

# DESIGN

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ENGL 2311 | Lesson 3

# DEFINING DESIGN

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Also known as information design or document design

## Two Part Definition

- Design as *product* - the presentation of information on page and screen
- Design as *process* - what we do to develop a document “that works for its users” (Reddish).

# UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW

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## MLA Formatting

Angeli 1

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Toward a Recovery of Nineteenth Century Farming Handbooks

While researching texts written about nineteenth century farming, I found a few authors who published books about the literature of nineteenth century farming, particularly agricultural journals, newspapers, pamphlets, and brochures. These authors

The *process* of following MLA format guidelines presents a *product* that allows its users to find needed information quickly and complete related tasks

Excerpt from [Sample Essay](#) (purdue.owl.edu)

# KEEPING IT SIMPLE

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## KISS Principle – Keep it Simple!

Effective information design follows user-centered guidelines and principles

### Main Goals

- Get users interested
- Keep users interested
- Make information easy for all users to find
  - Users searching for key terms
  - Users scanning to find specific information
  - Users reading every word

# KEEPING IT SIMPLE – Don't make it harder

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Instead of presenting information in ways that make access and use difficult

Sec. 1101.001. APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT OF GUARDIAN;  
CONTENTS. (a) Any person may commence a proceeding for  
the appointment of a guardian by filing a written  
application in a court having jurisdiction and venue. (b)  
The application must be sworn to by the applicant and  
state: (1) the proposed ward's name, sex, date of birth,  
and address; (2) the name, relationship, and address of  
the person the applicant seeks to have appointed as  
guardian; (3) whether guardianship of the person or estate,  
or both, is sought; (3-a) whether alternatives to  
guardianship and available supports and services to avoid  
guardianship were considered; (3-b) whether any  
alternatives to guardianship and supports and services  
available to the proposed ward considered are feasible and  
would avoid the need for a guardianship;

Excerpt from [Texas Estates Code](https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov)(statutes.capitol.texas.gov)

# KEEPING IT SIMPLE – Make it easier!

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Good design presents information to users in a way that makes information

## Easier to access

The actual application for guardianship includes an introduction to the need for guardianship, basic demographic information, a statement to establish residency in that county and the relationship of the person filing for guardianship. The application must also identify other family members and/or interested parties and those parties must be served notice that the application has been filed. The Texas statutes are specific about what is to be included in the application.

Excerpt from [Texas Estates Code](https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov)(statutes.capitol.texas.gov)

## Easier to use

### **What does the guardianship application include?**

The application for guardianship includes:

- an introduction to the need for guardianship
- basic demographic information
- a statement to
  - establish residency in that county
  - the relationship of the person filing for guardianship.
- Identification of family members and/or interested parties

# CONSIDERING THE ELEMENTS

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When we design, we think about both what elements we use and how to place them to effectively craft a message.

These are the **most common elements**:

- Color
- Size
- Weight
- Shape
- Type (text, graphic, photo, white space, etc.)

# FOLLOWING THE BASIC PRINCIPLES (CRAP)

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We know the elements. Now what?

Robin Williams answers in *The Non-Designer's Design Book* by offering these four **basic principles of design**:

- Contrast
- Repetition
- Alignment
- Proximity

Using the CRAP principles effectively involves arranging different types of elements to create visual and typographic cues that help users to find and access information

# FOLLOWING THE PRINCIPLES - CONTRAST

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- Avoid similarity
- Make elements the same or very different
- Makes a reader look at the page

We will review ways to apply contrast by varying color, size, weight, shape, and element type.

# CONTRAST (Color)

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Applying the contrast principle using **color** can ensure elements are easier for users to perceive.



For example, yellow text on a white background is hard to read because yellow and white are closer together, creating low contrast: **hello**

The same is true for light blue text on a blue background: **hello**

However, yellow text on a blue background is easier to perceive because blue and yellow are farther apart, creating higher contrast: **hello**

Because we all perceive color differently, color should never be the only element used in the application of any principle. Always use it in combination with other elements (size and weight are frequently combined with color, as they are on this slide)

# CONTRAST (Size)

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One of the most applications of the contrast principle through **size** appears on every slide you've seen so far.

By enlarging text some text and not enlarging the rest, you **emphasize** the text you enlarge.

It's commonly used to differentiate headings from body text (as is the case on this slide).

- Manually creating a hierarchy of titles, headings, subheadings, body text, and lists can be difficult to do.
- To ensure both consistency across these elements and accessibility for individuals who access the document through the use of screen readers and/or use the navigation pane, use the Styles tool.
- Styles are preset, but you can modify them.

