# The Principles of Design

When you learned about the elements of design (line, shape, colour, etc.) you treated them as ingredients. Now, we will see how these ingredients combine to create pleasing designs according to principles. Each of the elements can stand alone or be combined in any number of creative ways to produce unique and pleasing designs.

Elements are arranged according to design principles in order to produce pleasing compositions.

The principles of design are the recipe for a good work of art. The principles combine the elements to create an aesthetic placement of elements that will produce a pleasing design.

1. **Emphasis** - is an area that first attracts attention in a composition. This area is more important when compared to the other objects or elements in a composition. Emphasis can be achieved by size, contrast, use of colour, and placement in the format.
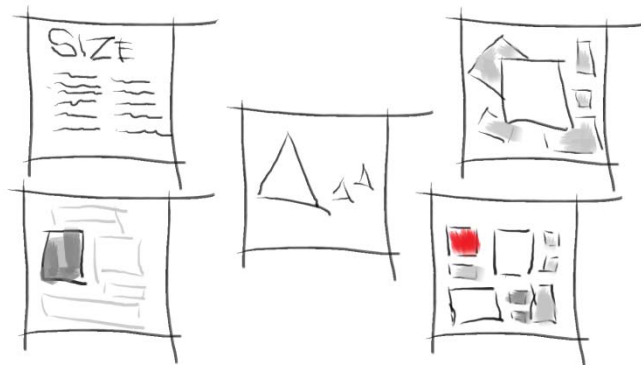
2. **Proportion** (Scale) – Proportion refers to the relative size and scale of the various elements in a design. The bigger something is depicted, the greater its importance tends to be. It is necessary to examine proportion within the context of individual designs.

3. **Balance** - is a feeling of visual equality in shape, form, value, color, etc. Balance can be symmetrical or evenly balanced or asymmetrical and un-evenly balanced. Objects, values, colors, textures, shapes, forms, etc., can be used in creating a balance in a composition. Balance in design is similar to balance in physics.... A large shape close to the center can be balanced by a small shape close to the edge. A large light toned shape will be balanced by a small dark toned shape (the darker the shape the heavier it appears to be)
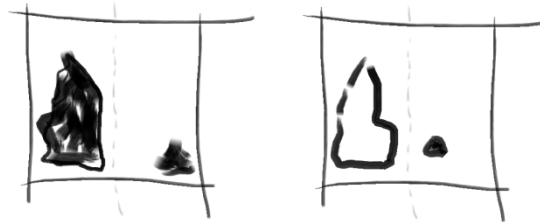
4. **Variety** – The use of different elements (or by changing similar elements in some distinct way) creates interest and uniqueness. Closely related to this principle is repetition.

5. **Repetition (Rhythm)** – Rhythm is achieved when some elements recurs regularly. Like a dance it will have a flow of objects that will seem to be like the beat of music.
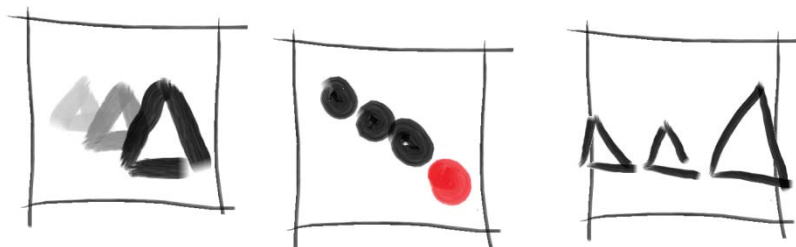
6. **Proximity** – Proximity (closeness) creates a bond between elements in a design. How close together or far apart elements are placed suggests a relationship (or lack of) between different parts.

7. **Unity/Harmony** – Harmony is achieved when a composition brings together similar units. If your composition uses wavy lines and organic shapes you would stay with those types of lines and not put in just one geometric shape.

8. **Contrast** – Contrast offers some change to provide a visual discord in a composition. Contrast shows the difference between shapes or colours and can be used to bring objects out and forward in a design. It can also be used to create an area of emphasis.
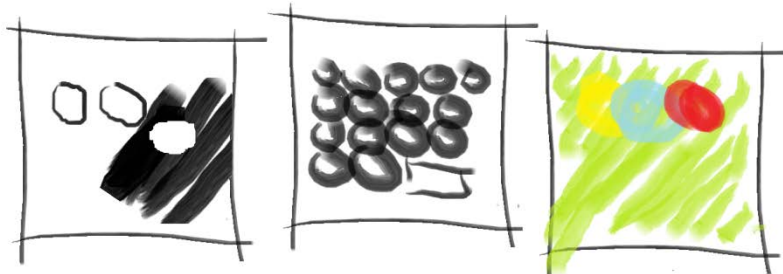
The principles of design are the results of your working with the elements of design. Practice using them effectively in every composition you do and you will be happy with the results.

Exercise: Identify and apply the principles of design.

Look at the 3 design examples given below. In each example, discuss how a different principle of design has been used effectively.

Describe **six** changes you might make to this fictional newspaper ad citing the principles of design. Describe what is wrong or "less than perfect" about the layout and what you would change to make the composition more effective and/or visually pleasing and why. Explain by citing one or more of the principles of design. Remember to look at all of the principles of design, no matter how little.

Then, remake the ad (using **simple shapes** instead of complex graphics) so that the design is more pleasing. Click the space below to attach your design.

Justify and/or explain each of the changes you have made.