

# CREATING A VISUAL HIERARCHY

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Mr Shelor's Graphic Design Class – M-101 Lab

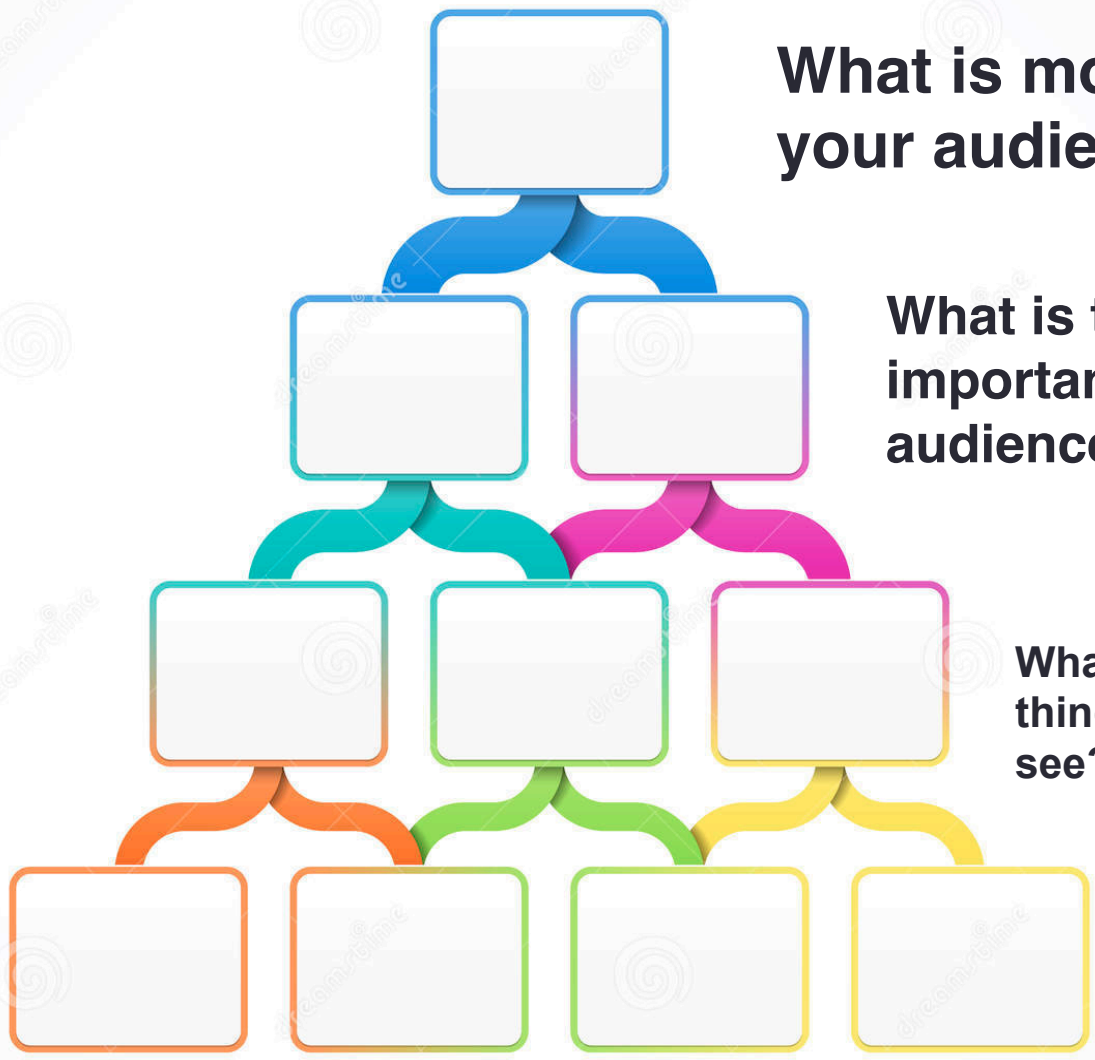
# Creating A Visual Hierarchy

- **Visual Hierarchy** is the arrangement or presentation of elements in a way that implies **IMPORTANCE.**

