



developing a
Designmind

Concepts of Design



Basic Design Concepts

It's difficult to say exactly what makes a design successful.
Good design is hard to define.



Figure/Ground



Emphasis



Balance



Optical center



Flow



Unity

Over the years, experts have developed some basic concepts
you should keep in mind when you design your layouts.



Figure/Ground

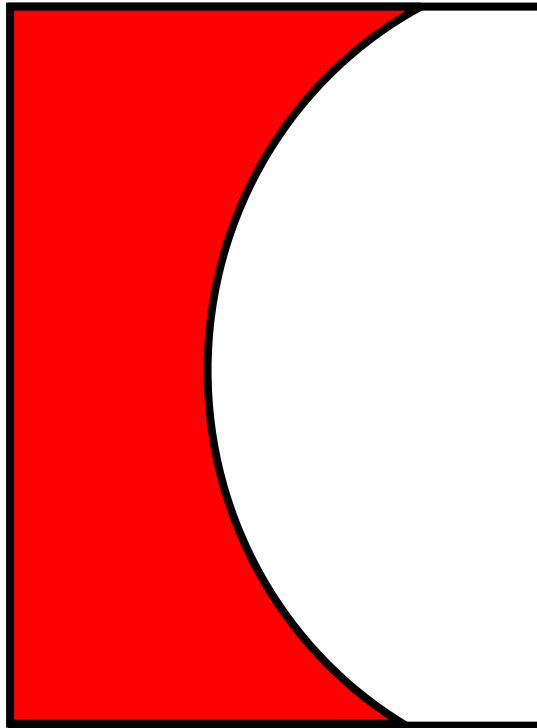
What's in the picture?



Here is the classic example used to explain the concept of figure/ground. Depending on how you look at it, you could see either two faces or a vase.



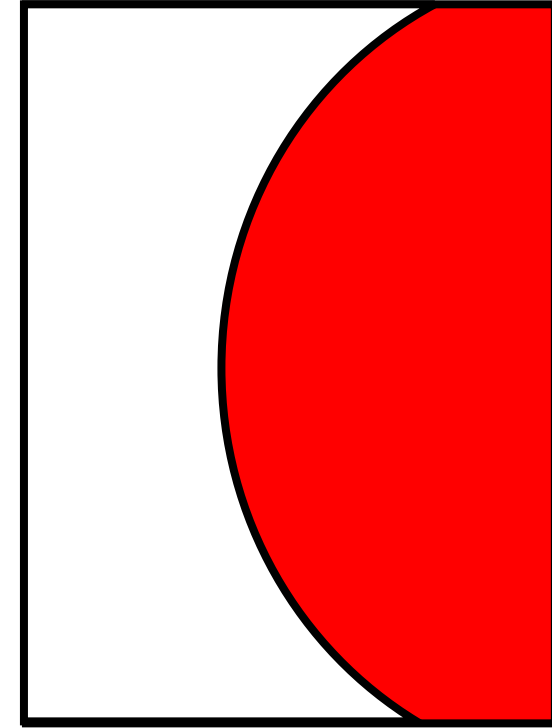
Figure/Ground



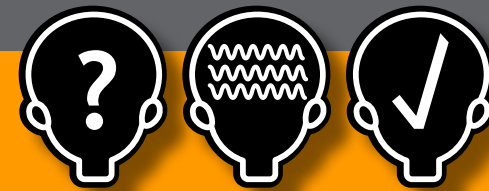
An object placed in the space of a layout is called the **figure**.

The space that surrounds the figure is called the **ground**.

