Design Course
## Design Analysis and Critics
Rationalising Design
by
Prof. Mandar Rane
IDC, IIT Bombay

**Source:**
**https://www.dsource.in/course/design-analysis-and-critics**

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https://www.dsource.in/course/design-analysis-and-critics/introduction

## Introduction

The material and practical nature of the world makes us vertical rather than lateral thinkers. Therefore, assignments in Basic Graphic Design-1 are compartmentalized into right and wrong by vertical thinkers and if a functional reason is not found to act upon, then they are labeled as irrational. In such cases, it becomes critical for the instructor to design courses, which can address audiences comfortable to think with both the hemispheres (left & right), instead of creating dominance of one kind of thinking over the other.

Metaphors-2 and Analogies-3 are excellent ways to understand concepts which need to be experienced. The course Visual order provides insights to the rationality that exists in the sensitive issues related to Graphic Design (Rane, 2005)4.

Instead of simply allowing oneself to comprehend these issues as in the course Visual Order, the present chapter will focus on task of a more pragmatic nature. It attempts to enable a student to practically do things on his own. Here the aim is to work on solutions and analyze them with a solid foundation of elements and principles of design. The primary objective is to enable students' understanding towards analyzing as well as performing the role of a critique, specifically, for communication design solutions related to type and images. Attempt is to prepare the students to judge design solutions with concrete answers, releasing them from the notions of likes and dislikes.

**1. Basic Graphic Design:**
It includes teaching of elements and principles of Design. These courses are exploratory in nature and the objective is of learning by doing/ experiencing.

**2. Metaphor:**
A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is substituted for a dissimilar subject to suggest a likeness or link between them. The original word or phrase then takes on qualities of the linked subject, increasing understanding.

**3. Analogy:**
Analogy is the term for a description derived from a process of reasoning from parallel or similar cases explaining what unlike things share in common.

**4. Rane, 2005:**
Visible Language, 39.2 Rationalizing Design Sensitivity, Special issue, Rane 2005, 147-167.

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# Distance

**Assignment: Image Distance**



All the questions will be answered in relation to the 'distance' from the name. Name will act as a central element (keyword) to all given words.

The act of arranging words in a given white space is not random. The words (content) and the space (format) provided are correlated, interacting with each other in order to extract a hidden or visible visual hierarchy, usually pre-defined by the graphic designer through his design. As graphic designers, we tend to create order of importance, i.e., try to create 'emphasis' in the elements of the page. Hierarchy defines the visual flow, priority of

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the elements, from larger to smaller, defining a path for the user's convenience, while extracting the presented information. We will try to experience these visual hierarchies through a series of assignments and find out how elements and principles of design affect these hierarchies.

**Task 01:**
A list of words is provided and you have to arrange these words, either close or far away from each other (in distance) within a given format. Try to exploit the subtle spatial distance, which would exist between those two words in reaction to the question asked for each word:

1. Your name* (Write you name in the predefined format.)
2. Birth date (How far are you from the date when you were born?)
3. Death (How far would you aspire to live from the present state?)
4. Birthday (How far or near are you from your next birthday?)
5. Dumb (How far are you from being dumb?)
6. Intellectual (How close are you from being intellectual?)
7. Father (How close are you to your father?)
8. Mother (How close are you to your mother with respect to your father?)
9. Friends (How close are you to your friends than to your parents?)

This is an endeavor to use typographic variables, to design visual answers for a user. One may develop a sensitivity towards white space or negative space through these efforts.

**Note:**
Use Font: Franklin Gothic Medium Condensed/ Regular,
Font size: 20 pts
*Do not write your surname (Write your first name).

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**• Solution Image Distance:**
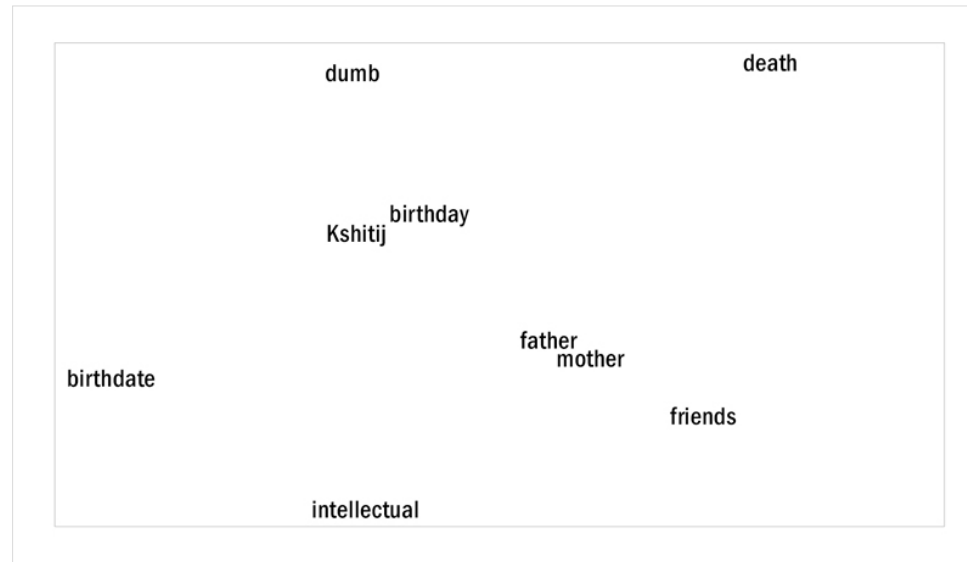