**What is most important for your audience to notice?**

**What is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important thing for your audience to notice?**

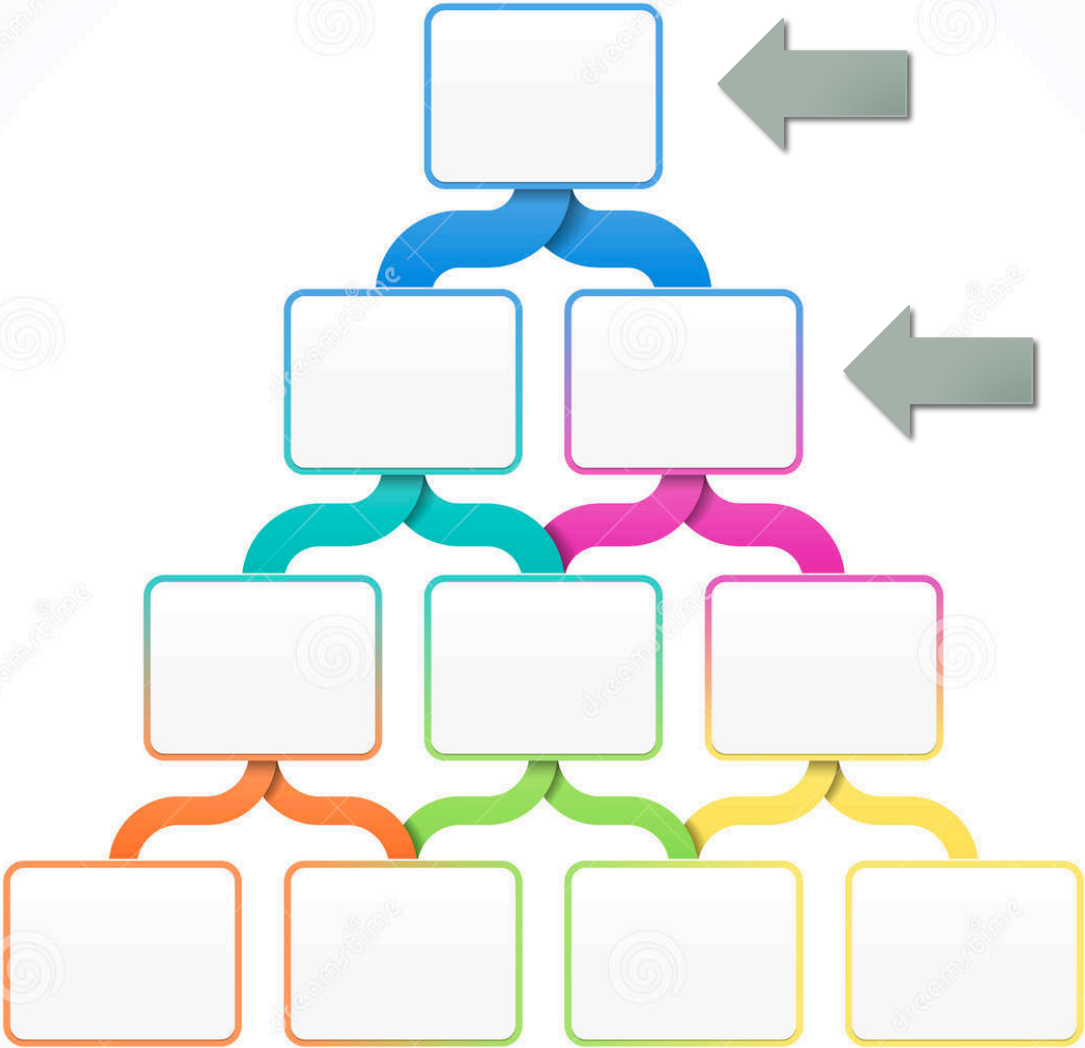
**What is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important thing you want your audience to see?**



