Visual Design Principles

For presentations & posters

← Image from adplist.com
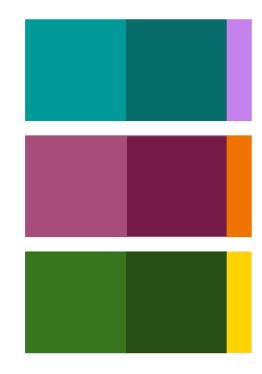
Color

Contrast

Space

Hierarchy

1 2 3

Repetition

Balance

Emphasis

AA

Typography

Aa
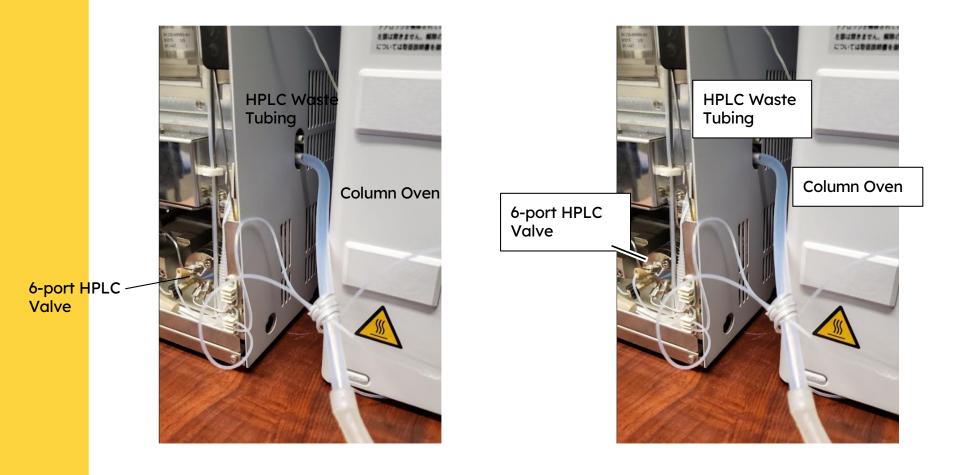
Color can be a useful tool for setting the tone, adding emphasis or just livening up your presentation
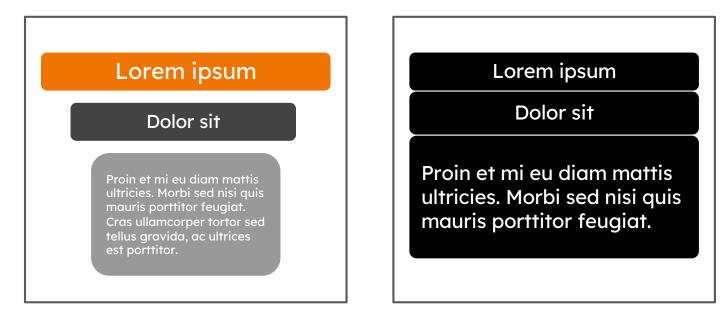
- For text, use colors that have sufficient contrast with their background, avoid yellow on white or blue on black

- Keep your color palette restricted to a small number of colors, 2-3 is plenty. Too many colors can be distracting and take away from the content .

- If you're choosing your own colors from scratch, consider choosing 2 tones/ shades/ tints of one color + 1 accent color that is notably different.

Contrast is one of the most common, and easily remedied, causes for a presentation to be derailed.

HPLC Waste Tubing

Column Oven

6-port HPLC Valve

HPLC Waste Tubing

Column Oven

6-port HPLC Valve

Hierarchy in a presentation slide, poster, publication, or other medium is the use of different design choices (size, placement, color, contrast, etc.) to guide the viewer's' eyes without explicit instruction that may add unnecessary clutter

Lorem ipsum

Dolor sit

Proin et mi eu diam mattis ultricies. Morbi sed nisi quis mauris porttitor feugiat. Cras ullamcorper tortor sed tellus gravida, ac ultrices est porttitor.

Lorem ipsum

Dolor sit

Proin et mi eu diam mattis ultricies. Morbi sed nisi quis mauris porttitor feugiat.