**• Feedback Image:**
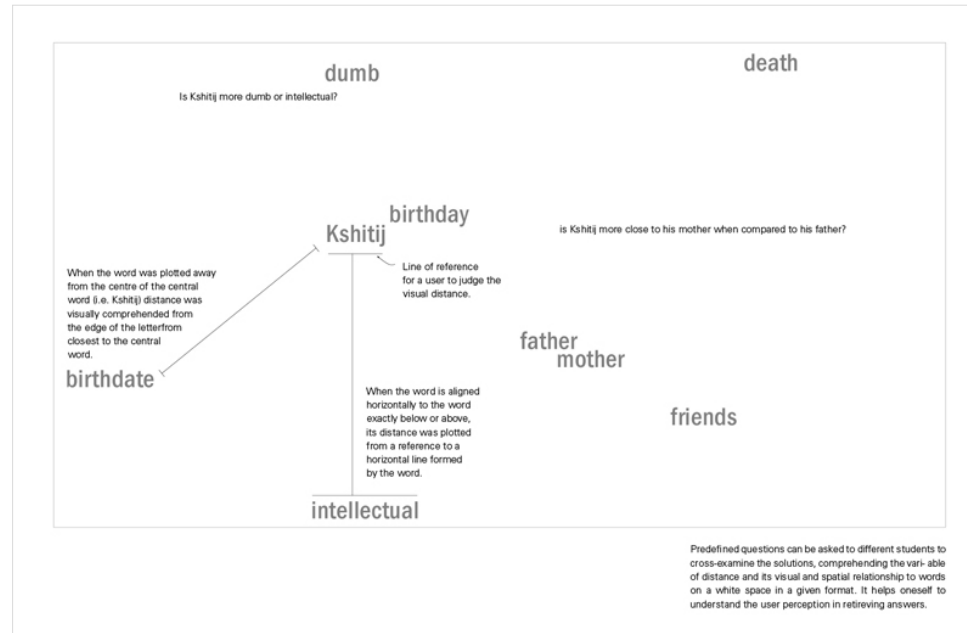
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Predefined questions can be asked to different students to cross-examine solutions, comprehending the variable of distance, its visual and spatial relationship to words on a white space in a given format. It helps one to understand the user's perception in retrieving answers.

**• Queries & Observations - Distance:**

**Queries:**
**Why such questions were chosen in the questions asked? Why these tasks and what is the aim?**

Two dimensional graphic design involves teaching of an experience: taught at subtle as well as gross levels. The words in the assignment depict human relationships; these are words with which one can relate. It allows students to experience space. The tasks mentioned in the assignment give a reason to shift /position a word in subtle and gross distances in order to make a relationship or break it. Personal involvement in the exercise encourages the student to participate and persuade him to begin the task with a rationale in his mind. Experience while altering distances with reference to the questions asked imprints in the student's mind, the importance of distance for visual judgments.

Why do some questions seem confusing? For example: How far are you from being dumb? They are made a bit confusing with the purpose of reducing the notion of monotony in repeatedly asking the same question. These questions should create and maintain interest levels of a participant. Thus, each question appears to be different, but follows the same underlying principle of how far or close it is from the central word.

Another question pertains to constraints. One may question the rationale behind these constraints. Why are participants not allowed to change the font face or font size? Why does this assignment have many constraints? The reason behind this is not allowing the students to tackle all variables at a time. Constraints force one to struggle with a single variable, making him add more thought into it while working. Value and scale are two important variables of typography and therefore were not introduced in the beginning with the variable of distance. Each variable teaches an underlying principle of typography.

**• Observations:**
While executing and reviewing the first solution, students were not aware of the next assignment.

We can cross check the appropriateness of solutions in group discussions with the students, asking questions and answers based on visual judgments when presented to a user ( as in comprehension of user's perception about the students' solution. Students judge each other's solutions and evaluate on the basis of given criteria (i.e. the questions asked).

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**• Distance, Position and Axis:**
An interesting dimension of this discourse lies in the analysis of distance, position and axis. When a set of students were asked to visually plot the distance based on positions of the words with reference to the keyword, the outcome was interesting. Distance was plotted on x and y axis primarily due to the constraints such as not allowing alterations in font face or font size.

**• How was the distance defined in this assignment?**
Distance was defined as the space plotted between two words in relation to the reference point and the position of the respective word in that format:

Here distance is referred to:
a. passage of time
b. Sharing a relationship
c. Evaluating behaviors

It also hints towards finding analogies in graphic design towards leading, kerning and tracking, as well as formation of visual groups based on proximity and closure.

Arrangements of dots in gestalt theory are the most well known laws of perception and have had a clear impact on rationalizing design decisions. Examples in theory, although well comprehended by novice graphic design students are difficult to translate into practical applications, such as design of a layout. The main reason for this is the contextual nature of design solutions. Design solutions simultaneously employ a large number of variables, not to forget the variable of sensitivity*, making one feel its strong presence by its sheer absence.

This assignment encourages students to put down actual words in a white space. There is a relationship attached to each word. Altering the spatial distance within a context of the relationship shared with a person time or behavior. This sharing develops a visual sensitivity in arrangement of these words depending on how close or how far they are from the central word. Due to the relationships shared by the word it does not result in a random activity, but augments ones contemplation before and while executing the given task.