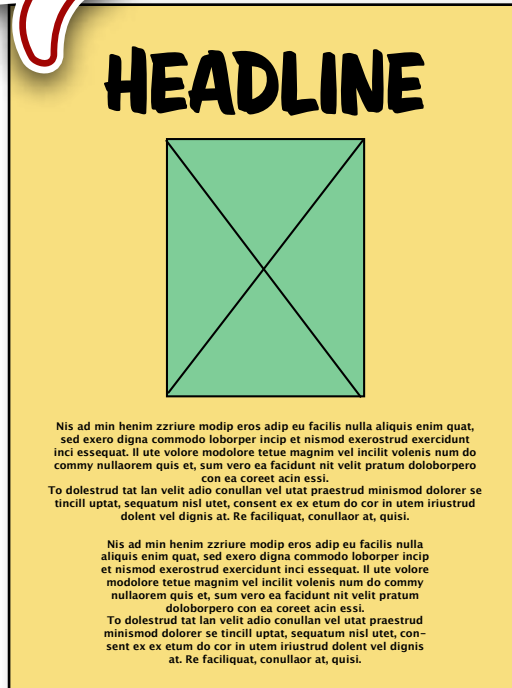
Look at these two examples.
Can you tell what is the figure and what is the ground?



Figure/ Ground describes the relationship between a subject or element and the surrounding space.



Figure/Ground



Everytime you add an element to a page, the shape of the resulting space changes. Professional designers know that you need to control the “white space” as much as the page elements.

In the example on the left, the elements and the space are pretty boring. The other two examples make better use of the space. They have more variety and the “white space” is better organized.

The space on a page that is not occupied by type or graphics is called **white space**.



Emphasis

STAND OUT

It is always a good idea to identify the main idea of a message and to somehow make that idea stand out. Sometimes it will be as easy as making a word or words larger or perhaps using a special type effect.

Making an element stand out in relation to other elements in a composition or layout is called **emphasis**.



Emphasis



**CHESS CLUB
WILL HOLD A
MEETING
WEDNESDAY
PLEASE BE
THERE
SPECIAL GUEST**



Please be there!

CHESS CLUB

meeting will be
held Wednesday

Special Guest!

Adding emphasis to some elements helps make a design seem more organized and helps the reader understand the message.



Space/ Format

v 863-296-9846
f 863-296-2365
c 348-2299

Golden Orange Citrus Co.

P.O. Box 567
568 Highway 98
Winter Haven, FL 33880

Color adds emphasis to this business card, while reinforcing the message.



Balance



**Human beings have an inborn sense of balance.
This sense of balance allows us to walk around without falling over.
Our eyes help us keep our own balance and detect balance in the world around us.**



