Design Elements

Design elements are the basic units of a painting, drawing, design or other visual piece[]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_elements_and_principles#cite_note-John_L-1) and include:

**Line** A fundamental mark or stroke used in drawing in which the length is longer than the width. It is straight and has two connected points form a line and every line has a length, width, and direction it is straight.



This image contains contour lines (the outline of the birds) and decoration lines ([hatching](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatching)).

***Uses for lines in design***

* [Contour line](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contour_line): A line that defines or bounds an edge, but not always the outside edge, could represent a fold or colour change. Divide space: A line that defines the edge of space can also be created by a gap of [negative space](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negative_space). Many uses include to separate columns, rows of type, or to show a change in document type. Decoration: Lines are used in linear shapes and patterns to decorate many different [substrates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Substrate_%28printing%29), and can be used to create shadows representing tonal value, called [hatching](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatching).
* **COLOUR**

Colour can play a large role in the elements of design[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_elements_and_principles%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-C-3) with the [colour wheel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_wheel) being used as a tool, and [colour theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_theory) providing a body of practical guidance to colour mixing and the visual impacts of specific colour combination.



Colour star containing primary, secondary, and tertiary colours.

***Types of colour***

[Primary colour](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_color): The three colours that are equal distant on the colour wheel and used to make up all other colours; red, yellow, and blue

[Secondary colour](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secondary_color): A mixture of two primary colours including green, violet, and orange. Secondary colours are a way to have more vibrant colours.[]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_elements_and_principles#cite_note-C-3)

[Tertiary colour](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertiary_color): Colours formed from a primary and a secondary colour like yellow-green, red-violet, and yellow-orange.

* ***Perceptual attributes of colour***
* [Hue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hue): The redness, blueness, and greenness of a colour.
* Value ([lightness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lightness_%28color%29)): [Tints and shades](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tints_and_shades) of colours that are created by adding black to a colour for a shade and white for a tint. Creating a tint or shade of a colour reduces the [saturation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturation_%28color_theory%29).[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_elements_and_principles#cite_note-C-3)
* [Saturation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturation_%28color_theory%29): Give a colour [brightness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brightness) or dullness

***Ways colour can guide the reader a***ids organization: Develop a colour strategy and stay consistent with those colours. Gives emphasis: Create a hierarchy

* Provides direction: Using warm and cool colours to relate parts with each other. Warm colours move elements forward and cool colours move them back. Display text using warm colours behind a cool colour background will stand out and direct the readers eye
* **Shape**

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, colour, or texture.[]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_elements_and_principles#cite_note-4) All objects are composed of shapes and all other 'Elements of Design' are shapes in some way.

***General Categories of Shapes***

Mechanical Shapes (Geometric Shapes): These are the shapes that can be drawn using a ruler or compass. Mechanical shapes, whether simple or complex, produce a feeling of control or order. Organic Shapes: Freehand drawn shapes that are complex and normally found in nature. Organic shapes produce a natural feel

**Texture (visual arts)**

Meaning the way a surface feels or is perceived to feel. Texture can be added to attract or repel interest to an element, depending on the pleasantness of the texture.

***Types of texture***

Tactile texture: The actual three-dimension feel of a surface that can be touched. Painter can use [impasto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impasto) to build peaks and create texture.

Visual texture: The illusion of the surfaces peaks and valleys, like the tree pictured. Any texture shown in a photo is a visual texture, meaning the paper is smooth no matter how rough the image perceives it to be

Most textures have a natural feel but still seem to repeat a [motif](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motif_%28visual_arts%29) in some way. Regularly repeating a motif will result in a texture appearing as a [pattern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pattern).

**Space**

In design, space is concerned with the area the design will take place on. For a two-dimensional design space concerns creating the illusion of a third dimension on a flat surface

***Major Methods of Controlling the Illusion of Space***

Overlap: Where objects appear to be on top of each other. This illusion makes the top element look closer to the observer. There is no way to determine the depth of the space, only the order of closeness.

Shading: Adding gradation marks to make an object of a two-dimensional surface seem three-dimensional.

Five Kinds of Shading Light: Together these shadows and highlights give an object a three-dimensional look.

1. Highlight
2. Transitional Light
3. Core of the Shadow
4. Reflected Light
5. Cast Shadow
* Linear Perspective: A concept relating to how an object seems smaller the farther away it gets.
* Atmospheric Perspective: Based on how air acts as a filter to change the appearance of distance objects.

**Form**

Form is any [three dimensional](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_dimensional) object. Form can be measured, from top to bottom (height), side to side (width), and from back to front (depth). Form is also defined by light and dark. There are two types of form, geometric (man-made) and natural (organic form). Form may be created by the combining of two or more shapes. It may be enhanced by tone, texture and color. It can be illustrated or constructed.

