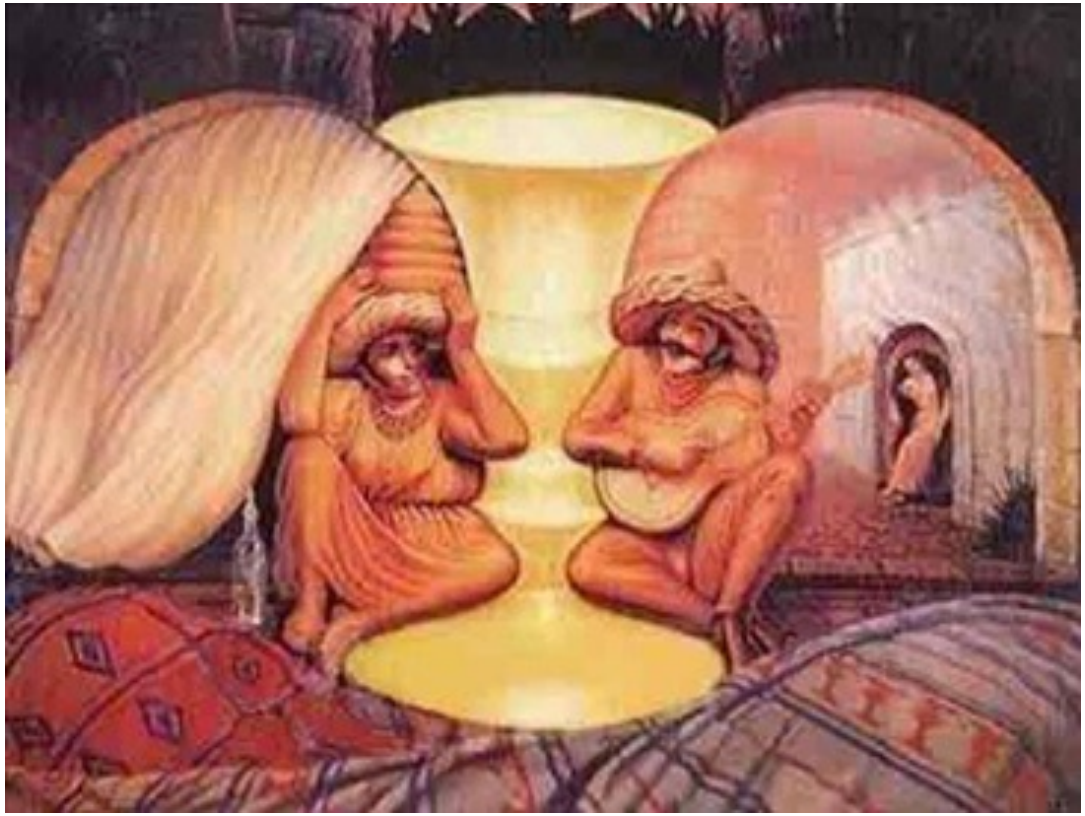
Design Principles for Visual Composition

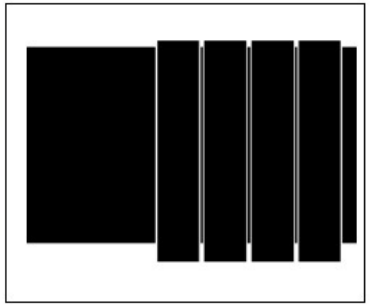
- Unity and Gestalt
- Visual Weight
- Balance and Emphasis
- Text layout Examples
- Legibility

Gestalt – Theory of perception

The human brain perceives images as a unified whole, rather than as small parts.



PHOTOPORTFOLIO
people
animals
objects
nature



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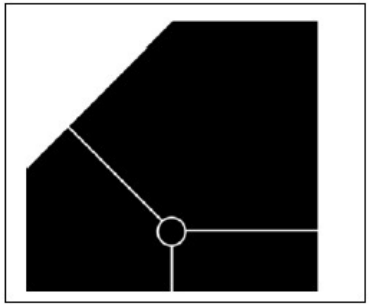

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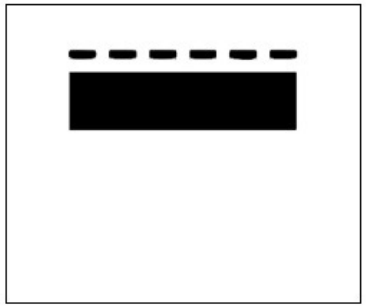

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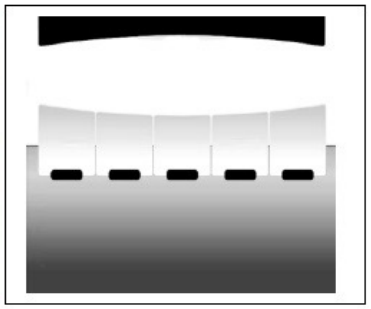

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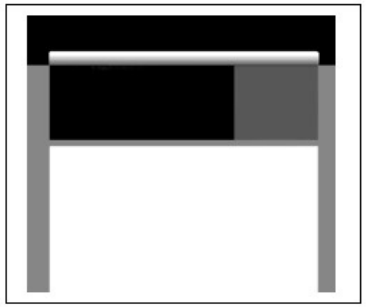
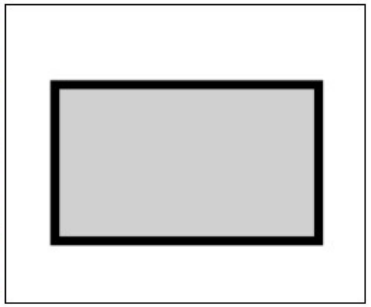


DesignMedia
About company



Gestalt Principles

Visual information is understood holistically before it is examined separately.