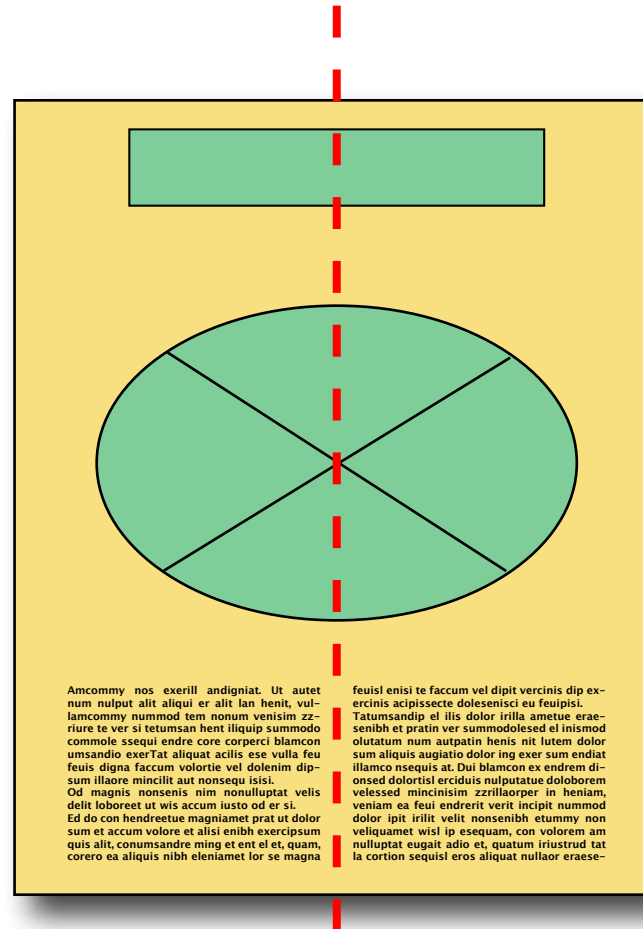
Balance



For designers, **balance** refers to the relationship of one side of a page to the other. Think of a teeter-totter. Balance is maintained when the weight on one side seems to be the same as the weight on the other.



Balance



In this example, the elements on one side of the centerline are exactly the same as the other.

This is called **symmetrical balance**.



Balance


Chamber Concert Series
Polk Community College

Friday, February 8 at 8 p.m.
Alexander String Quartet
Mozart, K287, Bartok#3, Beethoven, Opus 59, #1
Sam Pritchert & Elnel Libitz, violins,
Sandra Yarbrough, viola, Mark Wilson, cello
Friday, March 1, 8 p.m.
Trio Artata
Beethoven "Archduke" Trio, and trios by Haydn,
Schoenberg and Magnard
Richard Samson Norantz, violin
Reception following concert in PCC Art Gallery
Friday, April 26 at 8 p.m.
Polk Community College Chamber Players
Brahms G Minor Piano Quartet,
Schubert Arpeggione Sonata
Polly Hollyfield, violin, Linda Batticcioli, viola,
Norinne Antiqua-Tempest, cello,
Margaret Park-Raynolds, lute, Robin Plantz, piano
All concerts in Newman Auditorium,
Emeritus Hall, Community Education
Tickets \$10 and \$8
For ticket information phone (941) 555-4571

Here is an example of a layout with symmetrical balance. It looks very formal but also a little boring, and the reader will have to read the whole thing to get the message.



Balance






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All concerts in Newman Auditorium,
Emeritus Hall, Community Education
Tickets \$10 and \$8
For ticket information phone (941) 355-4371

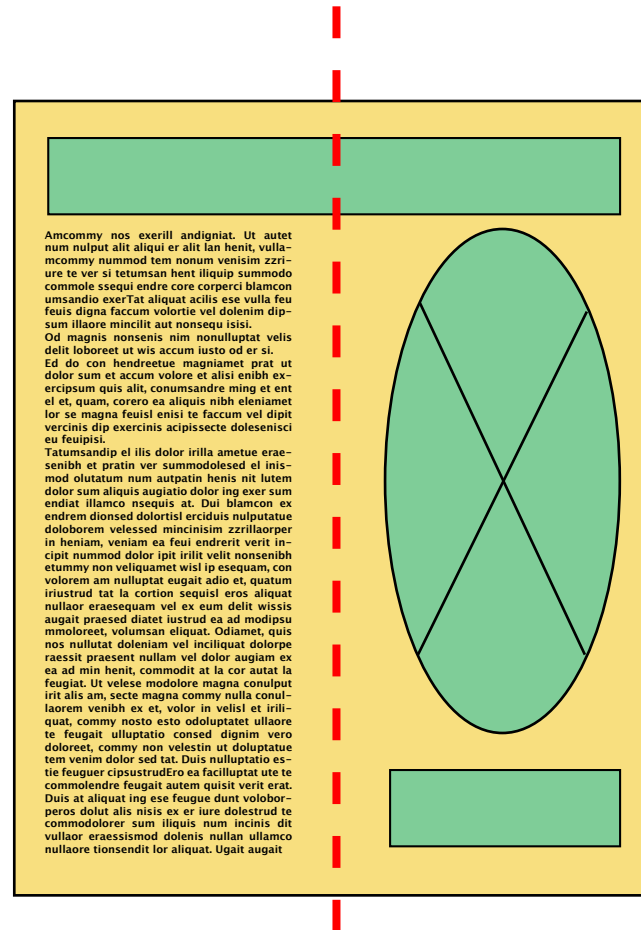




Because each element is simply stacked on one another,
the text is forced into the shape created by centering.