We tend to notice things first based on size and contrast as it's easier to pick out.
In the left image the largest text is in the largest box with the highest contrast; this *feels* like the title of the image while the text body is smaller with a lower contrast and is a lower priority.
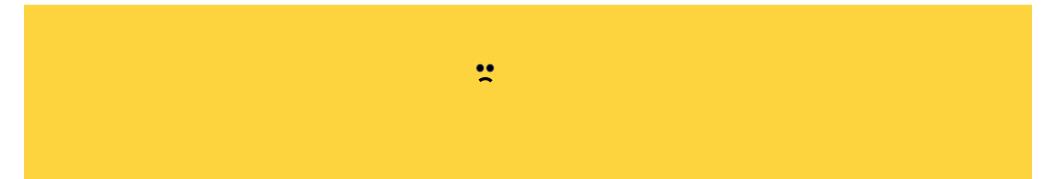
The image on the right is confusing. The top text is read as the title as we learned to read top-down, but it's unclear what the purpose or priority of the remaining text is.

Repetition in design is the establishment of a consistent format. It is particularly important in presentations where fresh information is frequently presented to the viewer when changing from slide to slide. Seemingly small changes in alignment, font size, and layout will become quickly distracting.

Alternatively, once the viewer understands the presentation template it allows them to quickly digest the information shown on-screen

Don't go changing your format mid-presentation without good reason!

While you don't want to lull the audience to sleep, it is jarring to have constant changes to your presentation's formatting once the expectation has been set

Breaking repetition <u>can</u> be a tool to highlight some of the most important breakthroughs in your research but should be used sparingly

☹

Serif fonts are often easier to read for long paragraphs. They are used in print publications, academic papers, blog posts, or anything else with a chunk of body text, like this. These fonts tend to make work feel legitimate, old fashioned and official.

Sans serif fonts feel a lot more modern and playful. They are great for web publications, headings and small pieces of text.

Avoid using too many different fonts at the same time, as this causes visual clutter that is difficult to parse. Instead, try using the same font in various ways to create hierarchy and emphasis.

For example, you could use a larger font size for headers, semi bold or **bold text for emphasis,** or treatments like underlining or *italicizing*, which provides a large variety with just one font.
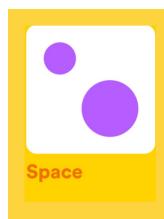
Space

Fig 2.3 Plant leaves

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nunc luctus commodo sollicitudin. Interdum et malesuada
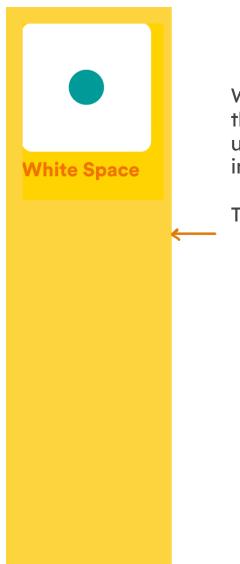

Fig 2.3 Plant leaves

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nunc luctus commodo sollicitudin. Interdum et malesuada

Space between objects on a page helps convey relationships between pieces of content. While even spacing (like the left image) *looks* uniform, it misses the opportunity to communicate something about the content to the reader. The right image has the label very close to the image, with more space separating it from the paragraph, echoing that the label is applied to the image and distinct from the paragraph.

Thoughtful spacing can help to reinforce relationships between content

White Space

White space refers to the emptiness around the content of a pages. It refers to any unmarked text between paragraphs and images and diagrams.

Thoughtfully incorporated whitespace can

- Improve legibility and comprehension
- Guide a reader though logical groupings on a page/ slide
- Help the reader to focus on the content by creating breathing room

AA

Emphasis

Emphasis helps your audience know what your main point is. Depending on how much you want to distinguish a particular piece, there are many ways to emphasize certain parts. Some milder ones involves using a striking color or **bolding** important phrases

A more overt way is to increase the relative size of the content you want to emphasize.

You could also combine these to really draw focus to a specific word in an important sentence.

Resources

Canva Free online tool for making graphics and layouts
Unsplash and Pexels for free stock imagery
Coolors for quickly generating color palettes
Slidesgo for free google slides templates
Nounproject for free icons
Biorender for scientific images