Our brains use Gestalt principles create unity in a composition.

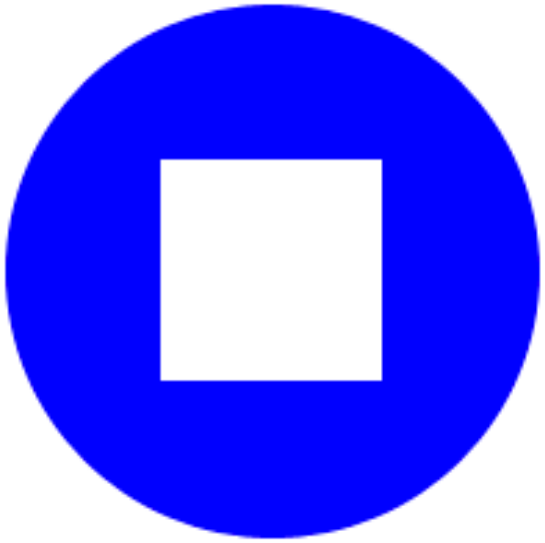
Designers reinforce unity by applying Gestalt principles.

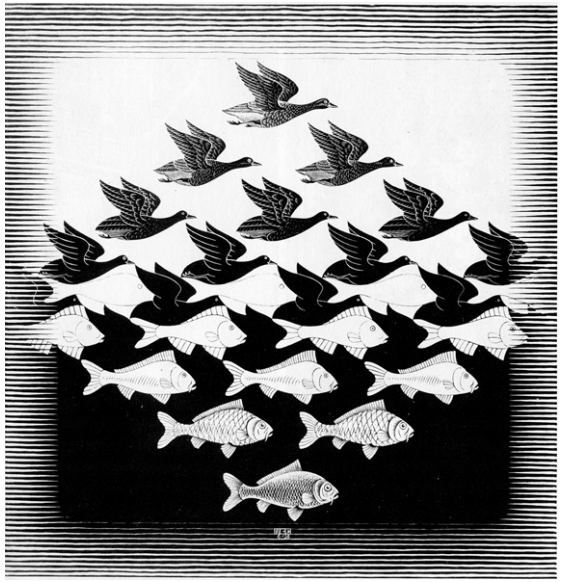
An image composed of units that are unrelated in size style orientation and color appears chaotic and unresolved.

- Figure/Ground
- Proximity
- Similarity
- Symmetry
- Continuity
- Closure

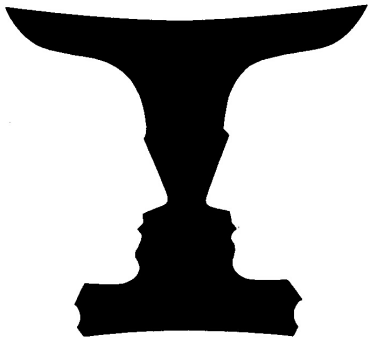
Figure/Ground

Our perceptual tendency to separate whole figures from their backgrounds



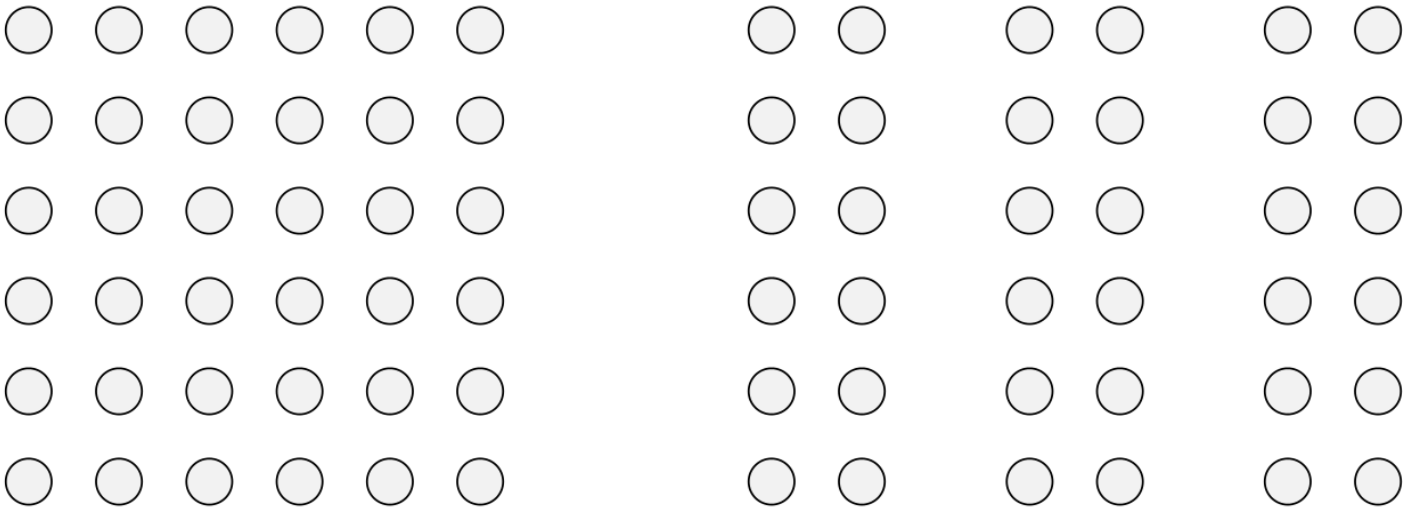


M. C. Escher Sky and Water 1 1938



Proximity (AKA Grouping)

Our perceptual tendency to perceive objects in close proximity as a single unit



Similarity

Our perceptual tendency to conceptually group objects that are similar in shape, size, color, or texture.