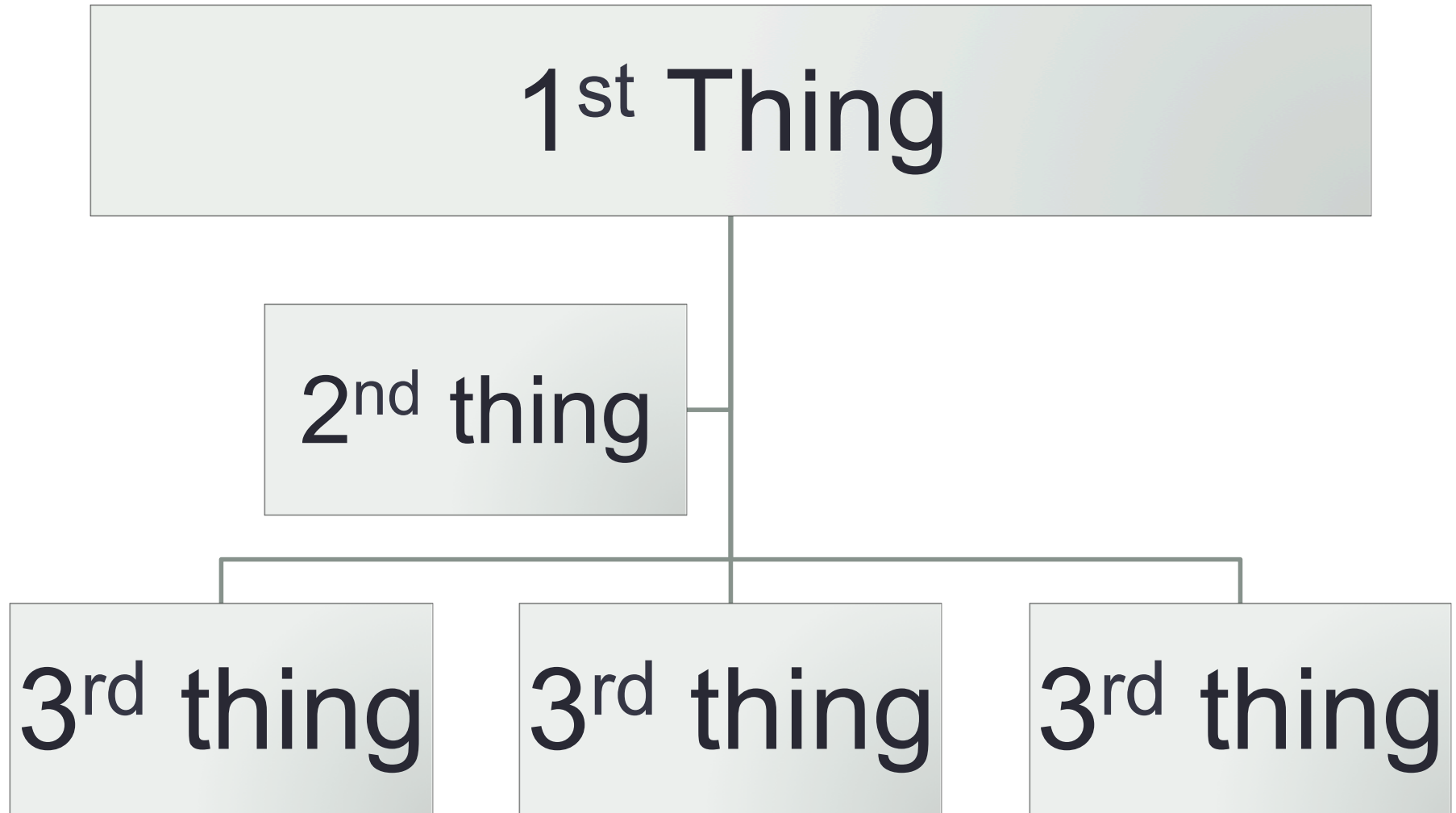
**Visual Hierarchy-Arranging the Elements of Design in the ORDER OF IMPORTANCE To Get Your Design Noticed**

**Primary Focal Point-  
Main Point of Emphasis**

**Secondary Focal Points-**

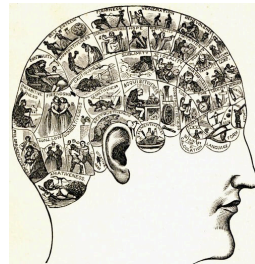


# Creating A Visual Hierarchy in Design



# Creating A Visual Hierarchy in Design

Objects with the  
**HIGHEST CONTRAST**  
to their surroundings  
are recognized  
first by the human mind



**Visual Hierarchy** is really a pretty simple concept.

By using color, contrast, texture, shape, value, proximity, and size, you can organize elements on a page so that users gets a sense of visual importance.

Look at this graphic below



Where did you eyes go 1<sup>st</sup>?

The point is, nothing guided your eyes because all of the circles are the same.  
If you make everything **bold**, nothing is **bold**.

