

Visual Design for Course Materials:

Ten conventions that will help you know what's unconventional

Picture superiority	Images are more likely to be remembered than words. Images that add meaning are more efficient than simply decorating.
Rule of thirds	Not everything needs to be symmetrical. Think of a page as having three columns, rather than one. Position key elements of an image where lines of a 3x3 grid intersect.
Readability	Avoid using all uppercase letters. Do not center paragraphs and lists (headings maybe, titles okay). To make paragraphs easier to read, add line space or narrow the column.
Emphasis	Use bolding, italics, and color –sparingly– to emphasize. If too many things are emphasized, then nothing will stand out. Italicize rather than underlining (underlined items read as links).
Fonts	Use a maximum of two fonts - one serif, one sans serif. Avoid decorative and script fonts.
Color scheme	Stick to a palette of 3-5 colors, balanced on the color wheel. Using too many colors can confuse learners.
Flow	Visual attention follows reading patterns (USA: top-left to bottom-right)
Empty space	Use negative/white space to frame an element or focus attention. Minimize density and clutter; cut out anything you don't need.
Contrast	Put <i>very</i> different elements side by side to clarify or add interest. Elements with the <i>same</i> attributes are perceived as belonging together.
Repetition	Using an element over and over can provide cohesion. Consistency makes things easier to follow.

Elements — text, shape, line, icon, photo, drawing, chart, etc.

Attributes — color, shape, size, direction, rotation, spacing, content, font face, etc.