The design does not relate directly to the message, giving it a very amateurish look.
Even the graphics seem to be just tacked on as decoration, not part of the overall design.



Balance




In this example, the elements on one side of the centerline are of equal weight, but are not the same as the elements on the other side.

This is called **asymmetrical balance**.



Balance



Chamber Concert Series

Alexander String Quartet
Mozart, K387, Bartok#3, Beethoven, Opus 59, #1
Sam Pritchett & Ethel Libitz, violins;
Sandra Yarbrough, viola, Mark Wilson, cello
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Here is the same layout presented in a more professional way.
The graphic is a more meaningful part of the design
and it is easier for readers to find the information they need.
The layout maintains asymmetrical balance.



Balance

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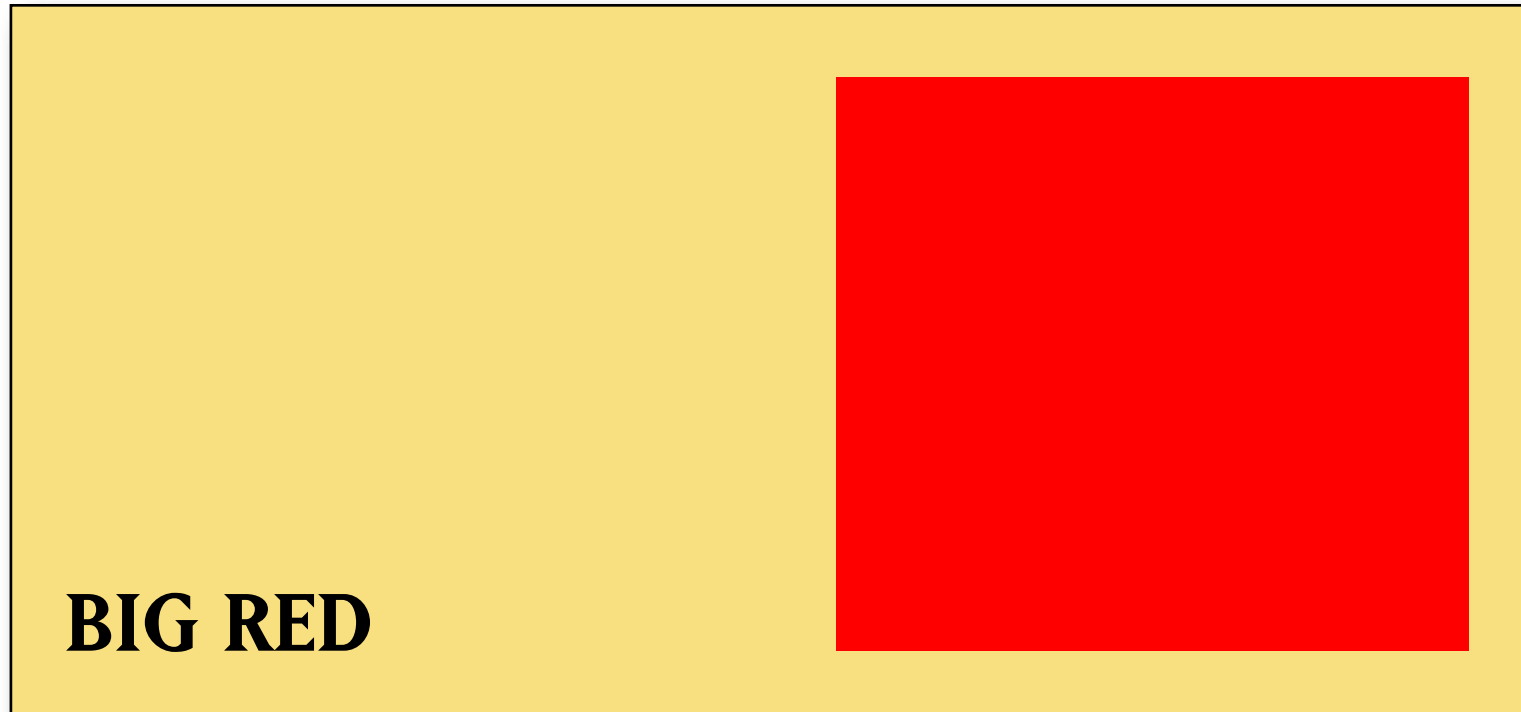
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Asymmetrical balance allows for many variations. The information can be easily grouped together for meaning and can create relationships that promote harmony, or tension, depending on the mood desired.