During the course of this exercise, different axis on the two dimensional plane was explored by rotating the groups and changing their positions and orientations to generate new solutions. Many queries can be posted to the students to encourage them to think and experience the interaction with the empty space. For example, do you find invisible structures formed beneath the word, like scaffolding, sometimes linear like a timeline or sometimes radial like a spider's web (with name acting like a spider (centrally located) and the words interacting with the name in spatial distances. Do these invisible structures help us to retrieve information easily and quickly, provide us a point of reference to start with, to plot things, or give us a hint with some clues, regarding the hierarchy

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of information presented within a group? Can these invisible structures acting behind the white space be defined as grid? So what is a grid?

• **References and Foot-Notes:**
*Sensitivity to micro and macro distances, spaces which govern formation of groups and chunks within content.

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## Value

**Assignment: Image Value**

| Variables | (away from) | (near to) |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| *Distance | Farther | Closer |
| Value | Lighter | Darker |
| Scale | Smaller | Bigger |

*(Already experimented variable in Task 01)

Value
Value
Value
Value
Value

Scale
Scale
Scale

Scale

Scale

Demonstrating meanings of the two variables 'Value' and 'Scale'

Value is the relative lightness or darkness of an area or object. Value adds dimension by creating the illusion of depth in a design.

Scale refers to the process of making size relationships.

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After the successful completion of the task 1, if we analyze the words and their relationship to the questions asked, we will be able to retrieve some answers emerging from the arrangement of words in relation to their distance, i.e., (away from or near to). Therefore, the probable question to a solution would be - is the student more (close) attached to his mother as compared to his father? We can derive visual answers through subtle spatial distances, deliberately altered by each subject to achieve the desired result in his solution. Now we will study the same questions by changing the acting variable, to 'value'.

**Task 02:**
We are already familiar with the questions asked in the previous assignment. The same questions (as in task 1) are supposed to be addressed in this assignment also. Here you are supposed to replace far and close in relation to the 'Value' of the achromatic colour 'Black'. Lighter the value of black more is the distance; darker the value of black, more is the closeness. Comprehending this simple relationship for far and close to the given variable 'Value', you are expected to design task 2. You should not think of the variable 'Distance', rather you are only working with the variable 'Value'. Please note, your solution will be judged on the basis of 'Value' and not the 'Distance'.

• Solution Image Value:
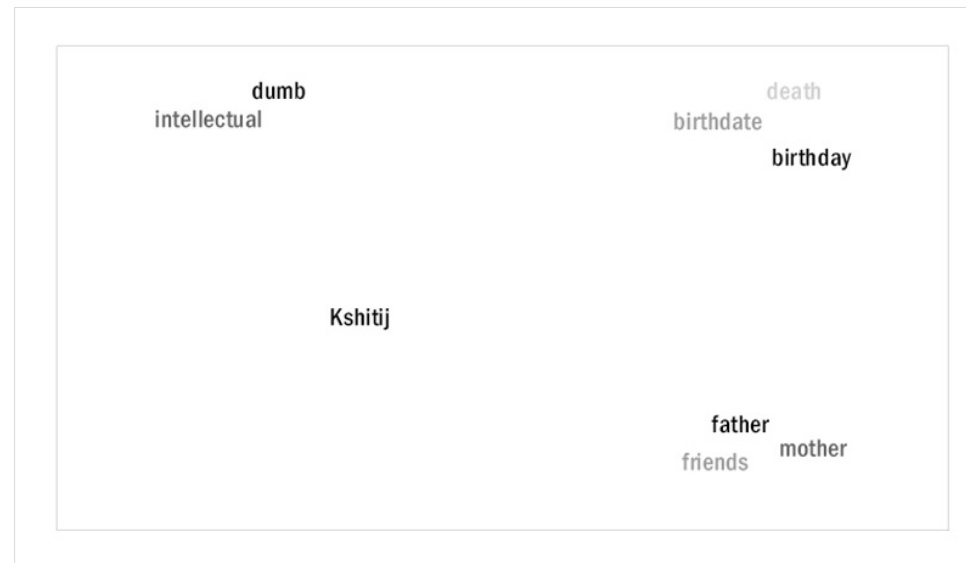
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**• Feedback - Value:**
Value of the hue is the only acting variable and one has to switch off the previously defined variable of 'distance' while making visual judgments.

In other words, position of the word becomes immaterial; this in fact could have been used as an advantage to explore new orientations, leading to new arrangements of words. More interesting explorations could have been possible. The opportunity to explore two dimensional and three dimensional planes was completely missed out.

**• Queries and Observations - Value:**

Define reference point in relation to the assignment?
Reference point is a point from where the user is told to begin scanning information and further visually guide him or her to the next position/ point of the related word. It should conclude into a visual judgment of plotting the distance between two words. Resulting in an answer to the question asked.

**• Observations:**
If we analyze the given words and the questions asked they from three distinct groups based on
• Time (birthdates, birthday and death),
• Qualities (dumb and intellectual) and
• Relationships (father mother and friends).

These three heads or labels (time qualities and the relationships) under which the respective groups are formed affect the positioning of the words in other groups, with respect to the name acting as the central point of reference. At times the words within the groups are also seen to be compared.

The second assignment with value as the acting variable tries to introduce the concept of topology of white space. Here value is looked upon in atmospheric perspective" the tendency of atmosphere to make objects appear cooler or lighter in "value as they become more distinct from our vantage point, alters our perception. This entire visual phenomenon has an impact upon the experience of information in graphic space". (Meggs, 1989).

