

## Discovering the Principles of Design: Rhythm, Proportion, Emphasis, Balance, Pattern, Repetition, Variety, Unity

### 4-H Line and Design Project

Part of the Family and Consumer Sciences 4-H Project Series

**Project Outcomes:** -Understand the principles of design.  
-Label design principles in a specific work of art, craft, graphic design or interior design.

**Project Indicator:** Complete the project exercises in activity including identifying principles of design in various pieces.

The elements & principles of design open our eyes to the beauty that is all around us. The elements & principles of art are the building blocks of understanding & creating art, crafts and designs. Just as the letters of any alphabet are fundamental to understanding that language, the elements & principles of design are fundamental to understanding the language of art.

**This activity will focus on the Principles of Design:** Rhythm, Proportion, Emphasis, Balance, Pattern, Repetition, Variety, and Unity.

### Rhythm

You have felt rhythm in music. Rhythm is also a part of things you see. It allows the eye to move from one part of a design to another part.

Rhythm can be created by:

- Repeating a color, shape, texture, line, or space when designing.
- Varying the size of objects, shapes, or lines in sequence (small to large).
- Using a progression of colors from tints to shades (light blue to dark blue).
- Shifting from one hue to a neighboring hue (yellow to yellow-orange to orange to red-orange to red).



1.

2.

3.

4.



Examples of where rhythm is created: 1. The slant in the trees that are repeated; 2. the angle of the lines and change in color in the graphic design; 3. the pattern in this afghan and the progression of monochromatic colors; 4. the change in the shapes and gradation of color.

## Proportion

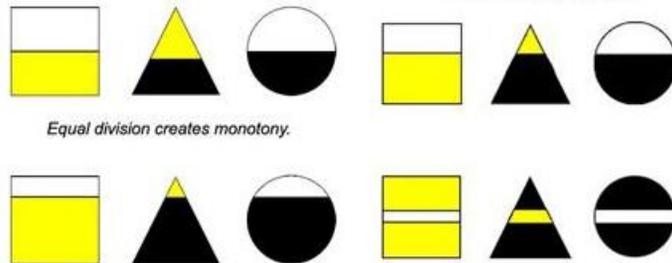
Proportion refers to the relationship between one part of a design and another part or to the whole design. It is a comparison of sizes, shapes, and quantities. For example, the relationship between the vertical and horizontal measurements of a wall hanging may be pleasing because the unequal lengths produce an interesting contrast.



Distorted proportions



Pleasing proportion



*Equal division creates monotony.*

*Division too unequal creates a lack of harmony.*

Bad Balance

Good Balance

## Emphasis

Every design needs an accent—a point of interest. Emphasis is the quality that draws your attention to a certain part of a design first.

There are several ways to create emphasis:

- Use a contrasting color.
- Use a different or unusual line.
- Make a shape very large or very small.
- Use a different shape.
- Use plain background space



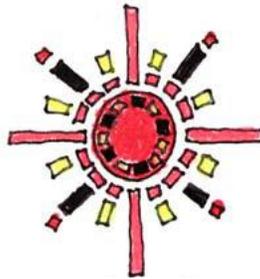
## Balance

Balance gives a feeling of stability. There are three types of balance.

**Symmetrical**, or formal balance, is the simplest kind. An item that is symmetrically balanced is the same on both sides. Our bodies are an example of formal balance. If you draw an imaginary line from your head to your toes dividing your body in half, you will be pretty much the same on both sides.



Designs that have a **radial balance** have a center point. A tire, pizza, and a daisy flower are all examples of design with radial balance. When you look through a kaleidoscope, everything you see has a radial balance.



**Asymmetrical balance** creates a feeling of equal weight on both sides, even though the sides do not look the same. Asymmetrical designs also are called informal designs because they suggest movement and spontaneity. Asymmetrical balance is the hardest type of balance to achieve and often takes experimenting or moving elements around until balance is achieved.



