ONLINE ARTICLES

Resources.

Use one for Abstract.

As designers, we often focus on the practical aspects of design above all else. We focus on what works, with little regard for why it works. And in our day-to-day work, that outlook serves us well. It lets us get our work done in an efficient, professional manner, and generally nets good results.

But spending some time on the theory behind the graphic design principles we use every day can expand our design horizons. It can open up new avenues of creativity and experimentation that can lead our designs from just good, to fantastic. On that note, below are 50 excellent resources and articles that discuss graphic design theory, including layout, colour theory, and typography. Feel free to share additional resources and articles in the comments.

General Design Theory

There are a lot of general design theories and principles out there that apply to all forms of design, whether in digital or print mediums. These include things like balance and scale, as well as more abstract topics like emotion and what makes for "good" design.

The Principles of Design
This article from Digital Web Magazine covers the basics of design theory, including balance, rhythm, proportion, dominance, and unity. It's fully illustrated and makes each principle easy to understand.

Asymmetrical

Asymmetrical balance occurs when the weight of a composition is not evenly distributed around a central axis. It involves the arranging of objects of differing size in a composition such that they balance one another with their respective visual weights. Often there is one dominant form that is offset by many smaller forms. In general, asymmetrical compositions tend to have a greater sense of visual tension. Asymmetrical balance is also known as informal balance.

Horizontal symmetry

Approximate horizontal symmetry

Radial symmetry

Asymmetry
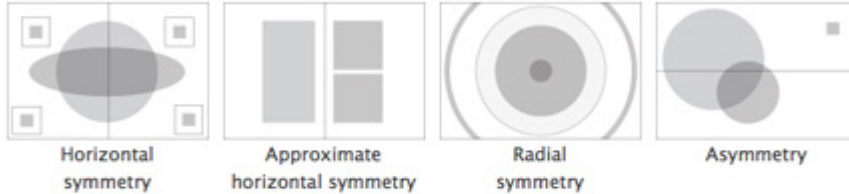
Rhythm

Rhythm is the repetition or alternation of elements, often with defined intervals between them. Rhythm can create a sense of movement, and can establish pattern and texture. There are many different kinds of rhythm, often defined by the feeling it evokes when looking at it.

- Regular: A regular rhythm occurs when the intervals between the elements, and often the elements themselves, are similar in size or length.

- Flowing: A flowing rhythm gives a sense of movement, and is often more organic in nature.

- Progressive: A progressive rhythm shows a sequence of forms through a progression of steps.

Graphic Design Theory?

This article from the AIGA archives offers a broad discussion of graphic design theory, offering guidance for designers on a host of topics, including their place within the current DIY culture.

How Good is Good?

This article from Typotheque talks about good design in relation to what the design is for, especially in relation to non-profit causes. There's a heavy dose of ethical considerations here, as well as some practical information on what makes a good design.

Can Graphic Design Make You Cry?

This article from Design Observer discusses the question, "How…could you make design that communicated to human beings and deliberately drain it of all human content?"

Ten Graphic Design Paradoxes

This article discusses ten of the most common statements or opinions about graphic designers (or said by graphic designers) that are contrary to accepted wisdom. Included are things like "For designers, verbal skills are as important as visual skills," and "I'm a professional: I know best."

Adrian Shaughnessy
Ten Graphic Design Paradoxes

PARADOXOMETER

Paradoxometer prototyped by Adrian Shaughnessy. Artwork by **Tea Design**

The Lost Principles of Design

An illustrated guide to the basic principles of graphic design. Included are explanations of balance, contrast, emphasis and subordination, directional forces, and proportion, among others.

The Laws of Simplicity

This article is actually excerpted material from the book of the same name by John Maeda. It covers ten basic principles to guide simple and minimalist designs.

Dudes and Dolls and Design Decisions

This post by Jacob Cass discusses the psychological differences to consider when designing for men or women. It's a practical discussion of what women respond to versus men, as well as how to effectively design for both.

Dudes and Dolls and Design Decisions

Published on Monday, June 16, 2008 – 10:00 pm

In this unusually quirky and informative guest article Kelly Erickson* goes through some tips and examples on **how to design for men and women** – showing how to win them over and get referrals at the same time. A really unique article that I would highly recommend to read. – Jacob Cass.

The Sticky Realisation That We Are Not All the Same

> "*I am not young enough to know everything.*"
> —Oscar Wilde

The Complexity of Simplicity

This article discusses how complex simplicity can actually be, including perceived versus actual simplicity.

Want to Know How to Design? Learn the Basics

This article discusses the most basic principles of graphic design, including color, shape, scale and size, and space, among others. Additional resources for each are also included.

C.R.A.P.: The Four Principles of Sound Design

This article from DailyBlogTips offers up information on four basic principles of good design: Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, and Proximity (C.R.A.P.).

Classic Graphic Design Theory

Don't let the design of this site fool you; the content contained here offers a great overview of classic graphic design principles, like shape, texture, movement, balance and unity.

Simplicity is Highly Overrated

This article discusses simplicity and the idea that it's not actually what consumers want.