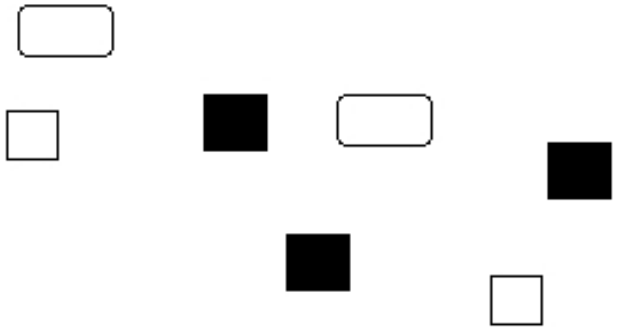


Image Source:
http://graphicdesign.spokanefalls.edu/tutorials/process/gestaltprinciples/gestaltprinc.htm

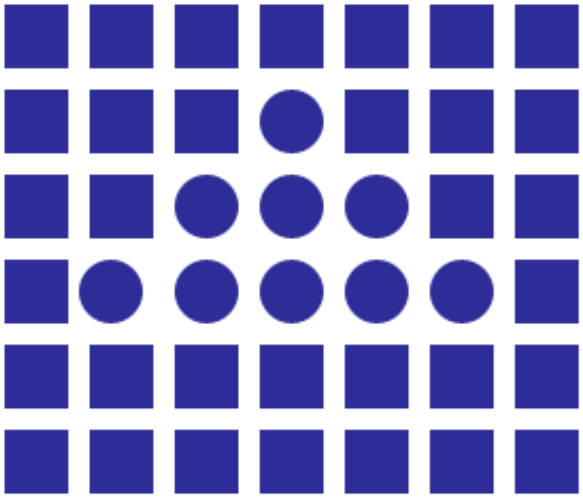
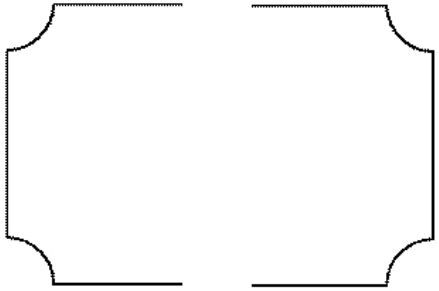


Image Source:
http://facweb.cs.depaul.edu/sgrais/gestalt_principles.htm

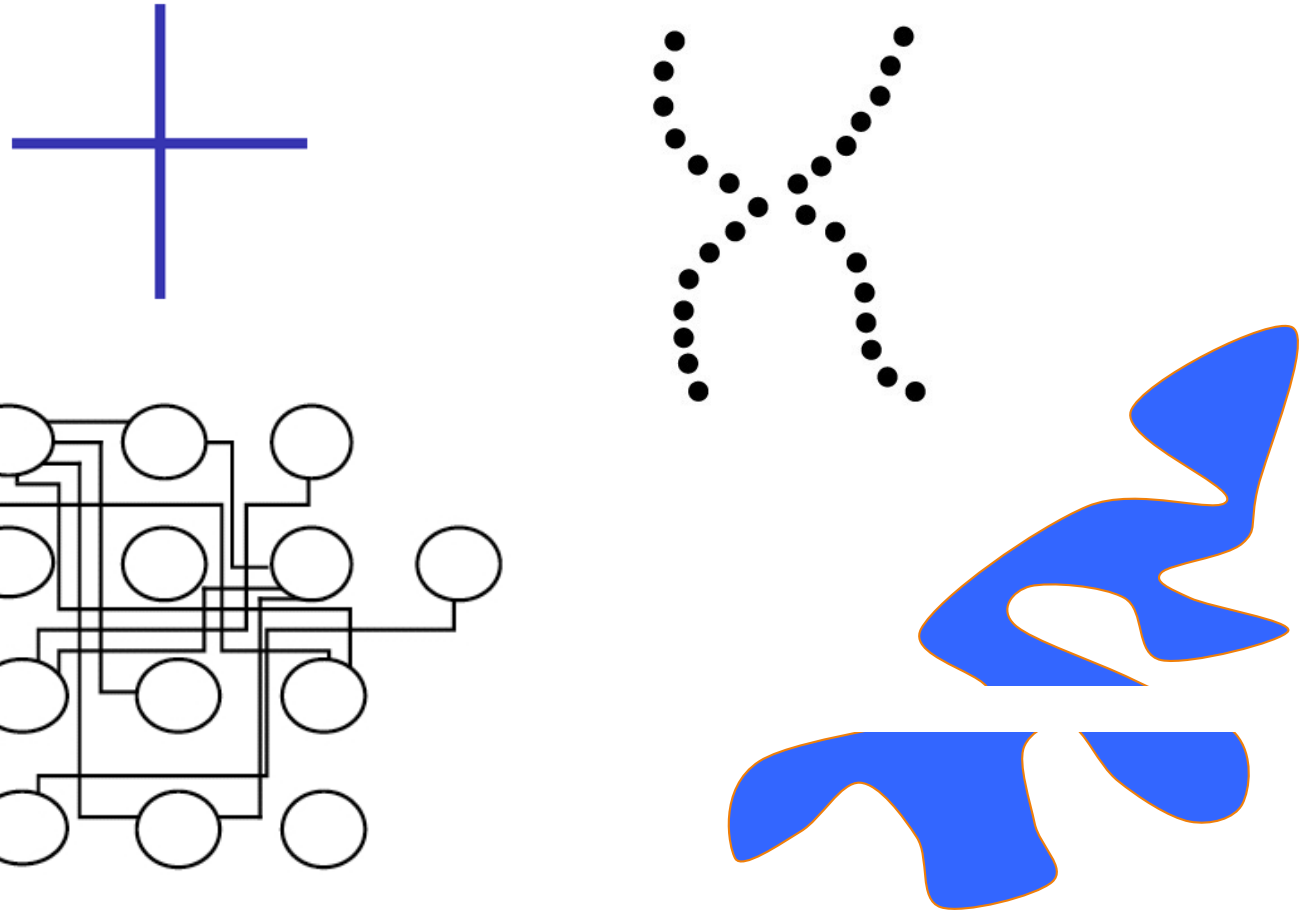
Symmetry

Our perceptual tendency to seek symmetry and connect symmetrical elements to form a coherent shape.