**Let's make a slight change to that graphic**



**Now where did your eyes go? My guess is the first circle.  
With only shading, I was able to direct your eye to  
the circle that, for whatever reason,  
I believed to be the most important.**

**This is visual hierarchy.**



**LOWEST PRICE EVER  
ON TOP-QUALITY  
BLUE WIDGETS!  
SALE ENDS MONDAY,  
SUPPLIES ARE LIMITED,  
STOP BY TODAY.  
(FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED.)**

These are our top-quality widgets and we've never offered them at such a low price. You must see them with your own eyes to believe the quality and workmanship that goes into the manufacture of each and every widget. They are the best on the market, and you won't find a better price anywhere, guaranteed.



**Widgets Inc.  
437 Widget Drive  
Widgetville, TX 75701  
[www.widgets.com](http://www.widgets.com)**



1. Primary Focal Point or EMPHASIS in this ad

XXX Not A Good ExampleXXX

**Example Ad 1**

**NOT SO GOOD**

# LOWEST PRICE EVER

## ON TOP-QUALITY BLUE WIDGETS!



These are our top-quality widgets and we've never offered them at such a low price. You must see them with your own eyes to believe the quality and workmanship that goes into the manufacture of each and every widget. They are the best on the market, and you won't find a better price anywhere, guaranteed.

**SALE ENDS MONDAY**

**Widgets Inc.**

437 Widget Drive | Widgetville, TX 78280

(210) 555-1212 | [www.widgets.com](http://www.widgets.com)

Supplies are limited, so stop by today.  
(First come, first served.)

## Better Ad-Has A Visual Hierarchy

1. Where does your eye go first?  
**LOWEST PRICE EVER**
2. Where does your eye go 2<sup>nd</sup>?  
**To The Widget-(shape)**
3. Where does your eye go 3<sup>rd</sup>?  
**Sale End Monday**

>>A Better use of **SPACE** around  
the text and pictures<<

# Visual Hierarchy

**YOUR EYES HERE**

**(then here)**


*Isn't that fascinating?*

# YOU READ THIS FIRST

You will read this when skimming

You will probably not read this on a skim

You will not read this. **Unless a phrase is bolded**



*Psst... This is using "anomaly"  
to break the flow of the hierarchy. Cool huh?*

# Hierarchy

SIZE

|

WEIGHT

|

PLACEMENT

|

SPACING

# 45%

of 25-34 year olds in the US would be comfortable using  
an independently issued, or branded, currency

Contagious / Opinium



09:25 / 10:52

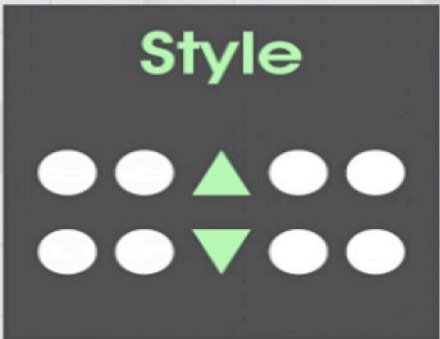
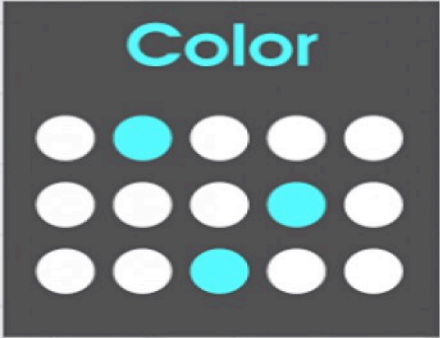
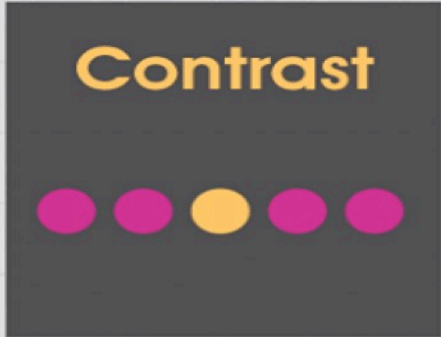
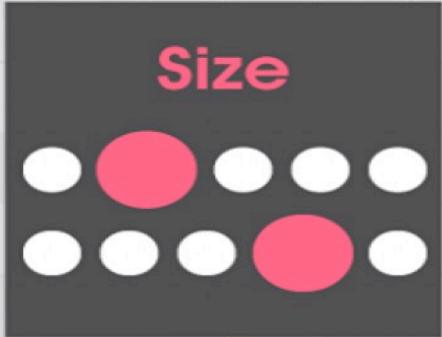


