Visual Literacy

Design Principles

Design principles help make visual images pleasing and interesting to look at. Design principles include:

- Balance
- Perspective
- Harmony
- Unity
- Movement
- Variety

Upon completing this lesson segment, you will be able to

- Write down at least three design principles,
- Write the definition of each design principle.
- Write down at least two characteristics of three or more design principles.
- Identify the design principles used in a given visual image.
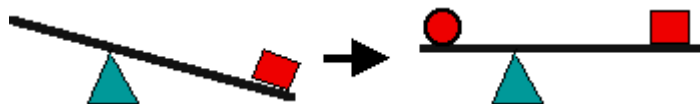
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Design Principles - Balance

Balance is a psychological sense of equilibrium.

As a design principle, balance places the parts of a visual in an aesthetically pleasing arrangement.

Join us for a day of environmental recreation...
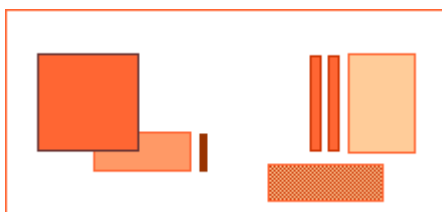
before all the leaves fall!

In visual images, balance is formal when both sides are symmetrical in terms of arrangement.

Balance is informal when sides are not exactly symmetrical, but the resulting image is still balanced.

4

four

Informal balance is more dynamic than formal balance and normally keeps the learner's attention focused on the visual message.
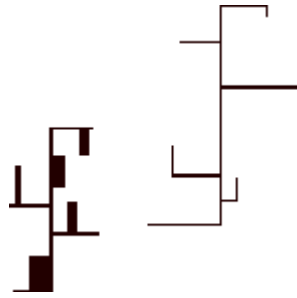
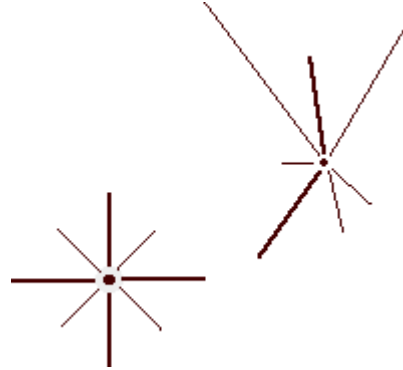There are three main types of balance,

horizontal balance,

vertical balance,

radial balance,

The next design principle is **perspective**.

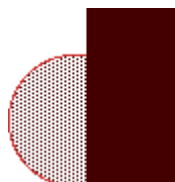Back One Screen

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Design Principles - Perspective

Perspective is created through the arrangement of objects in two-dimensional space to look like they appear in real life.
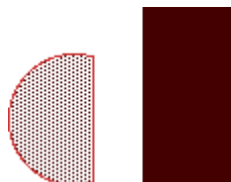

Perspective is a learned meaning of the relationship between different objects seen in space.

Is the dark rectangle in front of a circle,

or beside a semi-circle?

Perspective adds realism to a visual image. The size of a rectangle means little until another object gives it the size of a desk, or the size of a building.

Perspective can be used to draw the audience into a visual.

Perception can be achieved through the use of

relative sizes of objects,

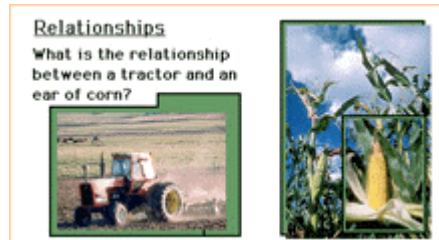overlapping objects,

and blurring or sharpening objects.

The next design principle is **harmony**.
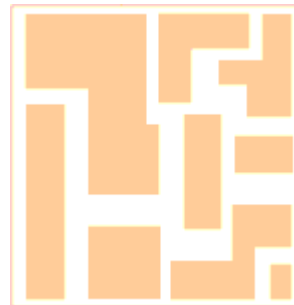
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Design Principles - Harmony

Harmony in visual design means all parts of the visual image relate to and complement each other.

Harmony pulls the pieces of a visual image together.

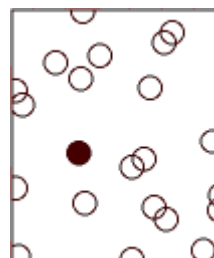Harmony can be achieved through repetition and rhythm.

Repetition reemphasizes visual units, connecting parts and creating an area of attention.

Rhythm is the flow depicted in a visual.