Continuity

Our perceptual tendency to see lines as continuous even when they are intersected; and to see two groupings of similar things as one interrupted group.



Closure

Our perceptual tendency to fill in missing parts of an object so it appears whole.

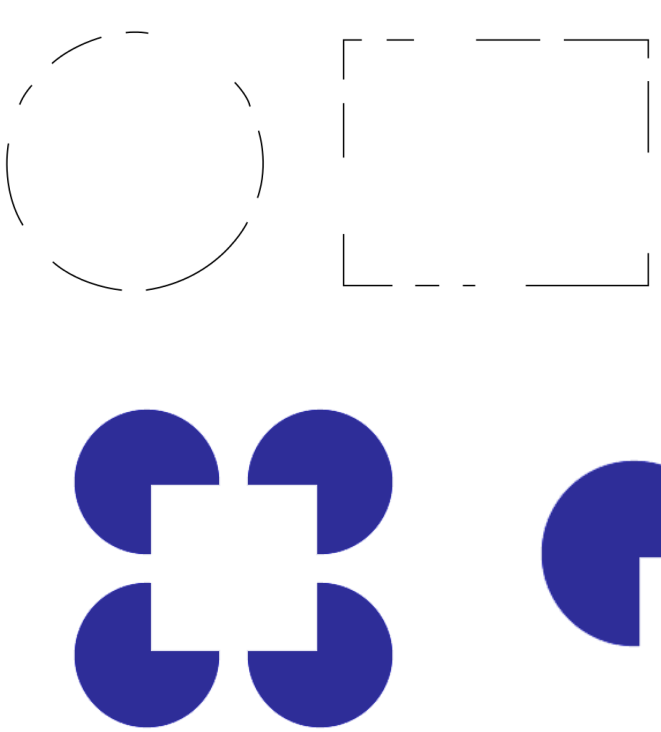


Image Source:
http://facweb.cs.depaul.edu/sgrais/gestalt_principles.htm

Panda image Source:
http://graphicdesign.spokanefalls.edu/tutorials/process/gestaltprinciples/gestaltprinc.htm

Unity

- Unity refers to the harmony and cohesion of the composition.
- Unity is achieved by application of the Gestalt Theory.

Gestalt:
Tendency to perceive an image as an organized whole.

Principles:
- Figure/Ground
- Proximity
- Similarity
- Symmetry
- Continuity
- Closure

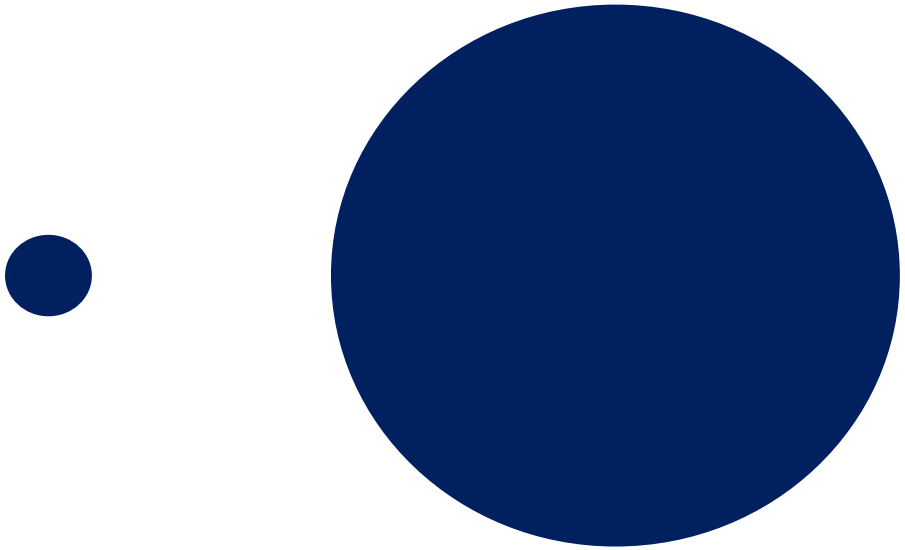
Visual Weight

Describes how much visual attention a design element pulls

Visual weight

Size:

