

Artistic Clothing Elements & Principles

4-H SUPPLEMENT



Acknowledgements

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Talking about creative works can be challenging. This document contains some vocabulary and concepts to help you make intentional decisions and describe your project. These concepts are the Elements of Art and Principles of Design which serve as building blocks of design. Try using these elements and principles to answer the questions - Why did I make my garment the way I did? What do I want to convey to my viewer?

Elements of Art

Page 1

The Elements of Art are the basic parts of a creative work. Understanding these elements helps creatives make new things, express ideas, and explore themes. The Elements of Art are: Line, Shape, Space, Texture and Color.

Principles of Design

Page 7

The Principles of Design are how we combine different Elements of Art. There are infinite ways to combine different elements to create a design. The Principles of Design are: Proportion, Scale, Balance, Rhythm, Unity and Movement.

Put it All Together

Page 15

Once you have read about and practiced using the Elements of Art and Principles of Design, look at the garment evaluation where we will put it all together.

Garments from the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising

All of the clothing and accessory photos in this guide are part of the collection of the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising at Colorado State University. You can visit our website to learn more and visit the museum. <https://www.chhs.colostate.edu/avenir/>

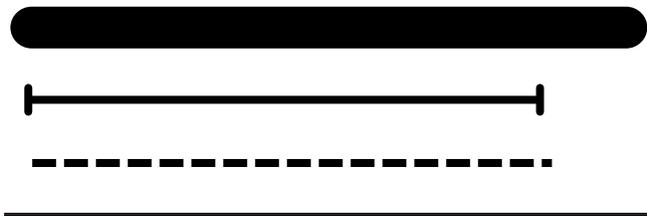


Element of Art - Line

A line is a series of connected points and can connect, outline, or divide a design. Our eyes tend to follow lines, guiding our vision through, around, or into a garment. Lines have all kinds of qualities like thick/thin, straight/curved, continuous/broken, vertical/diagonal/horizontal. Different line qualities convey specific feelings and ideas to the viewer. Lines can be created by a seamline, hem, pleat, topstitching, stripes, embroidery, embellishment or trim.

Line Exercises-

For each of these lines, write what an emotion it makes you feel.



Try to find some lines in your work. Take a picture of your garment and mark every line you see. What feelings or ideas do these lines convey?

Notice where there are lines in the details on the back of this Blackwell Jacket





Element of Art - Shape

A shape is a flat, enclosed area. Designers create shapes using lines, colors, textures, or other shapes. They can be geometric or natural. Geometric shapes are structured and use straight lines, including squares, triangles, and octagons. Natural or organic shapes are less regular and often use curved lines.

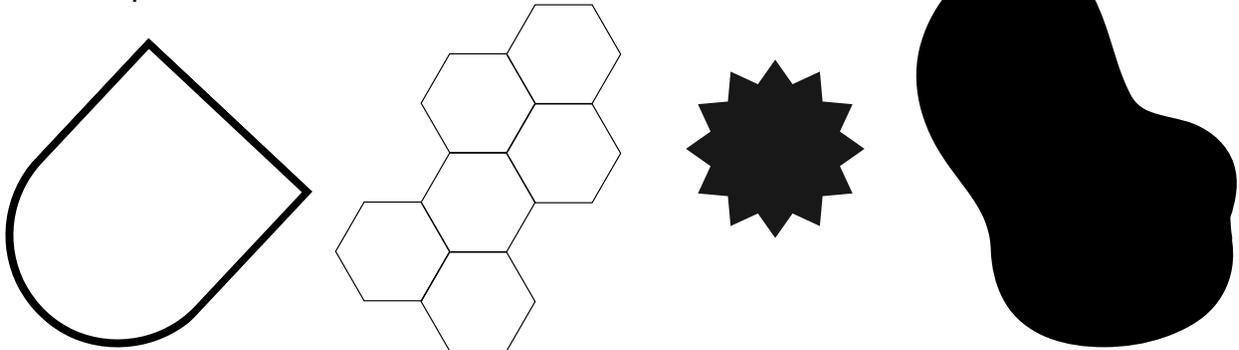
The outline of a garment creates a shape, or silhouette. Some common silhouette names are sheath, a-line, straight, hourglass, and bell.

Shapes can appear in patterns



Shape Exercises

What emotions are created by these shapes?



Coloring in an entire design shows the silhouette. Take a photo of your design and try it yourself.