**• References and Foot-Notes:**
Philip B. Meggs, Type and Image, The language of Graphic Design, John Wiley and Sons, Inc, ISBN-047128492-0.

**• Perception: Limits and character of visual information:**
Contrasts:
Refers to the contrast created by the written word to the white space in which it is placed, along with other words.

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## Scale

**Assignment: Image Scale**

| Variables | (away from) | (near to) |
|---|---|---|
| *Distance | Farther | Closer |
| Value | Lighter | Darker |
| Scale | Smaller | Bigger |

*(Already experimented variable in Task 01)

Demonstrating meanings of the two variables 'Value' and 'Scale'

Value is the relative lightness or darkness of an area or object. Value adds dimension by creating the illusion of depth in a design.

Scale refers to the process of making size relationships.

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• **Scale Task:**
Now we will study the same questions by changing the acting variable to 'scale'.

**Task 03:**
This task will tackle the third variable. 'Scale' will act as the third independent variable with same questions to be answered. Something smaller in its scale will be termed as far and bigger in its scale will be considered as near. The variable of 'Distance' and 'Value', will not be considered while judging your solutions. Complete the task by altering the scale of the words adhering to the logic of the questions asked.

• **Solution - Image Scale:**
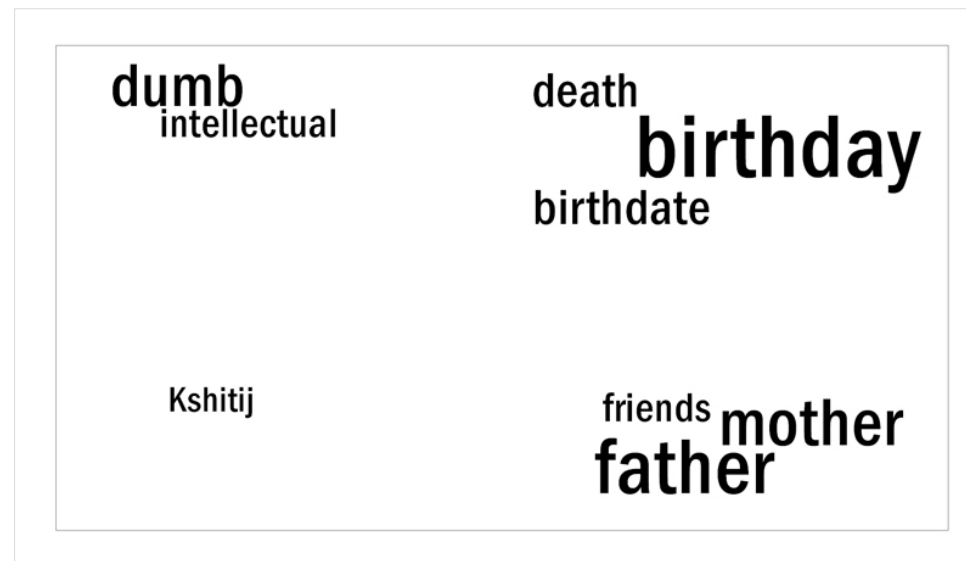
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**• Feedback - Image Scale:**
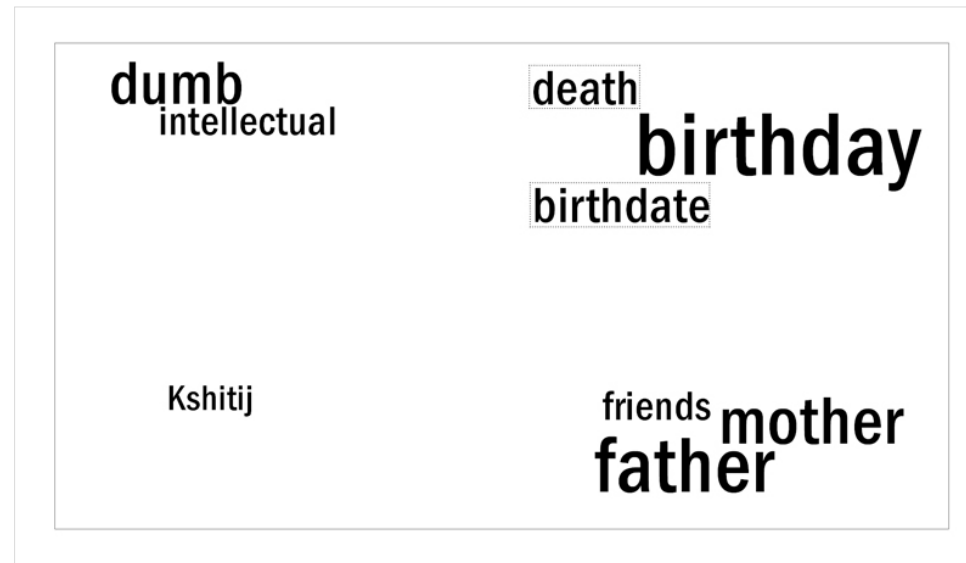


In Task 1 and Task 2 you have depicted the word 'Death' further than the word birth date hence, in this solution, where 'Scale' is the only acting variable, death could have been smaller than birthrate to get closer to the appropriate solution, reducing visual confusion for the user. We are not considering the word on the basis of area covered.

