

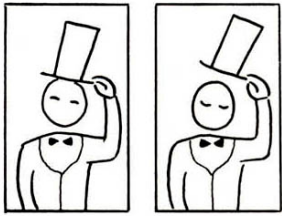
Best Practices for Designing to Teach

FLOW: keep moving forward

Chunking Cluster information into *at most* 4±1 chunks; this makes it easier to remember. *Do not use* for information you need to scan quickly.

6175551234 vs. (617) 555-1234
Chunk phone numbers for better recall.

Closure See a set of individual elements as a combined, recognizable, and predictable pattern

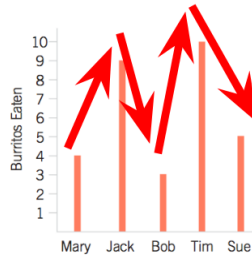
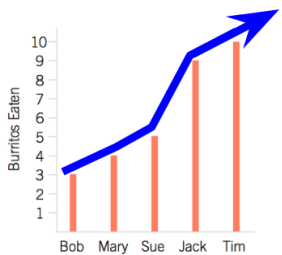


CLOSURE
CLOSURE
CL S RE
 [A series of dots forming the word CLOSURE]
CLOSURE

Continuation Elements in a line or curve look more related to each other than to other elements.

Your eye follows the arrow along the organized, continuous line.

Your eye jumps along the line in interrupted, abrupt, and distracting ways.



EMPHASIS: highlight what matters

Alignment Place elements along common edges, lines, or surface area density, to group meaning

Effective

Less Effective

Vertical/horizontal

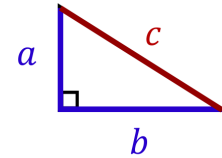
Diagonal/Sideways

Area-weighted for irregular objects

Center-weighted for irregular objects



Color Use **color** to distinguish elements, but do not rely on it. Aim for *high contrast*. (You may not always have color ink.)



$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

The Pythagorean Theorem

Formatting **Bolding** highlights elements louder than *italics* does. It's harder to read underlining, so use even less than italics.

Lines For slides, limit each line to 5 words. For work sheets, set paragraph spacing at 1.15 times the font size. Only use double-spacing for annotating texts.

CONSISTENCY: consistency is clarity

Same Phrasing Reuse command phrases linked to a sequence of steps; saves time by piggybacking on prior knowledge

Teacher: "After you read the first chapter, work with your group to **SUMMARIZE** it."

Student: "I've practiced how to **SUMMARIZE** in this class. First, I read the text silently. Second, I share with my group an important point. Finally, we write down every important point in order."

Branding When students recognize a consistent style, their brains quickly prime emotional and procedural expectations for what's next.

This "brand" primes us to be quiet in the theatre.



FLOW: *keep moving forward*

Hierarchy Increase understanding and connect concepts by sorting and grouping related elements using:

Type	Purpose	Example
Tree	High-level systems, overviews	Chain of command
Nest	simple relationships, child-parent	Venn diagram
Stair	Complex hierarchies, unclear relationships	Large changing structures

EMPHASIS: *highlight what matters*

Size Emphasize (bold, italics, underline) *at most 10%* of the visible design. For presentation slides, *all* fonts must be at *least* 20pt.

Typeface Use *at most* 2 to 3 typefaces for one project. Avoid using different fonts to highlight.

Whitespace Frame an important element using empty space, or use empty space to give the viewer something to complete or access.

CONSISTENCY: *consistency is clarity*

KWL chart Pre-thinking organizer. Asks students to:
 1) *recall* knowledge they bring,
 2) *ask* questions, then
 3) read a text or lesson, and reflect on what they *learn*.

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

Troubleshoot Your Work: *But my slides or handouts still don't look right! What do I do now?*

What do I want the **main outcome** of my visual to be? Is this where my visual ends?

How does my design **move** between elements? Can readers understand what comes next?

Does the time and space I give to an element match how **important** that element is? Where do viewers spend the most time looking or thinking?

How do people **perceive** my design?

What **extra work** must readers do to understand the information? Do I need them to do that extra work?

What do my readers **notice** immediately? What do my readers notice last? What is more important?

Do my elements **distract** or focus?

Have I been **clear** with and **reinforce** my expectations for routines?

How do people **interact** with my visuals?

Are my visuals **helpful** for teaching? How do I know?