

## DESIGNING *for the* CONTENT

Design is an organic process that arises from understanding and working with the content of a site. “Content is king” — it determines both design and structure. The designer’s main goal is to organize and present it in the clearest possible fashion. Adhering to the following Design Techniques will support both the information design and the visual design.

organization  
prioritization  
bite-sized pieces  
of information  
accessibility  
consistent navigation  
& formatting

### Develop a Hierarchy

When working with content, one of the most important steps is to prioritize it. Hierarchy helps the reader interpret the relative importance of each item of content. The most elegant design fails if the information it presents is buried, butchered, or boring.

*What types of hierarchical structuring do you see on the Web? How can you achieve a clear hierarchy in your designs?*

photos  
logo  
graphics  
large letterforms  
colored text

### Designate One Focal point

Every page needs a focal point; a visual “hook” that draws in the reader. A focal point is the eye-catching element that gets noticed first. Examine your material to determine what is of the strongest visual interest and then use it to your advantage.

#### Ways to create a strong focal point:

- Use strong contrast (size, weight, color, etc.).  
Strong size contrast is especially effective.
- Place it in the center of the page, or the strongest position on the page.
- Isolate it. White space can enhance a focal point.

*What adds strength to a focal point? What weakens a focal point?*

size & placement of  
elements,  
including text  
graphics, buttons,  
icons, dingbats,  
bullets, etc.  
movement  
(animation, for example)  
white space,  
paragraph space

### Create Eye flow

The focal point is the beginning of your control over the reader! You’re the boss—it’s your job to pull them into your design and then direct them where to go and what to read. Eyeflow is about deliberately leading the reader through your content and design.

*What elements inhibit eyeflow? What techniques can you use to encourage eyeflow?*

No Kodak corners! **Create White Space**

Avoid “trapped”  
white space  
Aids organization  
and eyeflow

Silence defines noise, counters define letterforms, and the blank places on your page help to define your design!

Pay attention to the shape, size and placement of the white areas in your layout. Consider the white space as one of your elements and use it to accent the focal point, to add to the organization of the text (space between paragraphs, before subheads, etc.), and add to the overall artistic effect (lighten up the layout, interesting positive/negative interplay).

The best white space flows through the design. Flush left type creates organically-shaped white space to its right, often creating a nice flow or white space through the text.

*What are some techniques for creating good white space? What are some examples of poor use of white space?*

Cut **Aim for Simplicity**

Cut  
Cut  
Cut

KISS: keep it simple sweetie! Your fingers should be ever ready to execute the CUT command: Command-X! Get rid of extraneous elements!

*What can you do to enhance simplicity? What interferes with simplicity?*

Symmetry: quiet sense  
of order, stability **Look for Balance**

Asymmetry: sense  
of movement, change,  
thrilling

Our eye is pleased with a balanced composition on paper and on screen. Balance is achieved by two forces of equal strength that pull in opposite directions, or by multiple forces pulling in different directions whose strengths offset one another. It is not a state of rest, but a state of equal tension.

Lack of balance will irritate the viewer and impair the communication.

*How is balance achieved? What factors may destroy balance?*

text formatting  
navigation bars  
& buttons  
graphics  
placement of  
elements  
white space

## **Design for Consistency**

Whatever approach you take to the material should be done consistently throughout the site. Text and paragraph formatting, text color, icon colors, placement of elements, etc should all be handled in the same manner. The reader should know that each page is part of the same site. Sure, surprises are nice, however, not within your site's structure, layout, or navigation.

*What design decisions create inconsistency? What design decisions create consistency?*

Consistency in  
formatting,  
navigation,  
spacing  
Contrast, Repetition,  
Alignment,  
Proximity  
Cut, tweak, refine

## **Aim for Visual Unity/Gestalt**

You've taken all the elements of the design, paid attention to the organization of the material, given it a focal point, and fed it a diet of white space and simplicity. You've doctored it with contrast, repetition, alignment and proximity (next lecture). And now the climatic event! Peek with anticipation at your design—does it come together as a whole?

Without unity a design is chaotic and distracting. A unified design synthesizes the elements into a cohesive whole. It looks and feels complete.

*What makes a design look/feel unified? What impairs unity?*

## **Consider Appropriateness**

Throughout the design process ask yourself: "Is my web site design appropriate?" The design of a site should be appropriate to the content, topic, target audience, purpose, web medium etc.. Make sure your design choices are aligned with your site's primary goals (as defined in your design plan).

*Look on the web for examples of appropriate design. What helps to create appropriate design?*

## **Include Visual Appeal and Originality**

No design is complete without a touch of creativity and originality. Look for ways to keep your viewer interested without obscuring the content.

## **Apply the Design Principles**

Make sure your design is clean and visually attractive by applying Robin Williams' Design Principles: Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, Proximity. *Read Chapter 6 in the Non-Designer's Web Design Book.*