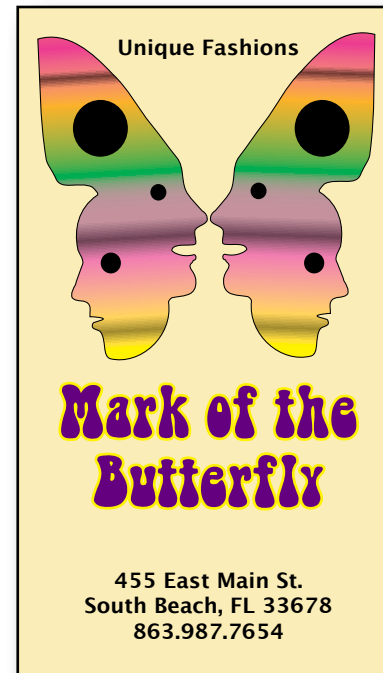
Balance



The white space or ground plays an important role in an asymmetrical layout.
Layouts like this one create tension.



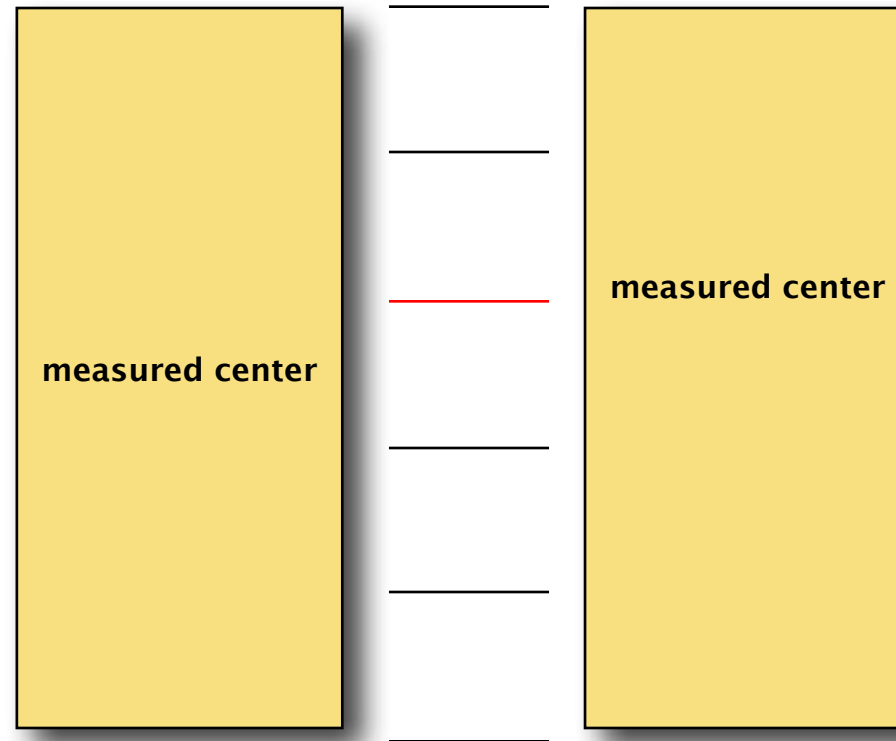
Balance



Symmetrical layouts can create a sense of calm.