Rhythm helps direct eye movement.

Patterns or shapes can help achieve harmony.

By repeating patterns in an interesting arrangement, the overall visual image comes together.
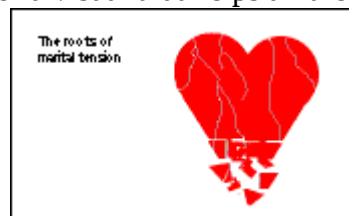

The next design principle is **unity**.

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Design Principles - Unity

Unity is the relationship among the elements of a visual that helps all the elements function together. Unity gives a sense of oneness to a visual image. In other words, the words and the images work together to create meaning.
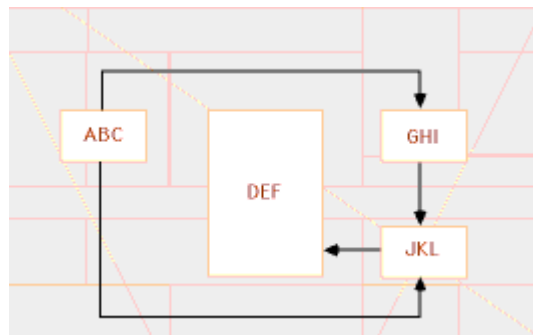

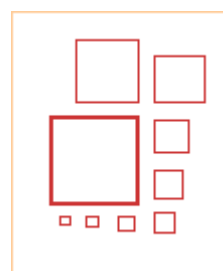Unity helps organize a visual image, facilitating interpretation and understanding.

This visual is confusing. It is hard to see the relationships between the various parts.
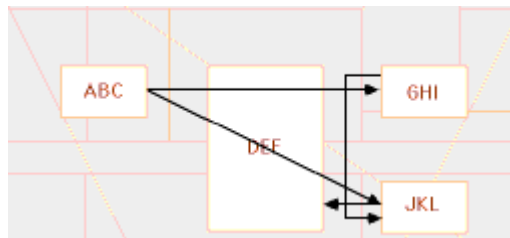
With better unity, the visual is now organized and easier to understand.

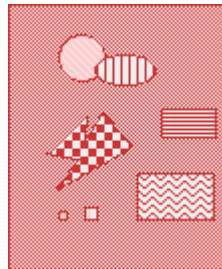Unity can be achieved through the use of similar shapes.

Unity can be achieved through the use of a common pattern.

Unity can be achieved through the use of space.

Unity can be achieved through the use of a common background.

The next design principle is **movement**.

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Design Principles - Movement

Motion or movement in a visual image occurs when objects seem to be moving in a visual image.

Movement in a visual image comes from the kinds of shapes, forms, lines, and curves that are used.

Diagonal lines tend to create the illusion of movement or motion.

Changes in direction, or change in the darkness or lightness of an image can also create a sense of motion.

Similar shapes connected with each other or overlapping each other can imply movement or restlessness.

Do not feed the dinosaur

A series of images shown as individual frames (like a comic strip) can provide a sense of movement through time.
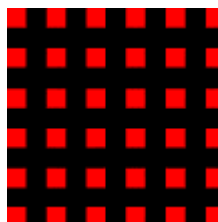
The last design principle is **variety**.

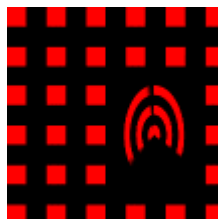Back One Screen
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Design Principles - Variety

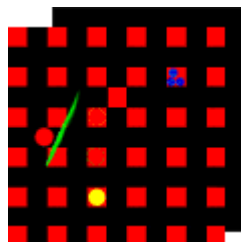Variety provides contrast to harmony and unity
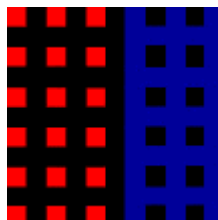
If this is harmony,

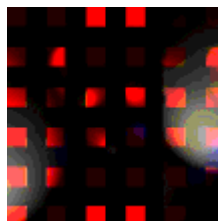then variety might be something like this.

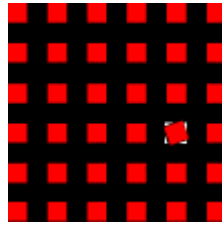Variety consists of the differences in objects that add interest to a visual image.

Variety can be achieved by using opposites or strong contrasts.

Changing the size, point of view, and angle of a single object can add variety and interest to a visual image.

Breaking a repeating pattern can enliven a visual image.

Variety is the last design principle.

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