Painting: Starry Night, by Van Gogh



Decorated Cake

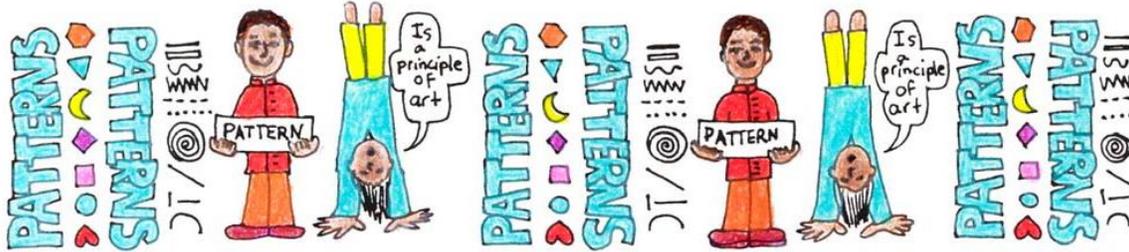


Center Piece

## Pattern

Patterns are everywhere. Many of our habits are patterns. Pattern is the repetition of the elements of design or anything else.

Can you identify the pattern below?



## Repetition

Repetition works with pattern to make a work of art seem active. The repetition of elements of design creates unity within the work.



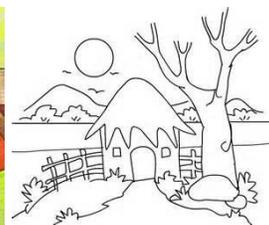
Repetition in shapes and colors

## Variety

Variety is the use of several elements of design to hold the viewer's attention and to guide the viewer's eye through and around a work of art. Variety can show contrast. Variety can be found in nature or made.



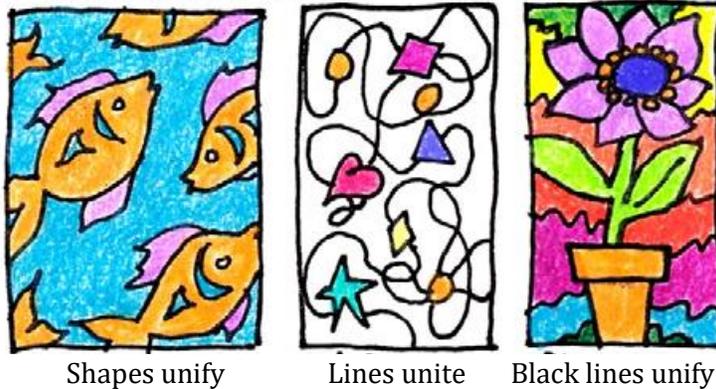
Variety in shapes and sizes.



The painting on the left is more interesting than the drawing on the right because of the variety in the sizes of the buildings and trees, and the gradation in the color green.

## Unity

Unity is the feeling of harmony between all parts of a work of art, which creates a sense of completeness. the thing that joins the parts together. It shows what things have in common. When things look right together, you have created unity or harmony. Lines and shapes that repeat each other show unity (curved lines with curved shapes). Colors that have a common hue are harmonious. Textures that have a similar feel add to unity. But too much uniformity sometimes can be boring. At the same time, too much variety destroys unity.



## APPLYING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

Now that you have learned about the principles of design and have seen examples of each, it's time to apply what you have learned. Examine the pieces that follow and complete the tasks as explained.

### Art Work



*A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* Painter: Seurat; (Technique used: Pointillism)

**Explain the following:**

Type of Balance-

Where Repetition is found-

How Variety is achieved by use of Colors and Lines-

## Craft



**Explain the following:**

Where Repetition is found-

What Unifies this piece of art-

The Pattern created by the colors-

Type of Balance-

## Ceramic Vase



**Explain the following:**

Where Repetition is found-

What is the Emphasis (Focal Point)-

The Pattern created by the horizontal lines-

The Proportion of the bottom part to the top part of the vase (describe it and tell if it is good or bad)-

## Graphic Design



### Mainstreaming 21st Century Learning

**Explain the following:**

Where Repetition is found-

Is there Unity in this piece (explain your answer)-

The Pattern created by the circles-

The Variety in color and size of circles and its effect on the design-

## Interior Design (Living Room)



**Explain the following:**

Rhythm created by gradation in color (What is it and what feel does it give the room)-

The Emphasis (Focal Point) in the room (Explain your answer)-

The Repetition of lines (Types of lines and what feel does it give the room)-

Element of Design that Unifies the room-

By: Sue Byrd, Professor Emeritus, The University of Tennessee at Martin

Sources: *The ABCs of Art*: awesomeartists.com; *Design Exploring the Elements & Principles*, Iowa State University Extension; *The Principles of Design*, The J. Paul Getty Museum

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