

COPY designs



Good artists copy,
great artists steal.

Pablo Picasso

Drawing **INSPIRATION** from great works of others is the best way to create a good design. It is also the best way to learn how to create new designs. When in doubt, go looking for inspiration to any of these sites.

DATA

Visual Complexity



D3 Gallery



INFOGRAPHICS

The New York Times



... just copy



WEBSITE

Smashing Magazine



... and paste



DESIGN

Pinterest



Behance



GROUP related items

Humans are poor at remembering unordered lists. Structure and narrative are essential tools for learning and remembering.

To aid this visually, it is important to group related items.

SQUINT your eyes and **COUNT** the number of separate items your eyes see. If there are more than 3-5 items, see which items can be grouped together into a single visual unit.

There are many ways of grouping related items. Some examples are shown here. But the key principle is **PROXIMITY**. Things that are close to each other for a group.

This **UNORGANISED** list has 9 distinct items. It is impossible to remember them or connect them into a story.



This structure is a uniform **GRID** - 3 rows and 3 columns. This is easier to remember based on row and column logic.



This structure is a **HIERARCHY** - rows and columns with totals. It is much easier to remember.



Retain **ASPECT** ratio



PRESERVE ASPECT RATIO of images. When stretching an image to fit a space, the most common error is to resize it to fit that box.

But as you can see from the example above, Audrey goes from thin to fat to very fat. This is both jarring as well as inaccurate.

Always ensure that the width and height are resized equally. If you need to fit a predefined box, crop the image.



ALIGN every edge

ENSURE ALIGNMENT GRAMENER

Every item should have a visual connection with something else on the page.



— Robin Williams

Draw a line from every edge of every object to the end of the sheet. You'll find that almost none of them are aligned to one another.

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Ensures that every edge is aligned to another. Use a grid if required.

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TYPOGRAPHY is key

PRACTICALTYPOGRAPHY.com says:

- Start by making the **BODY TEXT** look good, then worry about the rest.
- POINT SIZE** should be 10-12 points in print, 15-25 pixels on the web.
- LINE SPACING** should be 120-145% of the point size.
- The average **LINE LENGTH** should be 45-90 characters (including spaces).
- This implies **LARGE PAGE MARGINS** and/or use of multiple columns.
- Use **PROFESSIONAL FONTS**. Avoid goofy, monospaced, Especially default fonts like Times New Roman and Arial.



BETTER SYSTEM FONTS

FRANKLIN GOTHIC.....	ABCDEFGHIJ ijklmnop
GILL SANS MT.....	ABCDEFGHIJ ijklmnop
CALIBRI.....	ABCDEFGHIJ ijklmnop
PALATINO LINOTYPE.....	ABCDEFGHIJ ijklmnop
GEORGIA.....	ABCDEFGHIJ ijklmnop
CAMBRIA.....	ABCDEFGHIJ ijklmnop

CONSISTENT design

For example, if you're using rectangular **SHAPES** (in buttons, for example) avoid circles, ovals, rounded rectangles, etc.



If you're using a **COLOUR PALETTE**, stick to it. Avoid using slightly different variants when you mean to use a single colour.



If you're using a certain **STYLE** of icons (cartoons, pictures, black-and-white, etc.), stick to the same style of icons. Mixing these creates a jarring effect.



When designing, try and pick a single **THEME** of graphics (aqua, flat design, metallic, natural, etc), and stick to the same theme right through.



COLOUR carefully

Office 2007/2010 palette



Civic palette



We aren't very good at picking colours. Colour theory and colour palettes are a deep field by themselves.

If your colours are **DISTINCT** use palettes from



If your colours are **DATA-DRIVEN** use palettes from



Colorbrewer2 RdYlGn palette



Colorbrewer2 Purples palette



It's better to pick a colour from a tool that provides pre-defined palettes, or lets you create your own.

If your colours are **IMAGE BASED** use palettes from



If you palette must be **CUSTOM** use palettes from



HIGHLIGHT features

There are two reasons to highlight items.

By **ORGANIZING** a page into logical units, we improve its readability. This means that important items must be **CONTRASTED** with neighbouring items

Highlighting also allows you to create **INTEREST** in a page that might otherwise be dull.

Changing the colour, size, shape, etc of an item, you can increase the level of contrast.



COLOUR



SIZE



SHAPE



POSITION



SPACING



BOUNDARY



SHOW it around



Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee and just as hard to sleep after.

— Anne Morrow Lindberg

The best feedback comes from the end users.

Show your design around. See what they think.

Then iterate.