

What makes a page layout work?

PURPOSE

Every communication has a purpose. Is it to inform? Persuade? Call to action? Create recognition? Defining the purpose of your piece is essential to creating a layout that works.

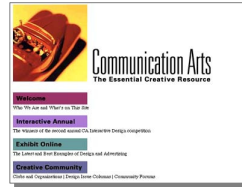
ORGANIZATION

Human beings like to create order, to organize, to classify things into groups, to compare and contrast one thing to another. It helps us to see patterns, understand similarities and differences—feel comfortable. Organizing information in ways that help the viewer move smoothly and easily through the piece is also essential to creating a layout that works.

ATTENTION

Getting the attention of your audience is also essential. Where is your piece going to appear? How will it be distributed? Will you need to distinguish it from competing materials? Who is the audience? Knowing the answers to these questions helps when applying the elements of graphic design to your page layout.

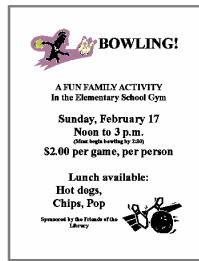
Alignment



The simplest way to create a visual relationship between all of the elements in a layout, even if the elements are far apart, is to align the elements in some kind of pattern or grid.

Example: Designers at Communication Arts used alignment to establish an overall sense of order and unity among disparate graphic elements. The logo typeface contrasts dramatically with more subtle elements.

Common Mistakes: Arbitrary placement; no thoughtful hierarchy of information; mixing different text-alignment schemes on the same page--using left, center, and right alignments in the same layout, for example.



As you can see in the example to the left, someone just plopped some type and images on a page without any understanding of how to use the elements and principles of design to organize the information and attract the attention of the audience. How would you design a flyer to advertise a night of bowling that raises money for the Friends of the Library?

The Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency that fosters innovation, leadership and a lifetime of learning, supports the operating expenses of this project.



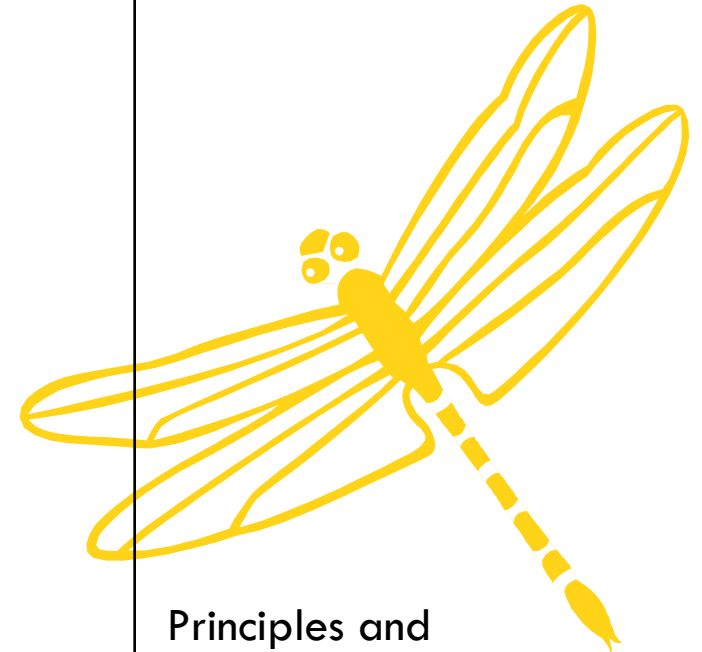
The Dragonfly Project

Chilkoot Indian Association Tribal Government
and Haines Borough Public Library
Technology Awareness Program

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Graphic Design



Principles and
Page Layout

The Principles of Graphic Design are used in artforms from painting to film.

Balance

The weight of objects and text as it appears on paper create balance. This is one of the primary ways the designer uses elements to create stability or a sense of dynamic space. Balance can relate to symmetry, asymmetry or radial balance.

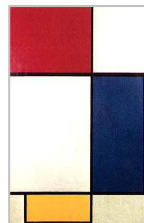
Symmetrical balance is an even placement of visual weight in the design. You can have horizontal, vertical or vertical and horizontal symmetry.

Symmetry is important because it gives us a sense of stability. On a vertical plane half of our body is a mirror image of the other half. This kind of equal geometry is at the heart of the classical sense of design with an emphasis on stability, order and tradition, and it effectively communicates these ideas to the viewer

Asymmetrical balance creates uneven spaces, a sense of imbalance making tension and a suggestion of visual movement.

Asymmetry, however, is about motion, instability and contrast and is used to give a sense of excitement and movement to a design. Dynamic line or unbalanced arrangements create in us a sense of movement and energy. It communicates a tension which is a very effective way of directing the eye.

Radial symmetry relates to images emitting from a point like spokes on a wheel or ripples from a pebble tossed into a pond.



Working with text and images to create a page layout is like the paintings of Mondrian, space and shape don't need to be evenly placed on the page but arranged in a kind of abstract composition to give the viewer a sense of interest and order.

Rule of Thirds

The rule of thirds says that most designs can be made more interesting by visually dividing the page into thirds vertically and/or horizontally and placing the most important elements within those thirds. For example, in the example of the photograph, the boy's eyes (the windows to the soul) are placed along one of the four intersections of those lines.

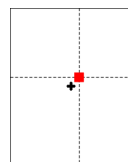


Asymmetrical balance

The calendar also uses this technique, placing the year along one of the lines, setting it at the visual center and using radial balance.



Visual Center



Placing important elements or the focal point of the design within the visual center of a piece is another design trick. The visual center is slightly to the right of and above the actual center of a page.

Rhythm

Using the repetition of elements like lines, shapes and spaces give the design vitality. Think in musical terms as a way to understand the concept of rhythm in a composition.



Emphasis or Focal Point

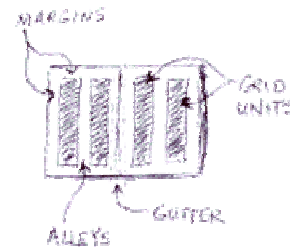
The place where the viewer's attention is drawn. This can be achieved by the use of most of the elements of design so that the eye is directed to a specific part of the design.

Unity

All the elements look like they belong together. There are a number of ways to achieve this. Using a consistent treatment of type; selecting a particular style of photography or illustration; using a palette of colors, and so on.

Grids

Graphic designers establish grids on a page that help organize and present the information. As you look through printed materials, examine how the page has been designed. Did the designer use a 2 or 3-column grid. Maybe they used a 4 or 5-column grid. How much of a margin is created around the page? What kind of alley (spacing) is between the columns? What kind of gutter (spacing) is between the pages?



Hierarchy of Information

Determining the levels of importance about the information you want to present and what will attract the viewers attention is essential to a good page layout. What is the headline information and what should be read after the headline and so on? Is the headline strong enough or do you also need to have a bold, strong image? How important is the logo/brand if you're using one? The purpose of your piece should help you evaluate the information.

