

DOC DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Robin Williams' Principles of Design

- 1) Proximity--bringing related information together
- 2) Alignment--strong alignment either right or left justified
- 3) Repetition--repeated elements can relate information
- 4) Contrast--the difference we create between things can relate them

Page Design Decisions from Lannon & Gurak

Shape the Overall Page

Conscious use of white space

--imparts shape and emphasis to page and information

Strong alignment

--clear justification of text either left or right-justified

Choose an appropriate Grid Pattern

--most Tech Writing documents like reports and memos will use a horizontal grid

Line Spacing and Length

--single-space within paragraphs, double-space between paragraphs

--long lines tire eyes; short lines disrupt reading

--reasonable length is sixty to seventy characters (nine to twelve words)

Margins

--for most TW documents are 1"

--if bound, documents will have a 1 1/2" left margin

--use a left-justified margin or *block style* format (everything is left-justified or *flush left*)

Paragraphing

--short paragraphs encourage quick reading

--use paragraphing to structure information, clustering related information

--length no more than 15 lines and no less than two sentences

--use short paragraphs for making more complex material digestible, giving step-by-step instructions, or for emphasizing vital information

--avoid leaving a paragraphs leading line at the bottom of the page ("orphans") or closing line at the top of a page ("widows")

Listing: Making Lists for Easy Reading

- embedded lists within a sentence become easier to read when presented as a vertical list
- consider converting embedded lists of three or more items to vertical lists
- for ordered lists use numbers
- for unordered lists use bullets
- phase all listed items in parallel grammatical form
- set off the list with extra white space above and below

Style the Words and Letters

Consistency in

- header, page numbers, margins, alignment, footer, font and other document elements

Fonts/ Type

- no more than two, avoid using two similar fonts,
- serif for print readability (New Times Roman, Cambria, Garmond)
- san serif for headings, for web readability (Arial, Calibra, Helvetica)

Add Emphasis

Adding Emphasis

- indent to set off examples, explanations, or other material to differentiate
- use ruled horizontal lines to separate sections in long documents
- use ruled boxes (text box) to set apart important information
- use of bold, italics, color, size to highlight text
- avoid large type sizes and dramatic typefaces in most TC documents; can be useful for fliers or when needed to convey forcefulness

Use Headings for Access and Orientation

Clear Titles and Headings

- that are descriptive and highlighted through use of font, size, and bold (contrast)

Headings

- make them consistent and grammatically parallel
- match size heading to importance
- Level1 <H1> Section Heading
- Level2 <H2> Major Topic Heading
- Level3 <H3> Minor Topic Heading
- Level4 <H4> Subtopic heading (see page 313 heading formats)
- insert one additional line of space above each heading
- write descriptive headings as titles to label each section or subsection