## **This gets more attention.**

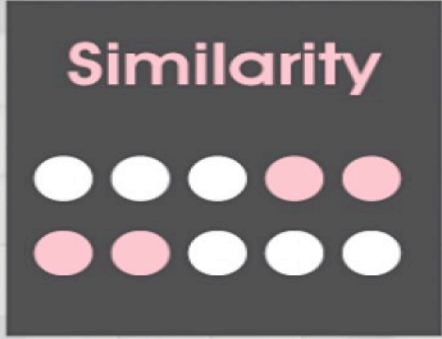
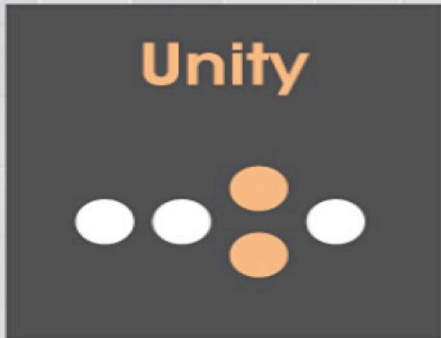
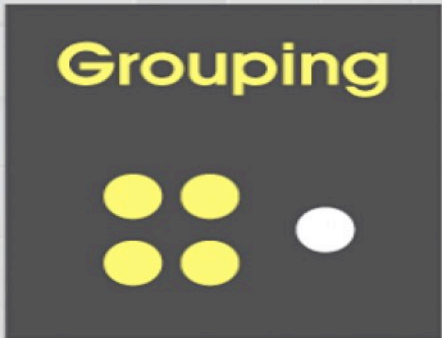
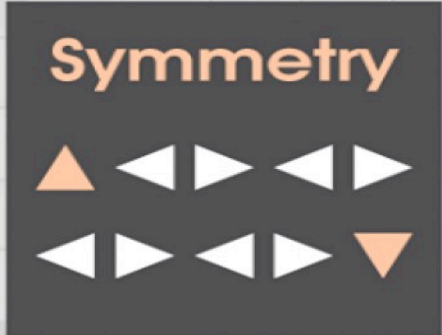
*You've established a heading and a sub-heading.*

Now you're telling people the main information, after you've drawn them in.

- And use bullet points,
- Or icons,
- Or photos to break up the content.



8 Possible Ways  
to Add  
**Visual Hierarchy**  
to your Design





Share the Earth

Environmental Film Series

# QUEEN OF THE SUN: WHAT ARE THE BEES TELLING US?

(Taggart Siegel, USA, 82 min, video, 2011)



Milwaukee Premiere

Wednesday, December 7 at 7pm  
UWM Union Theater

*Queen of the Sun* is a profound, alternative look at the global bee crisis from the director of *The Real Dirt on Farmer John*. Taking us on a journey through the catastrophic disappearance of bees and the mysterious world of the beehive, this engaging and ultimately uplifting film weaves an unusual and dramatic story of the heartfelt struggles of beekeepers, scientists and philosophers from around the world including Michael Pollan, Gunther Hauk, and Vandana Shiva. Together they reveal both the problems and the solutions in renewing a culture in balance with nature.

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN



**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.

Text can establish a hierarchy across most

each of from left to right, you should look not.

is been t "move with the al eye.

When contrast when you want clarity.

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

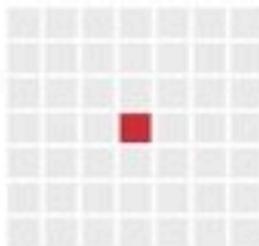
This is even worse. The bold weight doesn't help, so invert and maximize contrast. This creates the strongest element of this group.

#### POSITION

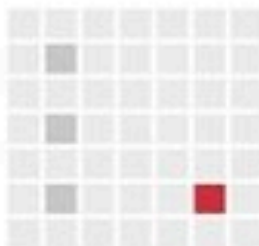


Position within a space also denotes importance or hierarchy, but this is very maleable.

