

# Basic Principles of Graphic Design<sup>1</sup>

CRAP : Proximity, Alignment, Repetition, Contrast

## Proximity

When objects are near one another they become a visual unit. Proximity's basic purpose is organization. Good use of proximity also produces good white space.

### Rules

- Limit the number of visual units on the page.
- Don't stick things in corners and middle.
- Avoid leaving exactly equal amounts of white space between objects unless groups are part of a subset.
- Allow no confusion about what goes with what.
- Don't create relationships between things that are not related.

## Alignment

Alignment helps tie together the elements that make up a page. Always find something else on the page to align each new element with.

### Rules

- Avoid mixing text alignments on same page.
- Always choose centered alignments consciously, never by default.

## Repetition

AKA "being consistent." Unifies piece. Keeps reader's eye on the page.

### Rules

- Find existing repetitions and strengthen them.
- But avoid overdoing it. Keep contrast in mind.

## Contrast

For contrast to be effective, it must be strong. If things are different, do not let them be similar. Creates interesting page. Adds to organization. Must support intended focus, not create new ones.

### Rules

- Avoid using two typefaces that are similar. If they are not exactly the same, they should be different. Don't mix brown text with black titles.

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, Robin. 1994. *The Nondesigners Design Book: Design and Typographic Principles for the Visual Novice*. Peachpit Press: Berkeley, California.  
Tufte, Edward. 1990. *Envisioning Information*. Graphics Press: Cheshire, Connecticut