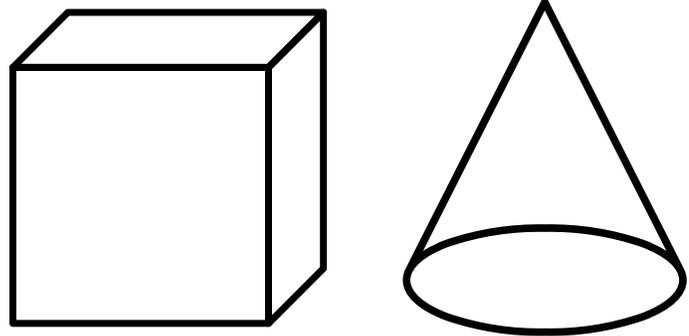


Element of Art - Space

Space is a three-dimensional volume. Since garments exist in three dimensions, it is important to think about the volume of a design and the space that it occupies. Positive space is area occupied by your garment or body. A large volume can create a feeling of strength or fluff. If your garment takes up a small amount of space, it may be seen as dainty or delicate. The space around your design is called negative space but it is still important. Negative space gives your design breathing room and keeps your viewer from becoming overwhelmed. Color, light, texture and movement all impact the positive and negative space of your design. A space can also be geometric or natural depending on the shapes that define the space.

Space Exercises

What emotions are created by these two different spaces?



Try defining different spaces in your design by outlining them. One of these has outlined negative space and the other has outlined a positive space.



Element of Art - Texture



Texture is the surface characteristic of an object or material. It can be smooth, fuzzy, soft, hard, scratchy, rough, or somewhere in between. You don't have to touch an object to know its texture, but textures do not always feel the way they look. In your design, texture is important visually but also for the wearer. Something that is soft might be more comfortable to wear than something scratchy! Many things can impact the texture of a fabric including material type, weave, ornamental features, lining, and fabric manipulation. Texture can convey delicacy, quality, strength or vulnerability.

Texture Exercise

Find four different textured textiles in the world around you. How do they make you feel when you look at them? Do they feel the way you expect them to? How do they make you feel when you touch them?

Element of Art - Color

Color is the spectrum of light reflected off an object. Color is important to the design process but also very complex! It is usually created through pigment or dye incorporated into the textile. Modern dyes allow designers to make just about any color.

Colors can remind us of other things and convey emotion. Often blue is associated with things like the sky or ocean and is often considered a calming color. Red is frequently associated with things like heat and danger and is a invigorating color. But you can also decide what each color means to you when you use it.

Hue is the wavelength of the light hitting our eye (red, green, blue, etc.). We can see the full spectrum of hues on a color wheel.



Tints of a color are the results of adding white to the original hue



Tones of a color are the results of adding grey to the original hue

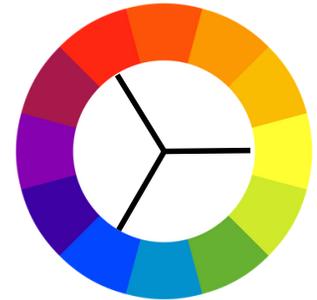
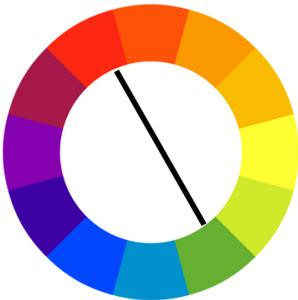


Shades of a color are the results of adding black to the original hue



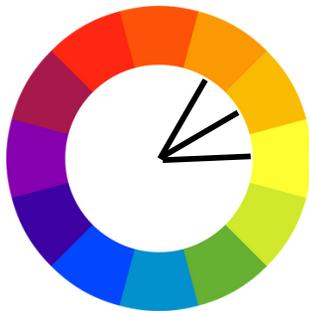
If you want your design to be monochromatic, pick different tints, shades and tones to create some difference between elements.

Take some time to look at the color wheel and think about how different colors might go together. Based on the hue relationships on the color wheel, we can anticipate how those colors might work together.



Complementary colors are opposite each other on the color wheel. They strongly contrast each other and can create bold designs where each color is easy to see against the other.

Triadic colors are three colors that are spaced evenly around the color wheel. These colors balance each other well while still standing out from one another.



Analogous colors are next to each other on the color wheel. The differences between the colors are subtle which allow for less obvious and harmonious design elements.

Remember, color is never seen in isolation! People will see your garment against skin tones, environments, and other garments that might impact how it is perceived. Also, think about if the color matches the person and personality who will wear the garment.

Color Exercises - Pick your favorite color. What is the complement to that color? What is analogous? What does that color make you feel?



Principle of Design - Contrast

Contrast is the difference between two elements. Contrast can be found in texture, shape, scale, and line but is easiest to see when it comes to color. Contrasting colors are opposite each other on the color wheel (complementary) and stand out clearly against one other. Black and white also have high contrast, which is what makes this text easy to read. Looking at the examples on this page, some have high contrast and other low. Our eyes notice high contrast, making it easy to see and attention grabbing.

