BASIC VISUAL HIERARCHY is established by using discernable differences in contrast, position, and spacing.
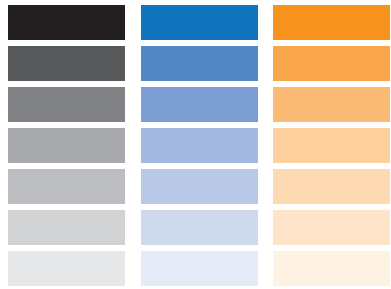
CONTRAST

BLACK
EXTRABOLD
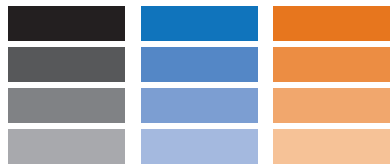**BOLD**
SEMIBOLD
REGULAR
LIGHT
THIN

36PT
24PT
18PT
12PT
10PT
8PT
6PT

In typography, a professional font allows you to establish a **hierarchy of sizes and weights**.

Tone can establish a hiearchy too, but the differences must be discernable.

Note a subtle hierarchy of **color brightness** from left to right. By the numbers, you would think they should look equal, but they do not.

Here the orange has been adjusted to make it "more equal in strength" with the blue. This is a visual adjustment done by eye.

FOREGROUND / BACKGROUND

TEXT on BACKGROUND

TEXT on BACKGROUND

TEXT on BACKGROUND

TEXT on BACKGROUND
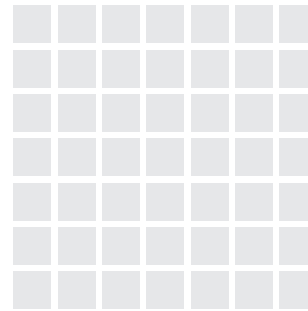
TEXT on BACKGROUND
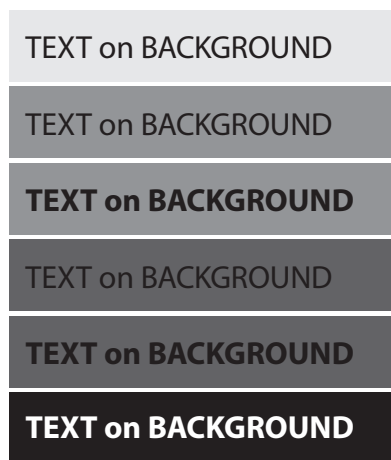
TEXT on BACKGROUND

Maximize contrast when you want clarity.

With 50% black background, the box is muddy. Increasing the text weight helps. Still not great. Fix it.

This is even worse. The bold weight doesn't help, so invert and maximize contrast. This creates the strongest element of this group.

POSITION

**Position within a space** also denotes importance or hierarchy, but this is very maleable.

In a content block that is "gray" (like lots of text) we tend to look at the top left and scan to the bottom very quickly, if we read it at all. It's just a block, and we pay it little attention.
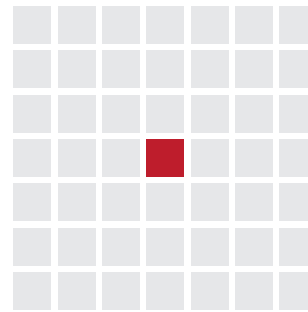
Now we're drawn immediately to the center. This could be a photo in a sea of text, providing immediate interest.
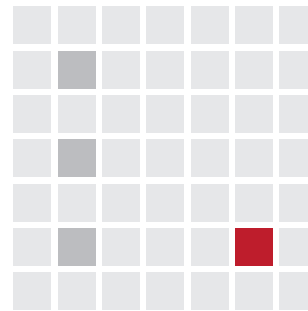
Now we see the red dot first, then scan bottom-up to the second-most interesting gray blocks. Perhaps branding is in the lower-right, establishing immediate context for the three items that follow.
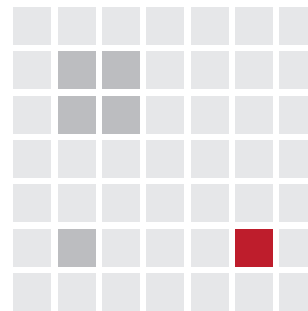
Now a flotilla of gray boxes challenges the dominance of the red block, creating diagonal tension between them! The lower-left box is sidelined. This is an interesting story, and has a lot of dramatic applications.

Behold, the power of composition!
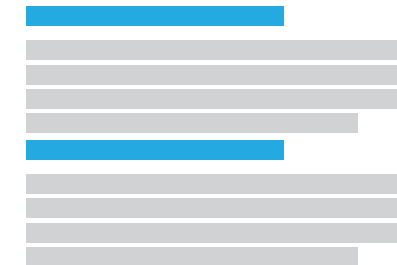
SPACING

A   B   C

D   E
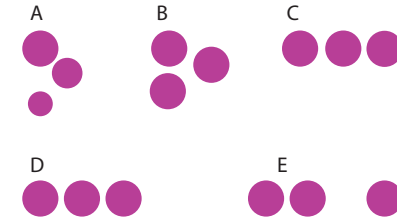
Groups create order, and it is established through consistency within the group. That **makes the visual differences clearer** and contributes to clarity.

D and **E** are acceptable. **C** is an example of poor consistency.

Color coding rarely works well on the item level. To create clarity, you need to use other techniques to create visual difference.

I use color coding only as secondary elements that can scan in a line, or for large backgrounds to denote areas of related content.

Pay attention to the **relationship of spaces** in groups. The blue header is supposed to be grouped with the text, creating a single unit. However, the following unit is too close; the headline is grouped by proximity.

......
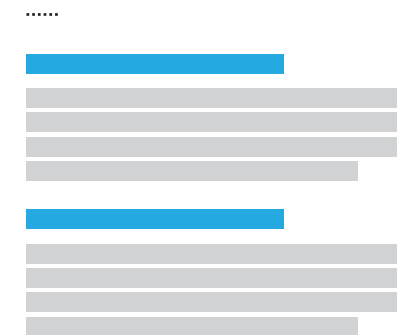
Here, the spacing has been corrected. It is 2x the distance between the header and the first line.

The spacing relationship depends on the direction of the layout flow.