[**Form follows function**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Form_follows_function)**.**

Originally a principle associated with [modern architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_architecture) and [industrial design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_design) in the 20th century, the concept is now used more widely as an exhortation to base the form on the required functional use, and avoid ornamentation.

Principles of Design

Principles applied to the **elements of design** that bring them together into one design. How one applies these principles determines how successful a design may be.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_elements_and_principles#cite_note-John_L-1)

**Unity**

To achieve visual unity is a main goal of graphic design. When all elements are in agreement, a design is considered unified. No individual part is viewed as more important than the whole design. A good balance between unity and variety must be established to avoid a chaotic or a lifeless design.

**Ways to achieve unity**

* Proximity: Elements that are physically close, are considered related.
* Similarity: Elements that are related should share similar position, size, color, shape, or texture.
* Repetition and Rhythm: Recurring position, size, color, and use of a graphic element shows unity. When the repetition has a focal point interruption it is considered rhythm.
* Theme with variation: Altering the basic theme achieves unity and helps keep interest.

**Point, Line, and Plane (PLP)**

PLP are the three most basic shapes in visual design and a good design contains all three. The key to using PLP is making the shapes overlap and share elements.

Point: In design, a point can be the smallest unit of marking not simply a dot. Additionally, a point can be a small plane or a short line.

Line: The trace of a point in motion, a thin stroke, or even a narrow plane can be considered a line. Typed text automatically creates visual lines

Plane: A plane can be perceived as a trace of a line in motion like dragging a piece of chalk across a blackboard sideways (long side down). Wide lines and large points may also create a plane

**Balance**

It is a state of equalized tension and equilibrium, which may not always be calm. A unified design is also visually balanced so that no space takes away from the whole.

**Types of balance**





The top image has symmetrical balance and the bottom image has asymmetrical balance

* Symmetrical: A formal balance is a mirror image of one half of the picture. It is vertically cantered, static, and evokes a feeling of class or formality. The objects in each half of the mirror image may not be identical, but may be mirror images in sense of colour, number of objects or any other element of design.
* Asymmetrical: An informal balance that is attention attracting and dynamic. It balances a number of items of smaller size on one side with a larger one on the other. The modern feel an asymmetrical design is complex to create as it takes skills to distribute the blank space.
* Radial: Balance arranged around a central element. The elements placed in a radial balance seem to 'radiate' out from a central point in a circular fashion.
* Overall: This mosaic form of balance normally arises from too many elements being put on a page. Due to the lack of hierarchy and contrast, this form of balance can look noisy.

**Hierarchy** A good design contains elements that lead the reader through each element in order of its significance. The type and images should be expressed starting from most important to the least.

**Scale** Using the relative size of elements against each other can attract attention to a focal point. When elements are designed larger than life, scale is being used to show drama.

**Dominance** Dominance is created by contrasting size, positioning, colour, style, or shape. The focal point should dominate the design with scale and contrast without sacrificing the unity of the whole.

**Similarity and Contrast**

Some key aspects of a well designed document include dramatic contrasts, scrupulous similarity, and active white space. Planning a consistent and similar design is an important aspect of a designers work to make their focal point visible. Too much similarity is boring but without similarity important elements will not exist. Also, without contrast an image is uneventful so the key is to find the balance between similarity and contrast.

***Ways to Develop a Similar Environment***Keep it simple and eliminate clutter. Do not fill white spaces with garbage.

* Build a unique internal organization structure.
* Manipulate shapes of images and text to correlate together.
* Express continuity from page to page (in publications). Items to watch include headers, themes, borders, and spaces.
* Develop a [style manual](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Style_manual) and stick with the format.

***Ways to Create Contras***]

Space

* + Filled vs Empty
	+ Near vs Far
	+ 2-D vs 3-D
* Position
	+ Top vs Bottom
	+ Isolated vs Grouped
	+ Centered vs Off Center
* Form
	+ Simple vs Complex
	+ Beauty vs Ugly
	+ Whole vs Broken
* Direction
	+ Vertical vs Horizontal
	+ Stability vs Movement
	+ Convex vs Concave
* Structure
	+ Organized vs Chaotic
	+ Serif vs Sans Serif
	+ Mechanical vs Hand Drawn
* Size
	+ Big vs Little
	+ Long vs Short
	+ Deep vs. Shallow
* Color
	+ Grayscale vs Color
	+ Light vs Dark
	+ Warm vs Cool
* Texture
	+ Fine vs Coarse
	+ Smooth vs Rough
	+ Sharp vs Dull
* Density
	+ Transparent vs Opaque
	+ Thick vs Thin
	+ Liquid vs Solid
* Gravity
	+ Light vs Heavy
	+ Stable vs Unstable

Movement is the path the viewer’s eye takes through the artwork, often to focal areas. Such movement can be directed along lines edges, shape and colour within the artwork.