Optical Center

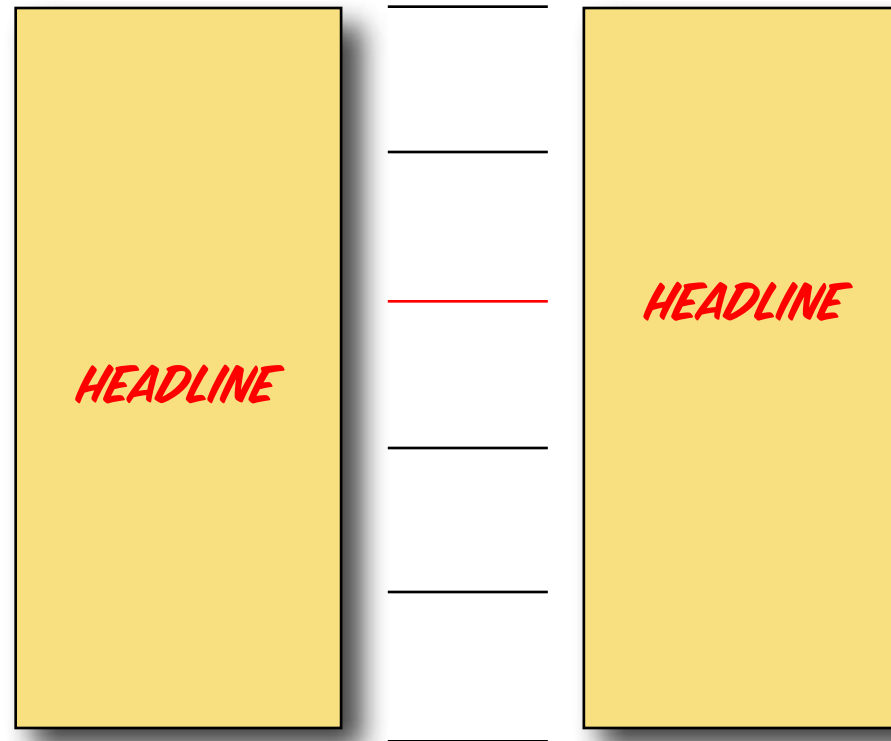


An imaginary line slightly above the measured center of a composition or layout is called the **optical center**.

The optical center is found about 2/5ths down from the top.



Optical Center



Most people will think that the headline on the left looks too low, while the headline on the right seems better.

If all else is equal, the optical center is the spot on the composition or layout that will attract the reader's eye first.