**• Queries and Observations - Image Scale:**

**Queries:**
**Define reference point in relation to the assignment?**
Reference point is a point from where the user is told to begin scanning information and further visually guide him or her to the next position/ point of the related word. It should conclude into a visual judgment of plotting the distance between two words. Resulting in an answer to the question asked.

**Observations:**
If we analyze the given words and questions asked they form three distinct groups based on time (birthdates, birthday and death), "qualities, (dumb and intellectual ) and relationships 'father, mother and friends'.

These three heads or labels (time, qualities and the relationships) under which the respective groups are formed affect the positioning of the words in other groups, with respect to the name acting as the central point of refer-

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ence. At times the words within the groups are also seen to be compared.

The third variable is the scale of the word which was earlier referred as size; size was misinterpreted by students as font size, sometimes as the area covered (rather than the scale). There was a noticeable tendency amongst students to plot the words in relation to the form size, in figures (I.e. 72 pts font was larger is size than the 70 pt font) to justify it as a logically correct solution. The difference was correct when quantified in numbers, but was not enough for a user to visually judge the difference between two words which they were suppose to compare. Therefore, visual judgments were more crucial for the user while creating visual hierarchies decisions, rather than quantified differences, which were almost negligible to their perception. Although quantified differences were precise but they were not enough to clear the ambiguity of the user towards differentiating contrast and scales, which were meant to be experienced, " objects appear smaller in distances and parallel line appear to become closer and merge as they move away from us. (Meggs, 1989, page 69)

In task 03 with scale as the acting variable switching off the other two, there was an invisible introduction of emphasis to the word whose scale was highest amongst the placed words.

**• References and Foot-Notes:**
Philip B. Meggs, Type and Image, The language of Graphic Design, John Wiley and Sons, Inc, ISBN-047128492-0.

**• Perception: Limits and character of visual information**
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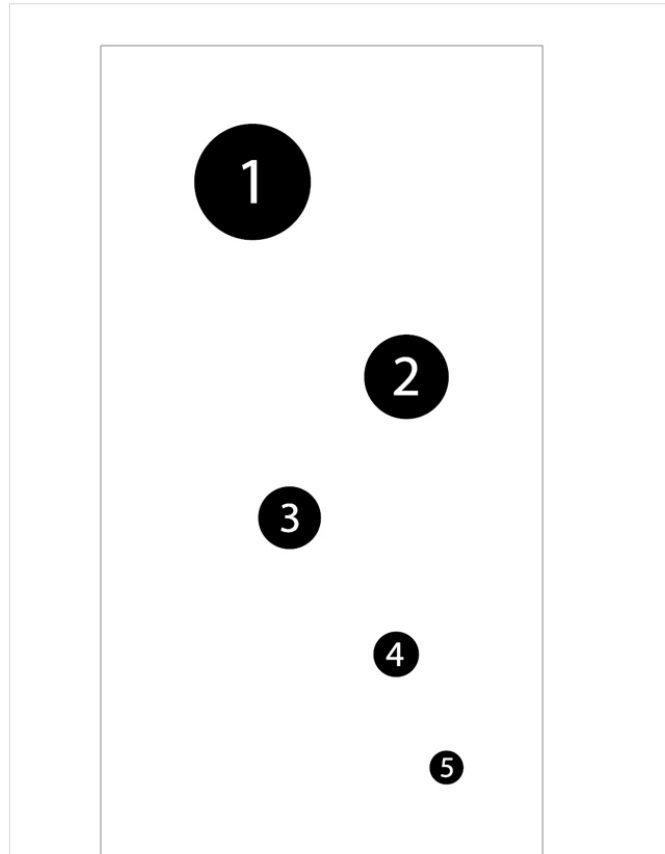
# Visual Order

**Visual Order Image:**



Emphasis attracts the user attention to a particular
point in the presented information first. The most emphasized
element is called the focal point (for example, No.1 in the pic-
ture, forces visual attention). Secondary and tertiary focal points
are called accents. (No.2 and No.3 are accents)

Design after all has unique capacity to shape information by:
1. Emphasizing or understanding,
2. Comparing or ordering,
3. Grouping or sorting,
4. Selecting or omitting,
5. Opting for immediate or delayed recognition,
6. Presenting it in an interesting fashion.

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**Source:**

The completion of the three tasks gave us an idea, how the three variables - distance, value and scale, affect the word relationships of 'away from' (far) and 'near to' (close) in a given format. All the variables were trying to create 'emphasis' (a principle of design) for each word, against the posed questions in their respective groups.

'Emphasis indicates the most important element on the page based on the message one wants to communicate. It could be said as the element which stands out and gets noticed first. The most emphasized visual element in design is called the focal point, because it attracts the viewer's attention first'. (Resnick, 2003)*.

Therefore, we understand that emphasis creates an order of importance for the content (information). Every information that has to be communicated will usually have an order of importance (in the hierarchy of the content or the context to which it relates). It could also be defined as the starting point or the reference point to begin, within each chunk of information. Moreover, when information needs persuasion this visual hierarchy becomes much more crucial. As graphic designers, we create these hierarchies in given contextual constraints to ease retrieval of information for the user. This hierarchy is achieved by employing elements and principles of design to one's advantage.

**Task 04:**
**a.** Employ line (an element of design) in the background of your solution, in high key, to emphasize your name. Use the line to enhance "maximum" perception of distance. Your use of line should not disturb readability and legibility of the solution. Clue - Attempt to alter the topology of white space to visualize depth.