# CONTRAST (Weight)

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Contrast can also be applied using **weight**.

The most common practice application for this principle in text is the use of boldface to **emphasize** a word.

# CONTRAST (Shape)

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Another way to apply contrast is by varying **shape**.

In text, this is most often applied through the use of different fonts. For example, both **IMPACT** and CALIBRI are used on this slide.

The variation in their shapes draws attention to the impact font first because it takes up more space.

# CONTRAST (Shape – serif and sans serif)

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Another way to apply contrast by varying **shape** is to use both serif and sans serif fonts.

“Serif” essentially means “feet,” and “sans serif” means “without feet.”

- The “T” on the left below is in a common serif font - Times New Roman.
- The “T” on the right has no feet and is in a common sans serif font – Arial.

T

T

# CONTRAST (Shape – common fonts)

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## Common Serifs

Times New Roman

Courier

Garamond

Droid

Georgia

## Common Sans Serifs

Arial

Calibri

Verdana

Droid Sans

Helvetica

# CONTRAST (Element Type)

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One last application of contrast is created through variation of **element type**. The full-color photo below is the first one to appear in this set of slides, so users are likely to notice it.



To ensure all users can perceive this photo, good design will include the use of alt-text (alternative text) for images. Usually, right-clicking on the image will make an alt-text option appear.

Photo by Unknown author license under CC BY-NC-ND.

# CONTRAST (Element Type - hyperlinks)

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One last application of contrast is created through variation of **element type**.

Hyperlinks will also stand out.

It's important to ensure that all hyperlinks are descriptive meaning the hyperlink text describes what the link leads to rather than providing only a URL.

[This resource from Microsoft](#) offers additional information about using features in Word to make documents accessible.

# FOLLOWING THE PRINCIPLES - REPETITION

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- Repeat visual elements
- Colors, shapes, textures, etc.
- Organizes and unifies

Examples include:

- Use of the same style headings in each section of a document
- Use of lists to organize information and to understand how it relates to other information in a document

# FOLLOWING THE PRINCIPLES - ALIGNMENT

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- Everything has a purpose
- Everything is connected
- Lines are clean

Examples include:

- All headings and body text in this document are aligned to the left of the page
- Bullets line up with each other
- Centering either would disrupt the organization and flow of the document

# FOLLOWING THE PRINCIPLES - PROXIMITY

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- Group similar items
- Organizes/provides structure

Examples include:

- A bulleted list of ingredients for a recipe
- A bulleted list of kitchenware needed for a recipe
- An ordered list of steps for a recipe

Mixing items between lists (like jelly, plate, open the peanut butter jar) would confuse users!

# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER - Example

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What differences make the design on the right better?

Examples from Robin Williams' *The Non-Designer's Design Book*, p. 12.

## Good Design Is As Easy as 1-2-3

- 1. Learn the principles.**  
They're simpler than you might think.
- 2. Recognize when you're not using them.**  
Put it into words -- name the problem.
- 3. Apply the principles.**  
You'll be amazed.

## Good design is as easy as...

- Learn the basic principles.**  
*They're simpler than you might think.*
- Recognize when you're not using them.**  
*Put it into words—name the problem.*
- Apply the principles.**  
*Be amazed.*

# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER – Example, cont.

Using principles effectively results in good design that gains and maintains users' attention and facilitates easy access and use.

Examples from Robin Williams' *The Non-Designer's Design Book*, p. 12.

## Good Design Is As Easy as 1-2-3

### 1. Learn the principles.

They're simpler than you might think.

### 2. Recognize when you're not using them.

Put it into words -- name the problem.

### 3. Apply the principles.

You'll be amazed.

## Good design is as easy as...

### Learn the basic principles.

*They're simpler than you might think.*

### Recognize when you're not using them.

*Put it into words—name the problem.*

### Apply the principles.

*Be amazed.*

- Removed the unnecessary border
- Changed the serif font to a sans serif font, added color, and italicized commentary (Contrast)
- Repeated the pattern of bold statement/italicized commentary (Repetition)
- Created stronger text alignments to guide the user with less effort (alignment)
- Added space between steps to group like items together (proximity)
- Removed the unnecessary numbers

# REFERENCES

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- Reddish, Ginny. "What is Information Design?" Teaching Technical Communication: Critical Issues for the Classroom, edited by James Dubinsky. Bedford St. Martin's, 2004, pp. 211-217.
- Williams, Robin. The Non-Designer's Design Book, 4th ed. Peachpit Press, 2015, p. 12-13 and 225.

# Questions?

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Contact your instructor!