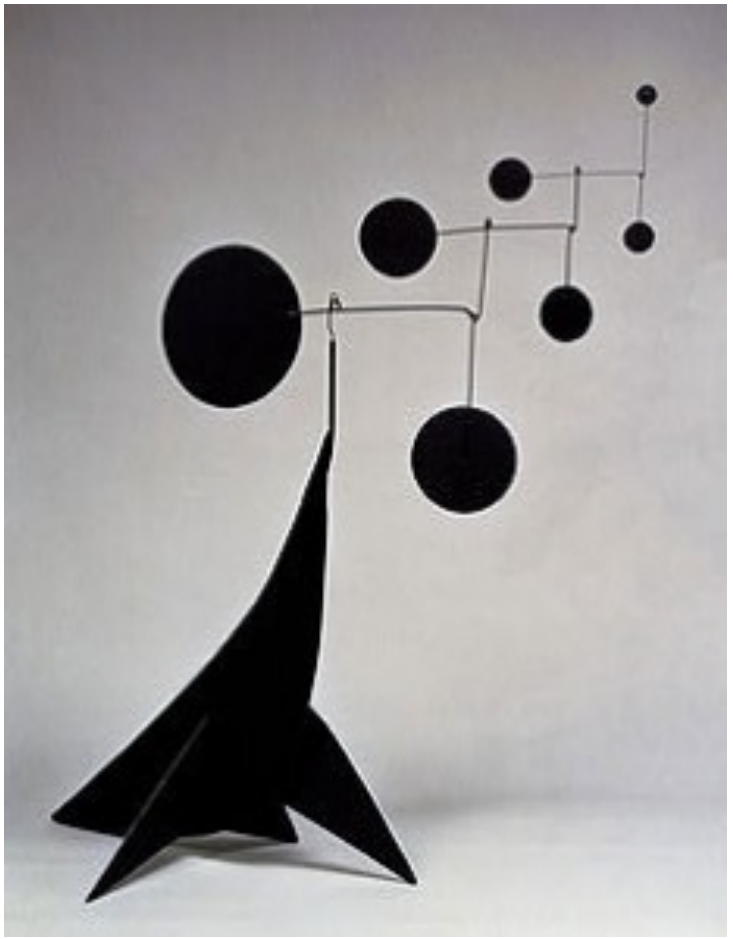
Large elements have more visual weight than small elements.



Visual weight

Position:

1) Elements located higher in the composition are perceived to weigh more than elements located lower in the composition.



Alexander Calder, Performing Seal, 1950

Visual weight

Position:

2) The further from the center or dominant area of a composition, the greater the visual weight

Vicki Jauron, 2011

John Need Photography

Visual weight

Position:

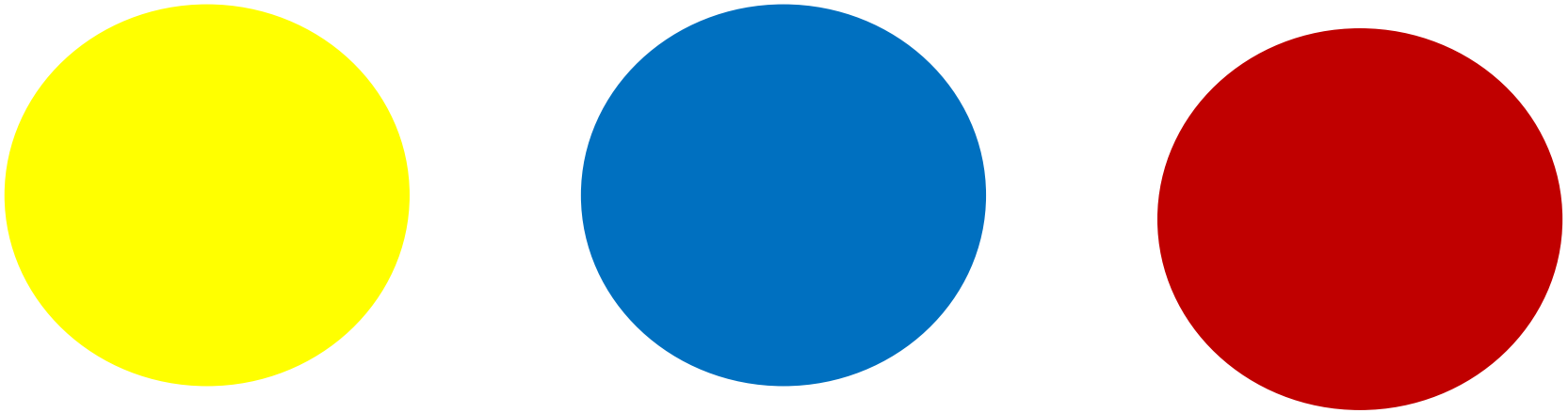
3) Elements in the foreground carry more weight than elements in the background.

Andrew Wyeth, The Drifter (1964)

Visual weight

Color:

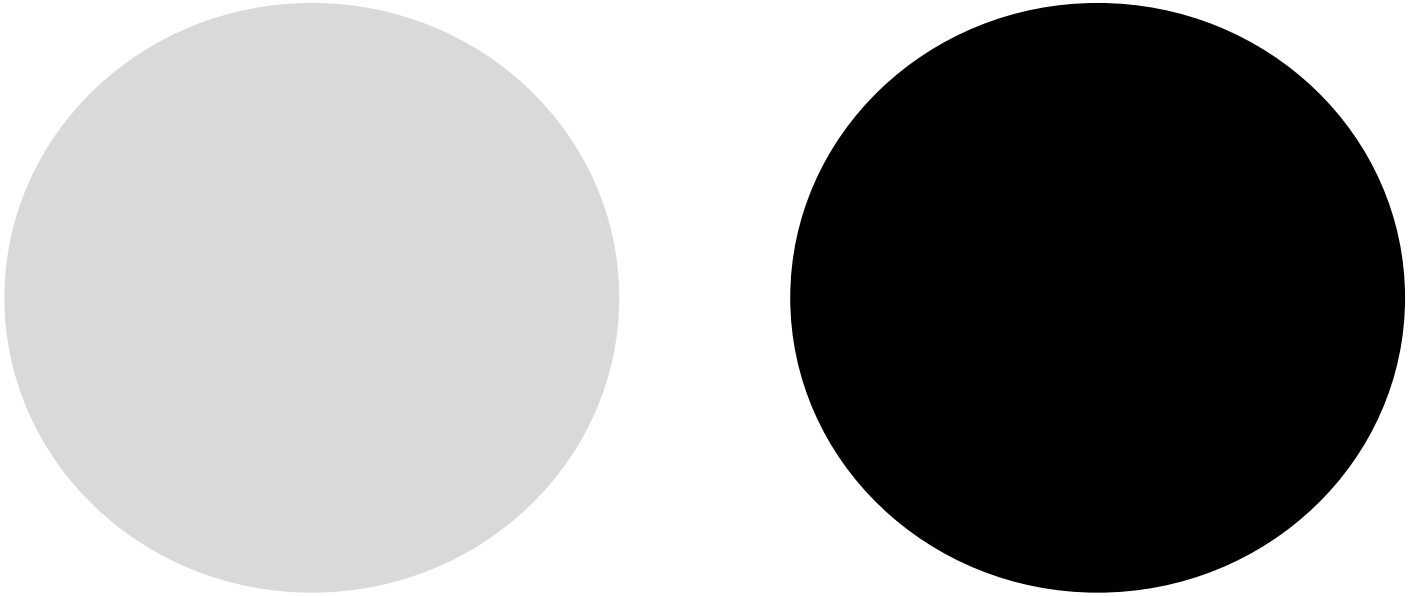
Warm colors advance into the foreground and tend to weigh more than cool colors, which recede into the background. Red is considered the heaviest color and yellow the lightest.