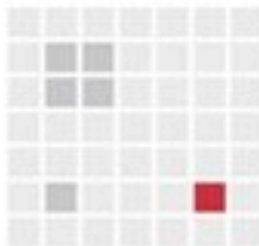
In a content block that is "gray" (like lots of text) we tend to look at the top-left and scan to the bottom very quickly, if we read it at all. It's just a block, and we pay it little attention.



Now we're drawn immediately to the center. This could be a photo in a sea of text, providing immediate interest.



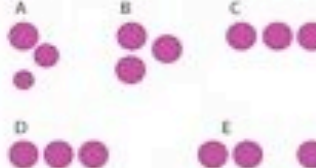
Now we see the red dot first, then scan bottom-up to the second-most interesting gray blocks. Perhaps branding is in the lower right, establishing immediate context for the three items that follow.



Now a ferilla 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



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.



Next, 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.

DAY 24

Visual Hierarchy Basics

Pre-cursor to a form design kit

TEXT on BACKGROUND

TEXT on BACKGROUND

TEXT on BACKGROUND

TEXT on BACKGROUND

TEXT on BACKGROUND

TEXT on BACKGROUND

# Race For Red

4K Run Walk

This race will benefit Go Red for women, an initiative created by The American Heart Association to raise awareness of heart disease specifically among women. Did you know that heart disease is the number one killer of women in the United States? Take charge of your health by joining us to promote awareness and raise funds for women everywhere.

*The Life you save could be your own*

**April 25th 2010**

# Visual Hierarchy

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Lorem ipsum. Dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Aenean commodo ligula eget dolor. Aenean massa. Cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur.

VS

## **Lorem ipsum**

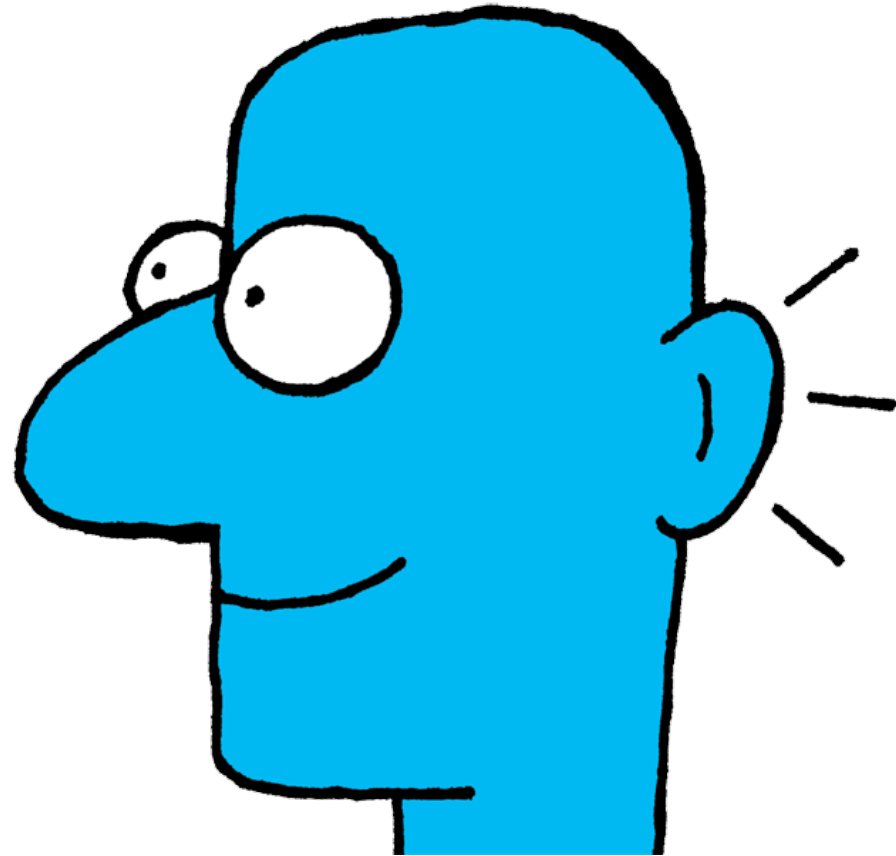
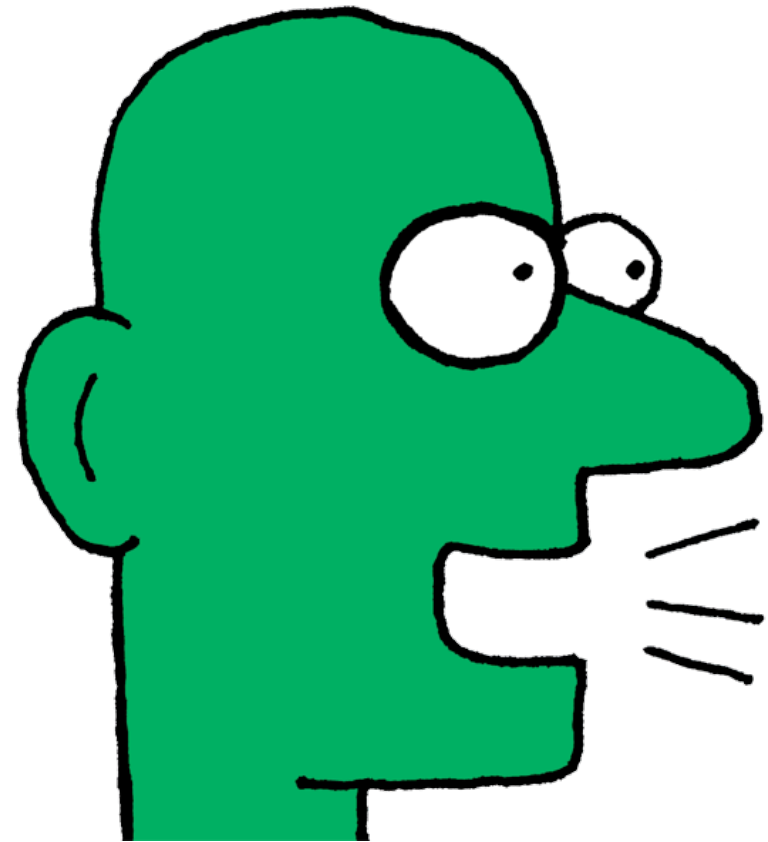
Dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Aenean commodo ligula eget dolor.