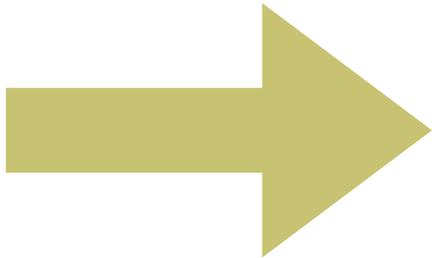


Contrast Exercise - in a word processing program, change the text color and background to find good contrast colors other than black and white. The easier the text is to read, the more contrast there is between the colors.



Principle of Design - Emphasis

Emphasis is a strategy to draw viewer's attention to one part of the design. Emphasis in a garment may be a color, waistband, pocket, embroidery design, or some other point of interest. If a garment is missing emphasis, it may have too many colors, textures, lines, shapes or sizes. Strong emphasis can be created through contrast, lines shapes and colors.



Arrows are the a great director of attention and they create emphasis by telling the viewer what to notice.

Emphasis Exercises

Draw an arrow to the emphasis on each of these garments. What creates that emphasis? How strong is it?

Look at an image of your design. What do you want people to look at first?



Principle of Design - Proportion

Proportion is the relationship of all the parts of a design to each other and to the whole garment. The human body has consistent proportions. For example, people are roughly eight heads tall (like the mannequin to the right).



Notice how these dresses break up the body into different proportions using horizontal lines. The black dress breaks the body into two parts, one about twice the size of the other. This creates a feeling of length in the legs.



The yellow dress has broken the body more evenly in half with a lower waistline which creates the illusion of a long torso. The proportions of your garment impact our perceptions of the body. Keeping the elements and areas of your garments in proportions similar to the body can create a more natural looking outfit. Unusual proportions can feel alien to the viewer.

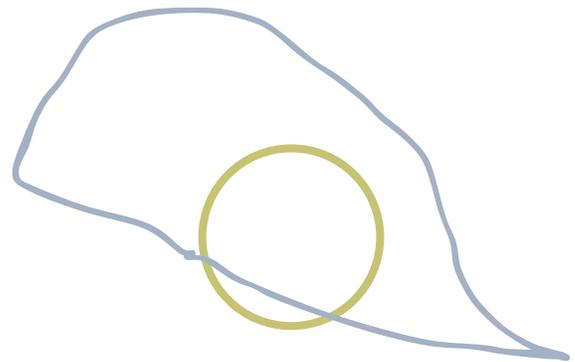
Proportion Exercises

Measure your body and see what your proportions are. How does the length of your arms compare to your height? How tall are you from shoulder to hip compared to hip to floor?

Look at some photographs of garments in this guide. How do the proportions of different garments impact how you view the body wearing them? (Most of these mannequins are identical.)

Principle of Design - Scale

Scale is the size of an object. Some items of clothing are large and others are small. Notice how one of these hats is much larger than the other compared to the size of a head.



When something is large scale it can make the person wearing it feel small. When something is small scale, it can feel dainty and delicate. Clothes also have to be the correct scale to fit the wearer. For example, children's clothes are the wrong scale for an adult.

Scale Exercise - Draw your garment idea so that it fills a piece of paper and draw it again so that it only fills a quarter of the paper. How does your idea look at different scales? What do you notice about it when it is big vs. small?

Principle of Design - Balance



Balance is how elements are weighted against each other across your design. A garment that is symmetrical is usually balanced because it has the same number and size of elements on both sides of the line of symmetry.

Garments don't have to be symmetrical to be balanced. One large or dense element can be balanced with many smaller or lighter elements.



Garments that are balanced generally feel more complete and stable but choosing unbalanced design can challenge your viewer to grapple with a design that might feel wrong at first.

Balance can be side to side, but it can also be top to bottom. If you would describe your outfit as "top heavy" perhaps it is because it is unbalanced.



Balance Exercises

Look at this outfit with and without the jacket. Is one more balanced than the other? Do you prefer one more than the other?

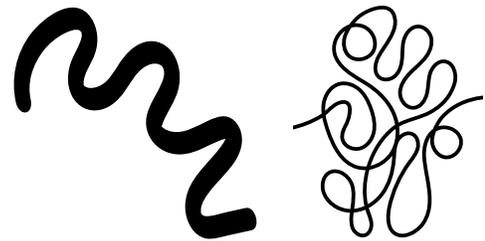
Dry drawing a balanced and unbalanced design for a garment. Is one easier or harder? Which do you prefer? How does each make you feel?

Principle of Design - Rhythm

Rhythm is repetition of visual elements to create a pattern. Designers can repeat colors, textures, shapes, or sizes. Rhythm moves the viewers attention through the design. Repetition can also be used to create unity and movement in your piece.