Visual weight

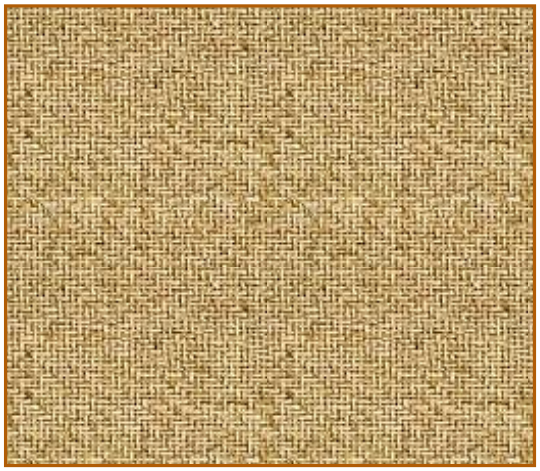
Value:

Dark elements have more visual weight than light elements.



Visual weight

Texture:
Textured elements appear heavier than non-textured objects. Texture makes an element appear three-dimensional, which gives the appearance of mass and physical weight.

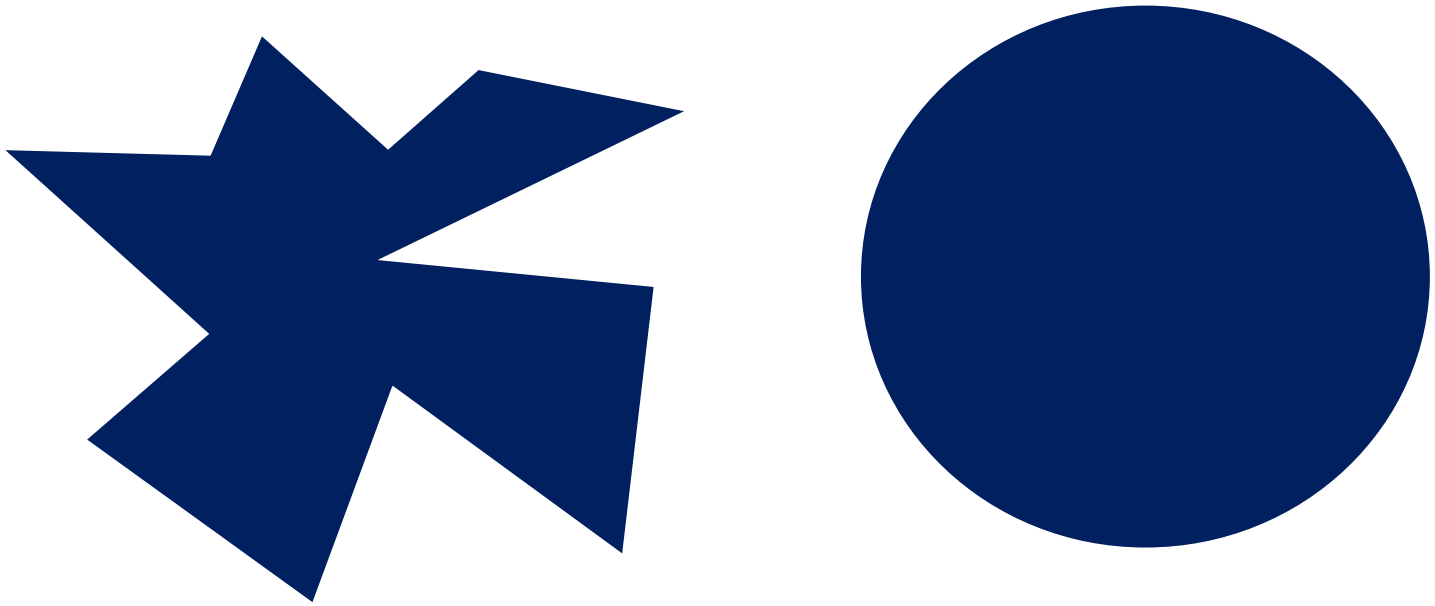


Example: In portrait photography, the background is often smoothed/blurred out.

Cheesy Stock Photo

Visual weight

Shape:
Objects with a regular shape appear heavier than objects with an irregular shape.



Balance

Balance refers to the distribution of **visual weight**.

Symmetrical Balance uses symmetry to balance the composition.

