

# Professor Clark's Visual Design Conventions

These are conventions, not laws. They tell you when you are being unconventional.

Contrast (color, shape, size, location, direction, content ...)

- Positioning distinctly different elements side by side provides interest and clarity.
- Elements with like attributes are perceived as belonging together.
- Proximity: positioning elements close together makes them seem to be related.

Harmony / Unity / Balance

- Unity: one should get the essence of a design without distraction from individual elements.
- Balance: the elements of a design should be perceived as being in equilibrium.
- Repeating an element over and over provides cohesion.

Flow

- Attention tends to move from top-left to bottom-right and we perceive images before text.
- Align elements that belong together along a common edge (horizontal/vertical/diagonal)
- A design does not have to be symmetrical.
- Follow the rule of thirds: imagine a 3x3 grid and position key elements where the lines intersect.

Clarity / Simplicity / Focus

- Emphasis: a design should have a primary center of interest.
- Use white (empty / negative) space to frame a design and focus attention..
- Minimize density and clutter; cut out anything you don't need.
- Limit the amount of text and the size of the color palette.

Color

- Contrast light with dark; put very different (not clashing) shades next to each other.
- Color schemes - use the color wheel to balance them.
- Color associations are tied to cultures; be aware of them.

Typography

- Case – all-caps is harder to read.
- Centering - you don't *have* to use it (even for titles).
- With multiple lines (blocks) of text, don't use all caps, centering, or decorative fonts.
- Use a maximum of two typefaces of different styles (serif, sans serif, script).

Readability recommendations for an 11x17" poster

- Your poster should be comprehensible from 30" away (1.5 x the diagonal).
- Text should be at least .25" or 18pt (distance in feet / 10 = size in inches).
- Put a maximum of 70 characters in a line of text.

