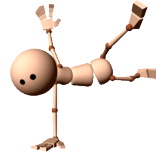Creating Proper Balance in our Designs

Balance

Try walking a long distance with a 2 pound bag of rocks in one hand and a 10 pound bag of marbles in the other.

After awhile you'll be wanting to shift your load around, putting a few marbles in the rock bag to balance your load, make it easier to walk. This is how balance works in design.

Visual balance comes from arranging elements on the page so that no one section is heavier than the other. Or, a designer may intentionally throw elements out of balance to create tension or a certain mood.

Examples - Balance

You can create balance with the three elements (text block, graphic, vertical text) here but in the first example they appear to be just random elements with no unity or balance. In the second "Balance" example the text block and graphic are resized to bring them closer together and better balance each other.

To tie the elements together, move them closer together (resizing helps accomplish this). Notice that the graphic (one of the marbles) slightly overlaps the box enclosing the vertical text, unifying the two elements. Reversing the word "balance" out of the blue box also adds more contrast to the composition. The increased leading in the text block redistributes the white space in a more balanced manner.

Balance

- Balance is the act of comparing or estimating two things, one against the other, and the contrast between:
  – Empty space (white space) and filled space
  – Text and images
  – Color and no colors and different colors
  – Textures against flat colors

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Balance in Design

- There are three different types of balance when using color, shape, and position:
  – Symmetry
  – Asymmetry
  – Radial symmetry

5

Symmetrical or Formal Balance

- You can usually identify at least one of three lines of symmetry.
  – Horizontal
  – Vertical
  – Diagonal
- Contains similar elements of equal proportion or weight.
- All elements are typically centered on the page.

6
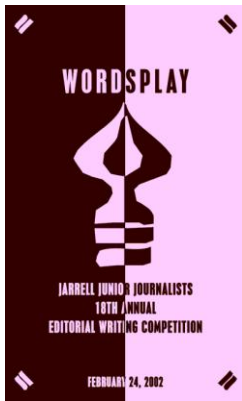
Vertical Symmetry — Each vertical half (excluding text) of the brochure is a near mirror image of the other, emphasized with the reverse in colors.

Even the perfectly centered text picks up the color reversal here. This symmetrically balanced layout is very formal in appearance.


Vertical & Horizontal Symmetry — This poster design divides the page into four equal sections. Although not mirror images the overall look is very symmetrical and balanced.

Each of the line drawings are more or less centered within their section. The graphic (text and image) in the upper center of the page is the focal point tying all the parts together.

Symmetrical Balance

9
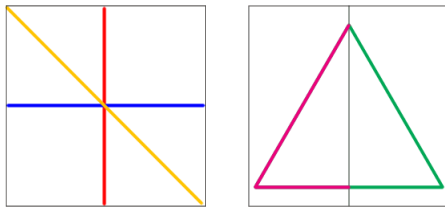
Examples of Symmetrical Balance


10
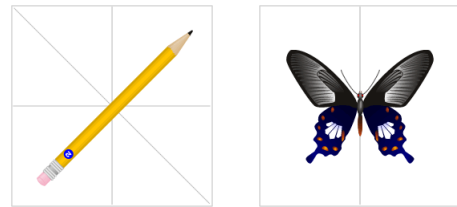
Asymmetrical Balance

- Contemporary design favors asymmetrical balance.
- Asymmetrical balance uses different design elements of varying weights and/or proportions.
- More flexible and visually stimulating
- Create balance using dissimilar or contrasting elements.

Asymmetrical Balance This page uses a 3 column format to create a neatly organized asymmetrical layout.

The two columns of text are balanced by the blocks of color in the lower left topped by a large block of white space.

In this case, because the white space is in a block shaped much like the text columns, it becomes an element of the design in its own right
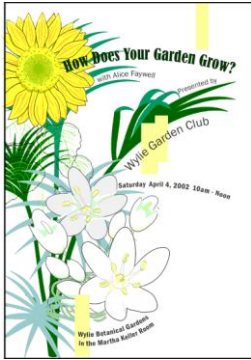
Asymmetrical –

Like a wild, unruly garden, the elements of this brochure cover are barely contained on the page. The plants spring up primarily along the left side but with a few stems escaping and arching across the page.

The text, although randomly placed, follows the lines of the plants keeping them anchored to the overall design. The off-balance design creates a sense of freedom and movement.
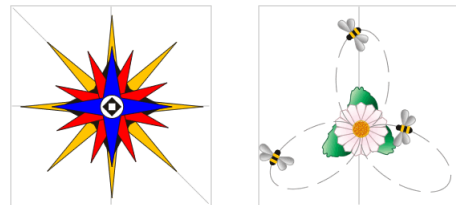
## Examples of Asymmetrical Balance
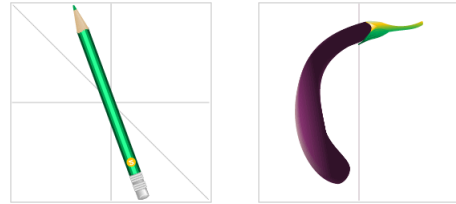
14

Radial Symmetry

- The third type of balance is radial balance, where all elements radiate out from a center point in a circular fashion.
- It is very easy to maintain a focal point in radial balance, since all the elements lead your eye toward the center

Examples of Radial Balance

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Use Rotational Symmetry to Convey Movement and Action
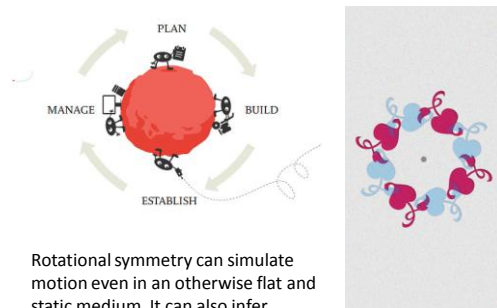
Rotational symmetry can simulate motion even in an otherwise flat and static medium. It can also infer progress or forward movement.

Pixels

- Every image is made up of very small squares called **pixels**, and each pixel represents a color or shade.
- Pixels within an image can be added, deleted, or modified.
- Pixel is made up of two words:
  "**Picture**" and "**Element**"
- **Resolution:** refers to the number of pixels per linear inch.
  - *Books generally have 300 pixels per inch. Where monitors usually display resolutions 72 to 96 pixels per inch.*

Pixels and Resolution

- If an image has **high resolution**, its pixels are so small that the human eye cannot make out the individual pixels when the image is printed.
- If an image has **low resolution**, images will look fine when displayed on a computer screen, but when printed, they appear a little rough and out of focus.
- If your eye cannot see pixels in an image, the image is **pixelated**.
- Low-resolution images display quickly on web pages.

Below is an illustration of how the same image might appear at different pixel resolutions, if the pixels were poorly rendered as sharp squares (normally, a smooth image reconstruction from pixels would be preferred, but for illustration of pixels, the sharp squares make the point better).
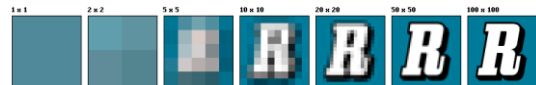
Rule of Thirds

- **Rule of Thirds** when placing the focus of interest.
- Draw 3 lines horizontally and vertically.
- You want to keep your focus on where those lines intersect