When a rhythm is regular and consistent, the viewer sees its stability and structure. When it is irregular it can confuse the eye but it can also feel more natural and organic.



Rhythm Exercises

Listen to a piece of music and represent the rhythm of the piece by drawing a line.

Find a pattern on a textile and trace it (on paper or just with your finger). What does it feel like to trace the pattern? What emotions does this rhythm evoke in you?



Principle of Design - Unity/ Variety

Unity is the result of all the materials fitting together and belonging in your design. A unified design feels cohesive and finished because all parts work together. When colors are not harmonious, we say they clash. When textures don't go well together, the wearer or viewer can be uncomfortable.



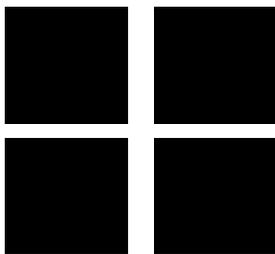
Unity Exercises

If you don't feel like a design is unified, try taking away one element. This can sometimes help you find the thing that doesn't fit.

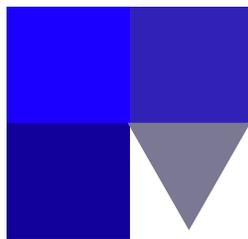
Too much unity can be a bad thing too! **Variety** is visual difference between elements in a work. Without some variety in our work, it can be boring or simple.

Variety Exercises

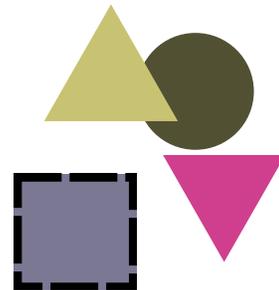
If a design feels boring or simple, try adding something outrageous! Adding something completely different can be inspiration to find the middle ground that balances unity and variety.



Complete unity means that all parts are the same. This works sometimes, but can be boring.



Some variety creates visual interest but the parts still feel like they fit together.



With too much variety and not enough unity, a design can feel jumbled and messy.

Principle of Design - Movement

Movement is the visual energy, perception that something moves or how it actually moves. Movement is especially important in clothing design, because we move our bodies while wearing the clothes. If a garment is constricting, we can't move well and it might be uncomfortable. Fabric choice significantly impacts the movement. If the fabric is heavy or stiff (like a thick wool), it will move less and maintain its structure while being worn. If the fabric is soft and diaphanous (like a thin cotton), it will flow and move along with the person wearing it. We can also create the illusion of movement through diagonal lines, textures and other elements. They trick the eye into thinking it should or will move.



The amount and type of movement a design has conveys feelings of fluidity or structure. Garments with a lot of movement are often associated with women like full skirts and flowing shawls. Outfits with less movement are often associated with men, like structured suits. This doesn't mean that either gender is limited to that type of garment!



Movement Exercise

Spin around in a circle or jump up and down. What do your clothes do when you move? If they flow behind you or float away from your body, that garment has movement. If your clothes keep their structure and shape or are close to the body, they have less movement.

Putting it All Together



When assessing a design, we combine all of the Elements of Art and Principles of Design to talk about what we see and how it impacts us. Not all Elements of Art and Principles of Design are equally important in every design. For example, Scale and Proportion are less impactful on this design than it is on others because the garment has fairly natural proportions for the body and fits the body correctly. Other elements like Balance, Color and Shape are more important in this design.



One way to start is to work through all of the Elements of Art and Principles of Design and see which ones feel most significant. Then write out how they connect and relate to each other.

Line - A-line skirt, curving lines, line down center front

Shape - organic, curves, triangles, waves

Space - covers body evenly, close to body, cone skirt

Texture - smooth and uniform

Color - black and pink (dark shade)

Contrast - medium contrast between black and pink

Emphasis - some emphasis on triangles center, not significant focal point

Proportion - natural proportions to body, full skirt, full sleeve

Scale - human scale, fits body

Balance - each side of garment is similar but pattern is slightly offset down center line

Rhythm - curving lines flowing pattern, like water

Unity/ Variety - many similar elements across whole design

Movement - skirt flairs out when move or spin, curving lines create sense of movement, flowing water

The garment is covered in organic wave shapes in a dull pink and black. These two colors have a mild contrast but the shade of pink reduces the contrast somewhat. The texture of the dress is smooth and uniform, not distracting from the surface design.

The movement of the dress when worn allows the skirt to flow out, creating shapes that evoke the pattern on the dress, flowing and soft. The pattern is slightly off set at the mid line that runs down the front of the dress moving the design slightly off balance in a way that increases the sense of movement in the pattern on the dress.