The Two Fridas, 1939 by Frida Kahlo

Asymmetrical Balance

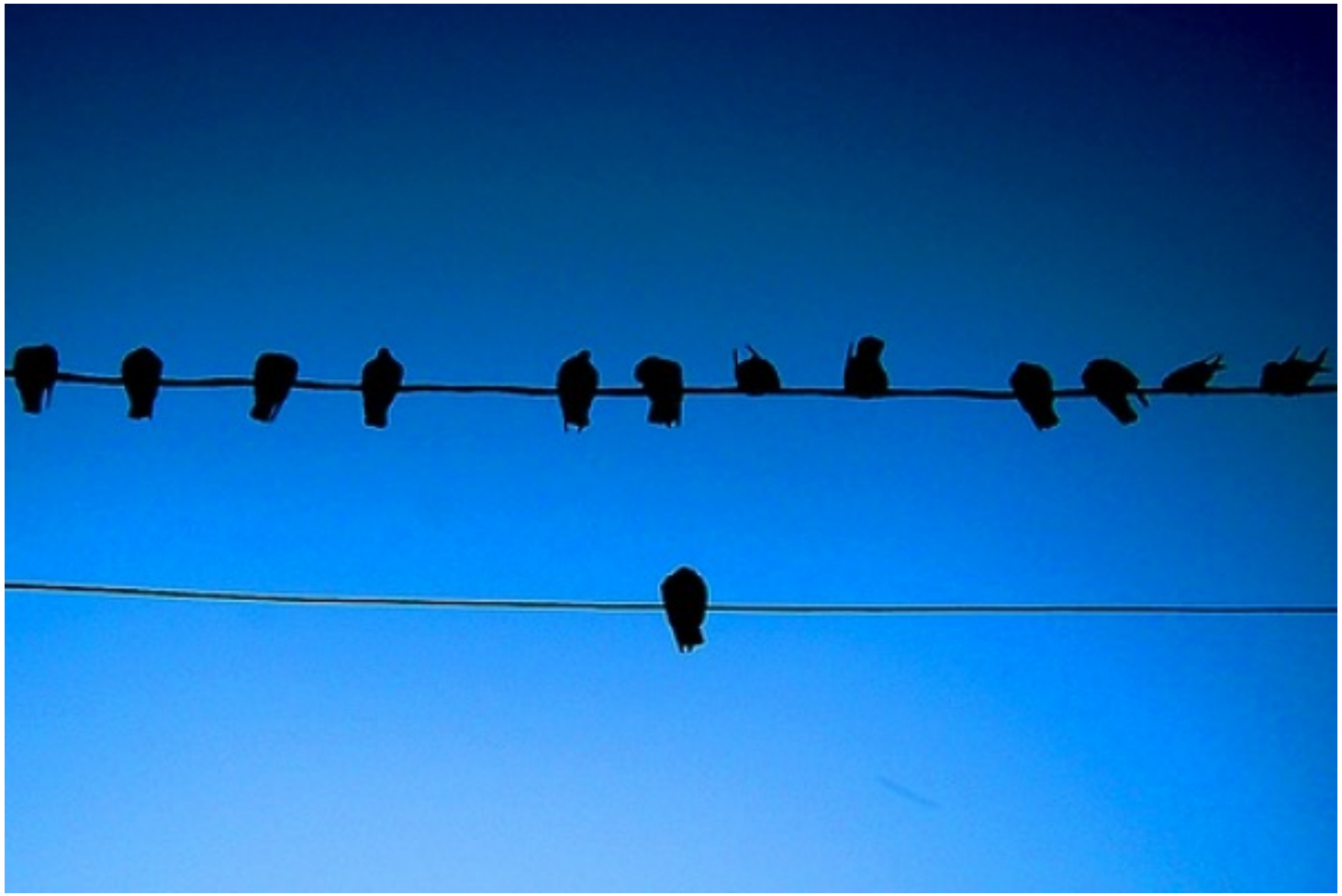
Vincent Van Gogh,
Starry Night, 1889

Emphasis

Emphasis by Contrast

Arnaldo Pomodoro,
Sphere, 1965

Emphasis by Isolation



Stock Photo

Emphasis by Placement

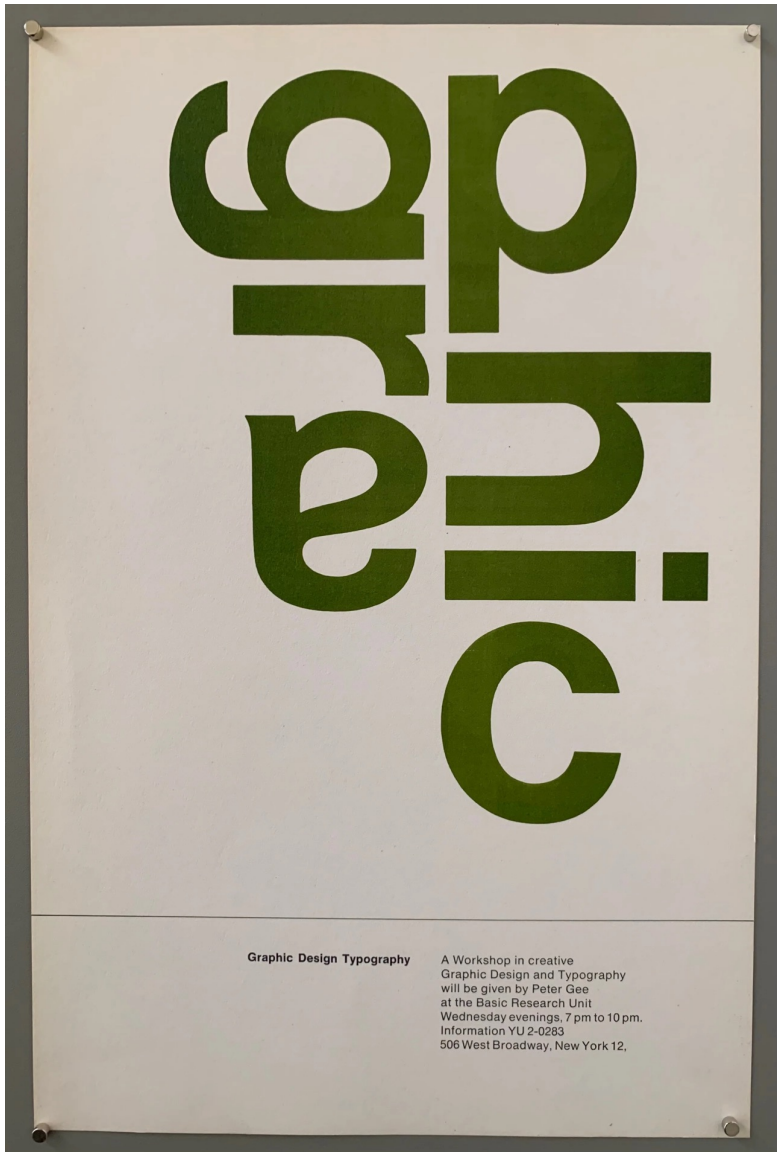
Jay Dickman, National Geographic, Title and date unknown