## **Aenean massa**

Cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur.

enjoy





**Easy and legible = comprehension and message received.**

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet. Consectetur adipiscing elit. Phasellus hendrerit. Pellentesque aliquet nibh nec urna. In nisi neque, aliquet vel, dapibus id, mattis vel, nisi. Sed pretium, ligula sollicitudin laoreet viverra, tortor libero sodales leo, eget blandit nunc tortor eu nibh. Nullam mollis. Ut justo. Suspendisse potenti. Sed egestas, ante et vulputate volutpat, eros pede semper est, vitae luctus metus libero eu augue. Morbi purus libero, faucibus adipiscing, commodo quis, gravida id, est. Sed lectus. Praesent elementum hendrerit tortor. Sed semper lorem at felis. Vestibulum volutpat, lacus a ultrices sagittis, mi neque euismod dui, eu pulvinar nunc sapien ornare nisl.

*versus*

### **Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet.**

Consectetur adipiscing elit. Phasellus hendrerit. Pellentesque aliquet nibh nec urna. In nisi neque, aliquet vel, dapibus id, mattis vel, nisi. Sed pretium, ligula sollicitudin laoreet viverra, tortor libero sodales leo, eget blandit nunc tortor eu nibh. Nullam mollis.

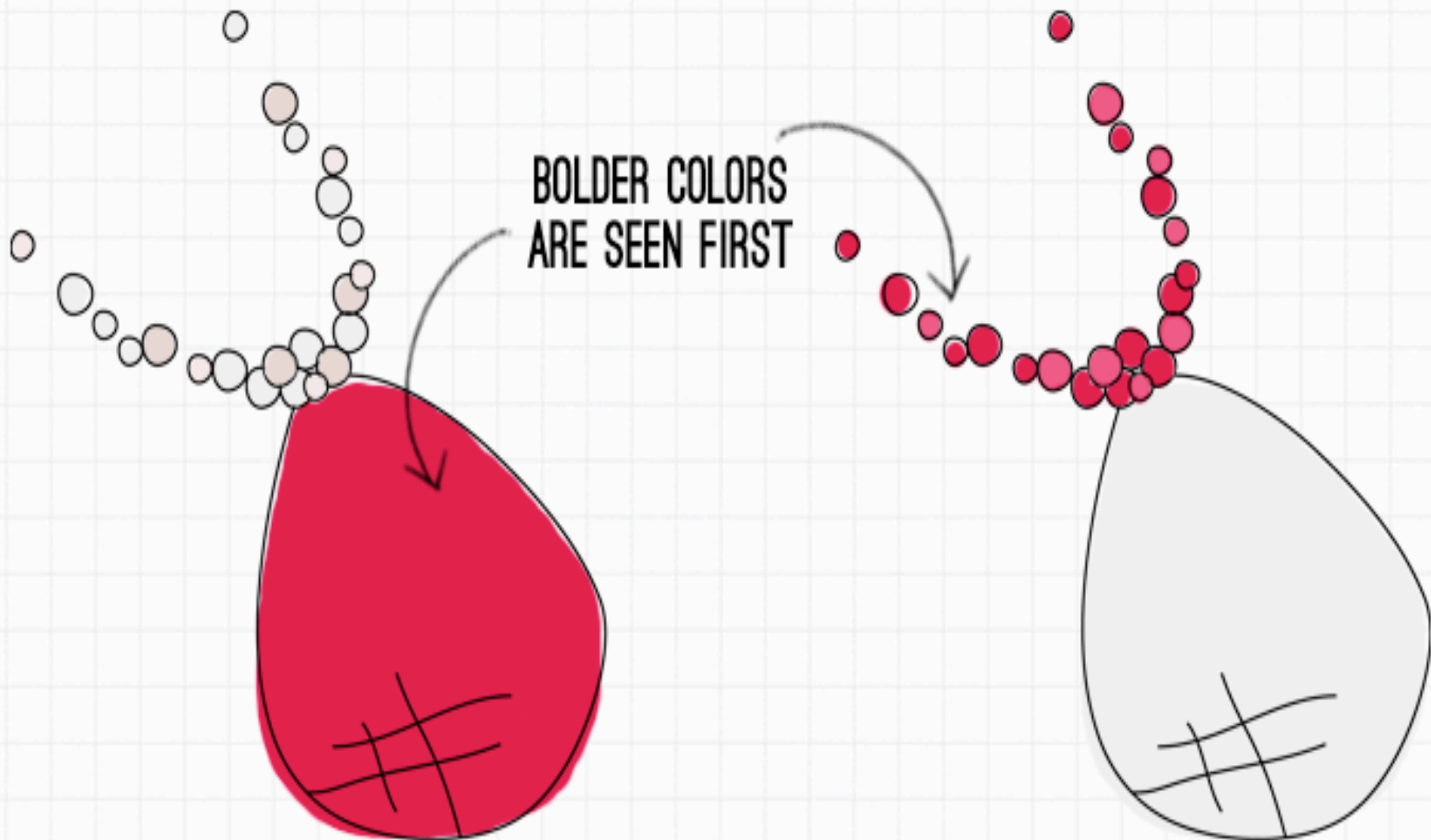
