

ELEMENTS of Art & Design

The elements are the building blocks used by artists to create a work of art. The elements help artists visually communicate thoughts and ideas to their audience.

LINE	Lines are marks with greater length than width. Lines can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal; straight or curved; thick or thin. Lines can represent a feeling, mood, or movement.
SHAPE	Shapes are closed lines. Shapes can be geometric, like squares and circles; or organic, like free-form or natural shapes. Shapes are flat (two-dimensional) and can express length and width.
FORM	Forms are three-dimensional shapes expressing length, width, and depth. Spheres, cylinders, boxes or cubes, and pyramids are forms. Forms can also be organic.
SPACE	Space is the area between and around objects. The space around objects is often called negative space and the space of the object itself is called positive space. Space is also used to create an illusion of depth.
COLOUR	Colour is perceived by the way light reflects off of objects and has three main characteristics: <i>hue</i> (the name of the colour), <i>value</i> (lightness or darkness), and <i>intensity</i> (strength/purity or dullness).
TEXTURE	Texture is the surface quality that can be seen and/or felt. Examples of texture are rough, smooth, soft, or hard. Artists sometimes create the illusion of texture. A drawing of a porcupine may look prickly, but if you touch the drawing, the paper is still smooth.
VALUE	Value describes the lightness or darkness of a surface.

PRINCIPLES of Art & Design

The principles of design describe the ways that artists use the elements in a work of art.

BALANCE	Balance is the distribution of the visual weight of objects, colours, texture, and space in a piece of art. Balance can be symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial.
EMPHASIS	Emphasis is the focal point that catches the viewer's attention. Usually the artist will make one area stand out by contrasting it with other areas, by using different sizes, colours, textures, or shapes.
MOVEMENT	Movement is the path the viewer's eye takes through the work of art, often to focal points. This kind of movement can be directed along lines, edges, shapes, and colours within the work of art.
PATTERN	Pattern is the repeating of an object, shape, or symbol throughout the work of art.
REPETITION	Repetition works with pattern to make the work of art seem active. The repetition of elements creates unity within the work of art.
PROPORTION	Proportion is the feeling of unity created when all parts (sizes, amounts, or numbers) relate to each other. When drawing the human figure, proportion can refer to the size of the head compared to the rest of the body.
RHYTHM	Rhythm is created when one or more elements are used repeatedly to create a feeling of organized movement. Rhythm creates a mood like music or dancing. To keep rhythm exciting, variety is essential
VARIETY	Variety is the use of several elements which hold the viewer's attention and to guide the viewer's eye through and around the work of art.
UNITY	Unity is the feeling of harmony between all parts of the work of art, which creates a sense of completeness. Everything in the work of art works harmoniously together.