Back to work

WORK HARD PLAY HARD

(*NEVER* PLAY IT SAFE)

Sure, we know how to work together, but we also know how to play together. This helps build strong client relationships, award-winning projects and an environment that puts people first—and they know it.



Graphic Design
by
Peter Gee

Text Legibility

Size – for body text, use 9 to 12 point.

(table on the right translates points to web units)

Use smaller text only for captions and fine print.

Use larger text only for headings, for larger resolution displays, or for seniors or children.

Spacing - Proportionally spaced typefaces are preferred over monospaced.

This is an example of a proportionally spaced font. Most fonts are proportionally spaced.

```
This is an example of a monospaced font. Use these fonts only to make specific aesthetic statements.
```

Points	Pixels	Ems	Percent
6pt	8px	0.5em	50%
7pt	9px	0.55em	55%
7.5pt	10px	0.625em	62.5%
8pt	11px	0.7em	70%
9pt	**12px**	**0.75em**	**75%**
10pt	**13px**	**0.8em**	**80%**
10.5pt	**14px**	**0.875em**	**87.5%**
11pt	**15px**	**0.95em**	**95%**
12pt	**16px**	**1em**	**100%**
13pt	17px	1.05em	105%
13.5pt	18px	1.125em	112.5%
14pt	19px	1.2em	120%
14.5pt	20px	1.25em	125%
15pt	21px	1.3em	130%
16pt	22px	1.4em	140%
17pt	23px	1.45em	145%
18pt	24px	1.5em	150%
20pt	26px	1.6em	160%
22pt	29px	1.8em	180%
24pt	32px	2em	200%
26pt	35px	2.2em	220%
27pt	36px	2.25em	225%
28pt	37px	2.3em	230%
29pt	38px	2.35em	235%
30pt	40px	2.45em	245%
32pt	42px	2.55em	255%
34pt	45px	2.75em	275%
36pt	48px	3em	300%

Text Legibility

Text Blocks – for body text, limit the width of your text blocks to 12 words per line.

Text blocks that are too wide become burdensome to read.

This paragraph, for example, spreads out across the entire page width, and you will find that it is more difficult to read than the paragraphs below. "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog" is an English-language pangram—a sentence that contains all of the letters of the alphabet. It is commonly used for touch-typing practice, testing typewriters and computer keyboards, displaying examples of fonts, and other applications involving text where the use of all letters in the alphabet is desired.

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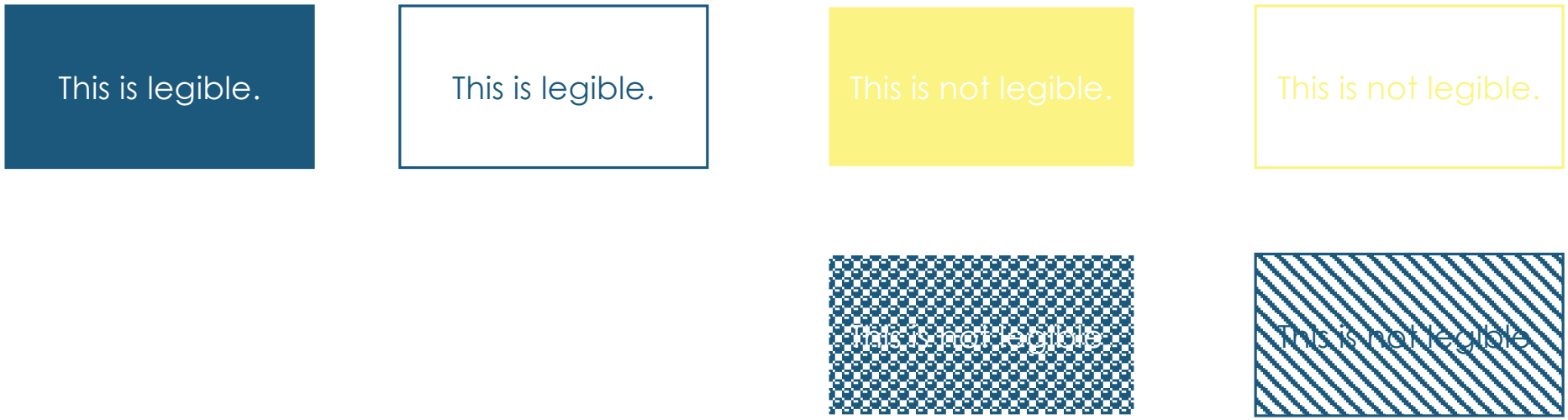
Text Legibility

Contrast - Use dark text on light background, or vice versa.

Contrast level between text and background should be more than 70%

Avoid putting text on patterned backgrounds.

For long text blocks, dark text on a light background is preferred.