

DESIGN BASICS

When designing a communications text, whether in print or online, designers should consider the following design principles.

BALANCE

The elements contained within a design layout (i.e. text, images, color, etc.) need to look natural and balanced. Balance is achieved by controlling the size, weight, and position of the elements within your design.

Size: Design elements should be proportional and scaled appropriately.

Weight: Think about the weight of the fonts you use. Are they appropriate to the subject matter? Are they compatible with the images contained in the design?

Position: The elements within a layout can be arranged in a formal/symmetrical (think mirrored image) manner or in an informal/asymmetrical, manner.

Color: Create contrast by including both light and dark elements in your design.

UNITY

Unity is created by grouping elements together, rather than scattering them across a layout.

Unity is dependent on consistency - of fonts, shapes, sizes, and elements.

Unity is enhanced by simplicity. Don't use too many font styles or contrasting shapes.

A layout should include a dominant element that helps tie everything together.

HARMONY

Elements within a design layout need to get along or harmonize.

Shapes within the layout need to harmonize with the overall shape of the layout.

Font styles should compliment each other.

The weight and tone of elements need to go together.

PROPORTION

When including multiple elements in a layout consider the size of the elements in relation to each other. Are they proportionate? Do the differences in sizes look natural?

When sizing elements be sure to include different sizes - variety encourages interest and unity, while equally sized items can be monotonous and boring.

CONTRAST

It's important to include contrast in your design. Contrast helps grab your attention and stimulates interest.

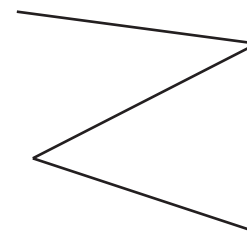
Contrast can be created by:

- adding the occasional bold or italics word or phrase
- varying sizes of design elements (text blocks, images, fonts)
- breaking up large blocks of text with sub heads
- enlarging one design element, like an image

RHYTHM

Layouts need to be active, not static. Movement, even within a printed page, can be created the repetition of design elements like shapes, types, lines, and textures.

On a printed page a reader's eye naturally moves in a Z formation from the top left to the bottom right.



Z formation

But a designer can change a reader's eye movement by ordering design elements along a vertical, horizontal, or diagonal format.