### **Ut justo. Suspendisse potenti.**

Sed egestas, ante et vulputate volutpat, eros pede semper est, vitae luctus metus libero eu augue. Morbi purus libero, faucibus adipiscing, commodo quis, gravida id, est. Sed lectus. Praesent elementum hendrerit tortor. Sed semper lorem at felis. Vestibulum volutpat, lacus a ultrices sagittis, mi neque euismod dui, eu pulvinar nunc sapien ornare nisl.

**SIZE** Matters



**BOLDER COLORS  
ARE SEEN FIRST**



# Color Psychology

## PRIMARY COLORS:

### YELLOW

- Cheerful or warm
- Most likely to strain eyes or cause eye fatigue
- Makes Babies Cry  
Don't paint a baby's room yellow, because they are more prone to crying

### BLUE

- The color most preferred by men
- Calmness or serenity
- Most used color for offices  
People are more productive in blue rooms
- Curbs appetite
- Associated with water and peace

### RED

- Evokes strong emotions
- Encourages appetite  
(many restaurants use red in their signage/ads)
- Passion or intensity
- Red roses symbolize love

### Studies show that red can make you do poorly on exams!

"Red is hypothesized to impair performance on achievement tasks, because red is associated with the danger of failure in achievement contexts and evokes avoidance motivation."