**b.** Create emphasis for your 'Name' using the variable distance, you are not allowed to change the font. Only variable of distance can be altered to your advantage. Questions to be answered will be the same.

**c.** Fill the whole background with 100% (k) black and try to emphasize your name. (You are allowed to use all three variables to achieve your solution, but you are not allowed to change the font). Questions to be answered will remain the same.

*Elizabeth Resnick, Design for Communication, Conceptual Graphic Design Basics
John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Pg. 24, 2003. ISBN- O 471 41829 3.

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• **4a Solution:**



**4a Feedback Image:**
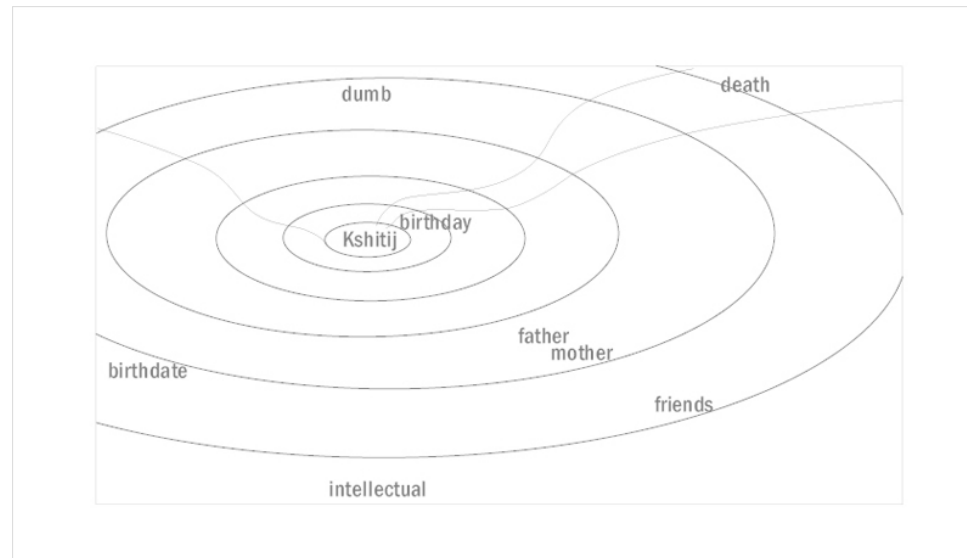
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**What is distance?**
Distance is the relation of two elements with each other or with relation of one to the other in the context of reference points (to begin with) being different.

The figure above is an excellent solution which enhances the perception of distance. It would have been nice to see the enhancement to its maximum extent as defined in the objective. Rather than trying to increase the distance in the two dimensional plane formed by these words this solution introduces a new dimension in the whole background with the orientation of these concentric rings which till now had been just flat white space. If orientation had been given importance then the words would have flown in accordance with the concentric rings, further emphasizing Kshitij. This leads us to another quest. Are distance and depth interrelated?

• 4b Solution - Part 1:



The direction of reading is a visual habit that strongly influences perception. In due course of time this habit becomes stronger because of the experience of reading. It deeply imprints itself upon on our visual behaviour. It guides our eyes not only when reading, but also influences the pattern of our attention while looking at pictures. (Zwimpfer, 2001).

The solution provided in the (figure below) is poles apart. The subject has plotted an imaginary horizontal axis across the format with relation to his name assuming that the user would identify this axis to retrieve answers from the designed solution. Even if this is considered true, assuming the subject's point of view, the relationship

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between the three words birthday, birth date, and death has altered, compared to his solution in task1. Apart from this it may be difficult for the user to immediately perceive the imaginary axis visualized by the subject.

Overall, this seems a promising solution and an innovative approach compared to other obvious solutions. The word 'Kshitij' could have been emphasized even more if it divided the white above and below unequally (i.e., pushing the word 'Kshitij' upwards). We also notice that with respect to solution in task 1 the word birthday was closer to his name than the words birthrate and death. This relationship has changed in this solution.

• 4b Solution - Part 2:
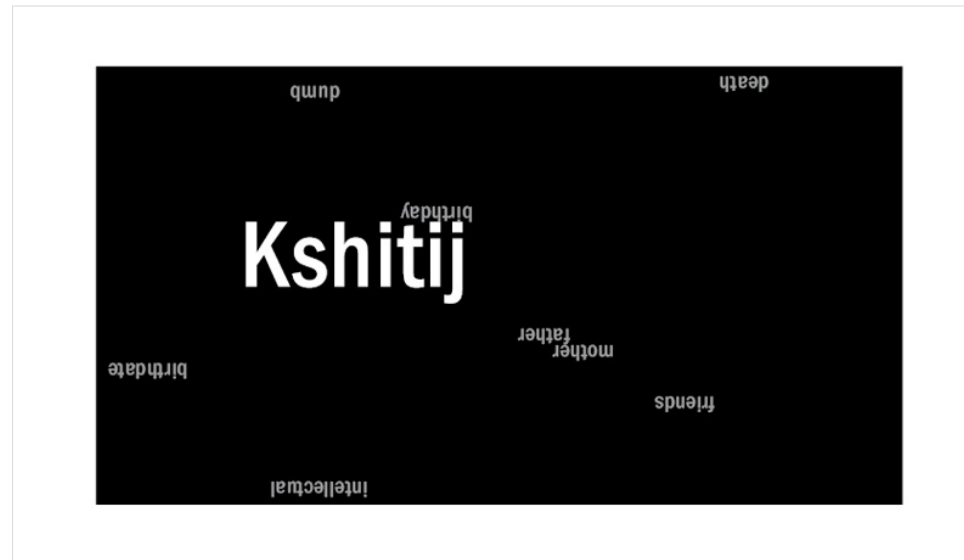


Why alternatives are not explored where the distance could have been less yet far off and distance could be more and yet too close? We need innovation in solutions. Why orientations and scales are not used to advantage? Why value of mother and father is the same contradicting your previous solutions?

