

OTHER DESIGN PRINCIPLES

VERTICAL BALANCE

Visual elements should be balanced to promote better readability. When items are overpowering or massive on a page, they may appear distracting.

Vertical Balance involves the distribution of objects on both sides of the (invisible or visible) vertical axis (considering left and right - the sides).

If you take a page and cut it down the middle with your mind (separating both the right and the left), then you should consider how you might balance what is on the right or the left.

When a heavier, darker, or more emphatic object appears on the left rather than the right, then the balance is said to be asymmetrical rather than symmetrical, since symmetrical things have balance.

HORIZONTAL BALANCE

Visual elements should be balanced horizontally as well.

Horizontal Balance involves the distribution of objects on both sides of the (invisible or visible) horizontal axis (considering top and bottom).

When a heavier, darker, or more emphatic object appears on the top rather than the bottom, then the balance is said to be asymmetrical rather than symmetrical, since symmetrical things have balance.

DOMINANCE (OR MANIPULATING THE FOCAL POINT)

Allowing some visual elements to receive more attention than others (through use of white space) can help or hurt. Regardless, it is important to keep in mind which visual elements are receiving what attention and how much. A quick test for dominance: Ask a peer to look at a visual and reveal: What is the first thing they notice on the page?

You may achieve dominance by making visual elements darker or larger. You may also choose to subtract elements to put elements into the foreground. Finally, with much of today's software, you can even put items on top of other (using layers or bring an item "to the front" which is allowed by certain paint and visual design programs).

ASYMMETRY

When an object maintains dominance vertically or horizontally, then it is said to be asymmetrical. Asymmetrical design creates visual tensions and can be exciting or playful to the audience. For example, if you have a darker object on the left and a light object on the right, you are playing with some asymmetry.

ACCORD

Accord is a term used to describe things that are usually equal in size, shape, weight, etc. Generally, the eye is pleased by similar shapes, symmetry, and closely-

related/adjacent colors (shades). Using this idea will help you to create visuals which are easier to read and more aesthetically pleasing.

PROPORTION

We examine most things on a page by considering its proportion. Proportion relates to the relative size or weight (darkness) of an item. When things are darker or lighter, taller or smaller, wider or thinner, then we are usually viewing changes in proportion.

GRADATION

Visual elements can have movement in color/weight (from light to dark), size (from small to large), or even other elements such as shape (rounded to edged). When an object shows a shift from one to the other, then you are viewing gradation.

VARIETY

You can generally change whether a visual has a variety of different types of visual elements or is minimal (contains less variety).

SCALE

You can change whether or not objects are truth-to-scale or not. You can also change whether an object is larger or smaller (moving towards DOMINANCE)

DIMENSIONALITY

Finally, you can change whether an object appears two-dimensional (flat) or three-dimensional (the appearance that the visual elements are coming out of the visual). Note: To improve the readability of most texts, I recommended two-dimensionality, especially in visuals such as charts and graphs. Three-dimensional elements tend to make pages appear more cluttered, since they appear to take up more space.

SEQUENCE

When you are dealing with direction or the page-to-page flow of a text, you are considering sequence. Consider how we read a sentence, one word at a time. The eye works similarly with visuals. We consider one section of an image, graph, or document at a time.

Some of the following ideas apply to the consideration of sequence:

1. Turning pages in a book
2. Viewing headers on a page (moving from most important to least important)
3. Moving from the left to the right.
4. Moving from the top to the bottom.
5. Viewing the image and then the text (which is the normal flow of things)
6. Viewing items by their weight/prominence.

EMPHASIS

Every page of something has a focus or a focal point. These points are the things on the page which "glue" our eyes to the page.

You can achieve emphasis by doing any of the following:

1. Give something weight or scale or darkness
2. Isolate the object
3. Use some imbalance/asymmetry