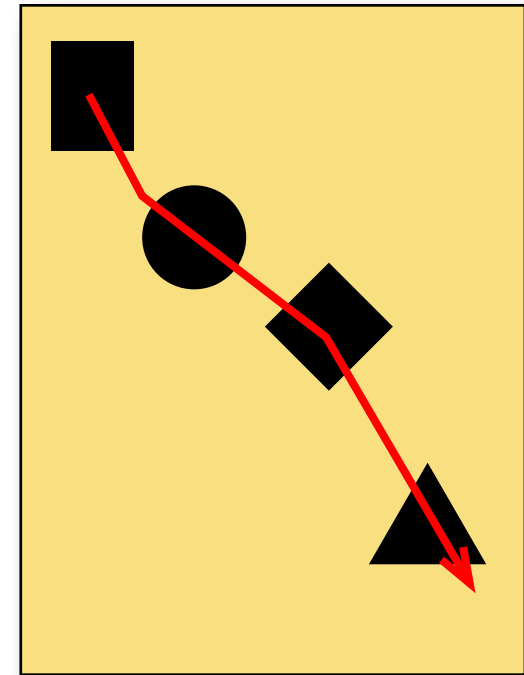
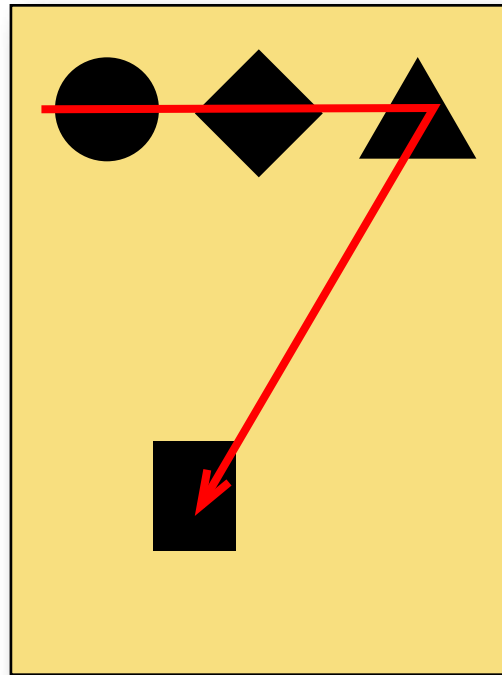
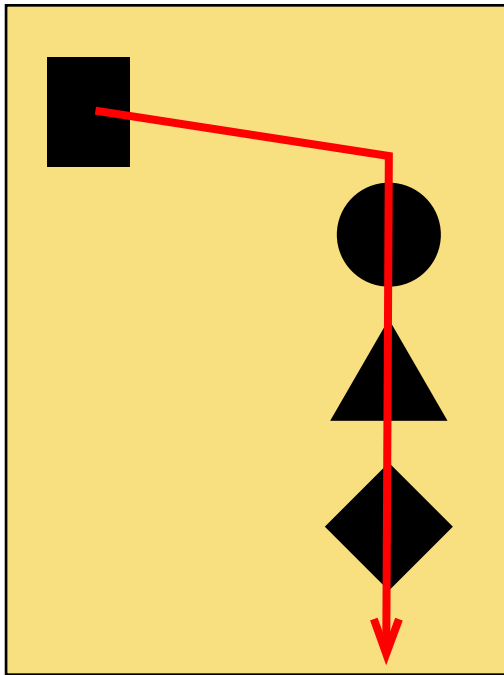
Optical Center



Here is the beginning of a simple business card layout with the company name positioned on the optical center.



Flow



Here are some simple examples of how the eye follows the elements in a layout.

The skillful designer will help direct the reader's eye from one element to another in a meaningful way. Careful placement of the page elements is needed to lead the reader through the layout. A layout that fails to direct the reader correctly will disrupt the communication and be confusing.



Flow



The arrangement of page elements that help direct and move the reader through the composition or layout is called **flow**.



Flow

Here are a few things to remember about flow.



Avoid illustrations and other elements that direct the reader's eye off the page.



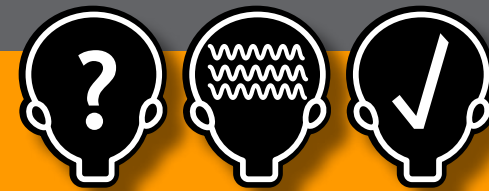
Here the illustration helps the reader's eye flow through the message.



Flow



By placing a strong horizontal element at the bottom of the page you will help keep the reader's eye flowing through the message.



Unity

Unity refers to the arrangement and treatment of elements that promote a sense of wholeness in a composition or layout.

A unified layout starts with a clear understanding of the message.

Selecting the appropriate type faces and graphic elements will help establish a tone that reflects the message.

The type of balance chosen also helps set up a unity within the layout.



Unity

Unity must be considered as a spectrum starting from total sameness to total disorder.



Here is an example of total sameness



Here is an example of unified variety



Here is an example of total disorder



Unity

Try to control your choice of page elements and position them to obtain an organized variety.