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• 4c Solution - Part 2:



The objective of this task was to answer the questions in relation to 'kshitij. This makes us wonder as to why gradation was not used effectively to orient the variables of scale and value to a curvy linear path which leads to the word 'Kshitij'. This solution, then could have resulted into a sparkle effect, using all the variables to converge into a single focal point. This would have also negated the need to increase the scale 'Kshitij' to such an extent; instead it could have been smaller and yet more emphasized.

Repetition creates interest. The purpose of emphasizing the word 'Kshitij has been achieved. What purpose does this linear gradation serve? Does the linear nature of gradation answer the questions relating to the words better or it is just meant to create interest?.

• **Observations:**
Task 4 assigned three tasks to be completed- a, b and c. Each task has its own objective. In tasks on value and scale variable, the topology of white space went unexplored, so the task 4a sets the constraint of adding lines in the background, in high key to maximize the perception of distance (in order to make students experience it).

Although solutions were not so satisfactory, one of the solution from a student fulfills the desired objective. He had not maximized the perception of distance to its fullest extent, but had introduced a new dimension of depth. Concentric circles in a three dimensional plane is a solution to enhance the depth to its maximum. Concentric rings and radiating lines were created to enhance emphasis, but could not create maximum depth. If they had

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been more in number, it could have enhanced the solution and guided user in better visual judgments. Introduction of background to affect perception of these elements on a two dimensional plane was the main objective of this task.

In task 4b1 the aim was to introduce- emphasis, using space. The constraint of distance as a variable was kept constant and the subject was told to emphasize the central word.

Task 4c has reversed the background. This results in a different manner of creating emphasis and perception which till now had been explored only on an empty, white space. One needs to explore freely, in order to use all the variables to their fullest potential.

• **Reasoning and Meta-Reasoning:**
Amount of time spent to achieve a solution with the help of software is translated by the student into effort. Problem lies in distribution of time spent on the effort, i.e. (struggling with the software) vs the time spent towards thinking about the task.

After a long pause... I commented to a student work. That's an obvious solution. The student replied obvious? But... I did fulfill the criteria of your assignment. What do you mean by obvious?

**Let's Discuss:**
• **What's very obvious for all of us?**
(Apart from the given assignment) May be what we have learnt previously that is very obvious, or when we throw up a ball it comes down. It's obvious. Sunrise and sunset is obvious. Yes...? So, of which result is known is obvious?

But when obvious concludes as the result of the given problem, is it boring? Yes Maybe! Why? As it's repetitive. So repetition is not interesting.

• **Ok, let's put it this way:**
Repetitive here states that the conceptual model is clear, there are no new challenges to be encountered for a mind to search for or even to create interest about the situation, unless the same (obvious) situation becomes an exception in a particular context. For example: sunset though obvious also becomes visually interesting. The support of so many variables, (colour, arrangement of clouds created by the winds, grey scales hues and saturations) acting together in a unique fashion to create a (whole) sunset for that particular time of the day to make it an interesting and as an event obvious because it is repetitive. The act is same, representation differs.

The instructor said, "your solution was obvious, generate more alternatives for the same solution". Student is

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frustrated, because he has completed the task based on the assignment criteria, which when fulfilled, the assignment is over. The student thinks what else the instructor wants from him to be explored?

**• If we think this situation as a problem, where does the problem lie?**
In problem solving one always assumes certain boundaries. Such boundaries make it much easier to solve the problem by reducing the area within which the problem solving has to take place. Close ended assignments are therefore well accepted by students, but the problem is that these assignments create limits that are self imposed, hindering explorations. Moreover they are imposed on no stronger grounds than that of personal convenience.

**• So now what to do?**
I can say generate more alternatives, but just to say generate three more alternatives does not suffice the urge to explore.

Visual investigations ( urge to explore) in most of the solutions related to graphic design problems, neither lie on the scale of very high order , which can be termed as obvious, nor on the creation of maximum chaos ( with exceptions). These are generally plotted between these two extremes. Therefore instead of saying generate three more alternatives, which at times is confusing for a student landing him into a junction of crossroads, where it is difficult for him to decide which path to take for directions. But if one says generate two solutions to a given problem, one very obvious and other not so obvious...

Sounds interesting as a thought to be experimented with.

**• For Example:**
A student might start generating a solution which is very obvious, based on the given criteria. For example, if one has to create a predefined visual order with written text as a material to explore, he would use the variables value and scale to generate the that visual order through type (from dark to light and big to small) which might lead into an obvious solution. Because everyone in the class would apply same approach for the solution (high order). A not so obvious solution on the other hand might result into a chaos. Why? As a not so obvious solution will be based on the reference of the obvious solution.

**• But then how will we benefit from this?**
See, in both the cases the instructor can easily explain the student that the student has to generate a third solution that lies between high order and chaos.( obvious and not so obvious). But in that case there is still a question to be answered, suppose, if someone generates a solution which lies between these two? Accepted, well and good that will serve as an example of exploration. One more query? Who decides what is the solution, obvious, not so obvious or in between, is it not subjective. Yes, this problem can occur, but the instructor has to take a call

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because he has decided the learning outcome of the planned task.

The answer lies in asking a question, rather than saying just generate three alternatives to your solution.

One can say generate an obvious and not a so obvious solution. It becomes a comfortable task for a vertical thinker because he lies on the scale of good and bad and gets criteria for exploration by definition of boundaries.

Arguable statements occur in tasks which include explorations. Arguable statements are usually created by exploratory assignments because they lack contexts. Such statements find themselves difficult to reach an agreement and if by chance they reach one they create win or lose situations between the instructor and student , which can never be conducive to learning.

**• References and Foot-Notes:**
For the first time the change in orientation was experimented by one of the nine students, all working on the same problem. Due to this an added element of persuasion in the solution was noticed. The student had managed to uncover a solution that actually lay between the scale of high order and high chaos, balance itself to stand out amongst rest of the solutions. This solution had challenged other student's complacency in executing their solutions, beyond mere accomplishment of the given criteria.

Exploration can only result out of passion and constructive arguments.
(Edward De bono, Lateral thinking : creativity step by step, challenging assumptions. Pg. 93)

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## Visual Order with words Part 1

**Assignment: Image**



01. Your name
02. Birthdate
03. Death
04. Birthday
05. Dumb
06. Intellectual
07. Mother
08. Friends

09. Marriage
10. Ambition
11. Money
12. God

} 4 new words introduced

13. Father

A sample depiction of numerical ordering of the words.
You are free to define your numerical order for words.
Four new words are added to the previous list.

**Father:** A source of strength. An idol.
Source of security and comfort.
A constant motivator.

A sample description for the word Father. You are free
to write short sentences as in the example above or
one sentence which may comprise of 17 words.

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When we compare a piece of art and the work of the graphic designer from a viewer's (user) perspective, it would be necessary for us to understand the difference between both kinds of visual enquiries. An artist creates art for self expression and the viewer has the freedom to interpret meaning out of the artist's expression.

A graphic designer has rarely any room for self expression. Moreover, they can never be physically present to explain their designed solutions to the user. In their absence they have to visually communicate clarity of the message to the user (viewer), making it least ambiguous as well as achieve their sole goal of effective communication. You have to understand this difference before designing solutions, thus prioritizing the user's perception and perspective.

**Task 05:**
Here one has to predefine the numerical order (1 to 13) of the words of the previous exercise and the additional words shown in the figure 5.1 as per one's own preference. This numerical order should be independent of the relationships they share with the keyword (name) and has no relation to the questions that were asked earlier. Your task is to define your own numerical order to the given set of words. Your solutions will be judged on the basis of your predefined numerical order.

So, first, you begin with assigning a number to each word, including your name. You will present your numerical order in the format that would be provided. Once the numerical orders are frozen write a description for each word consisting of 15 words. (Please revise your description to maintain a minimum of 13 words or maximum of 17 words). All descriptions have to be presented according to the predefined format. Create your solutions in the given format. Even though the user will be unaware of the numerical order while judging your solutions, ensure that your solution should make them perceive the same numerical order which you had set.

**You are expected to come up with two solutions:**
**a.** Define the order of 13 words without descriptions, use same font, and consider all three variables.

**b.** Define the order of 13 words with descriptions for each word. You have full freedom of using any font with additional elements of design to support.

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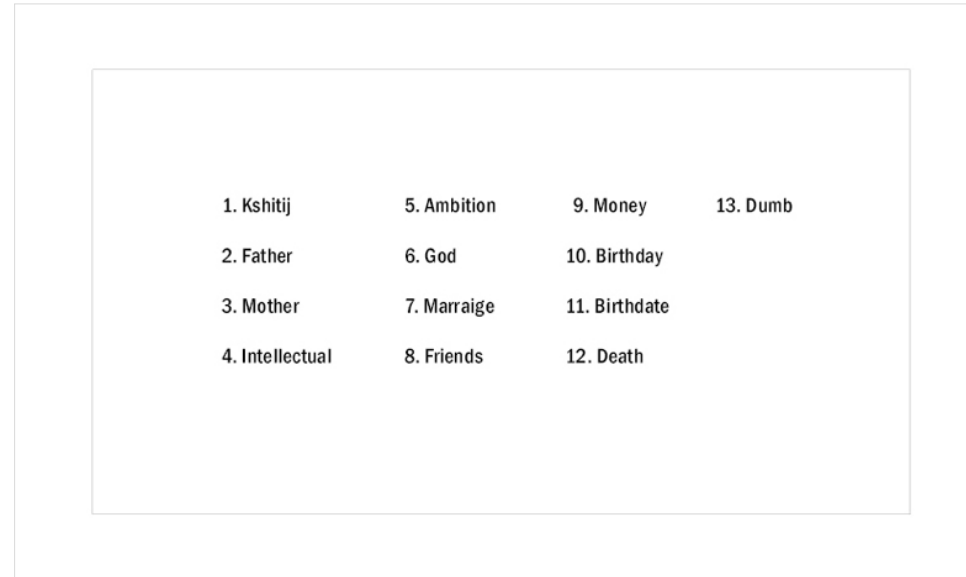# Design Analysis and Critics
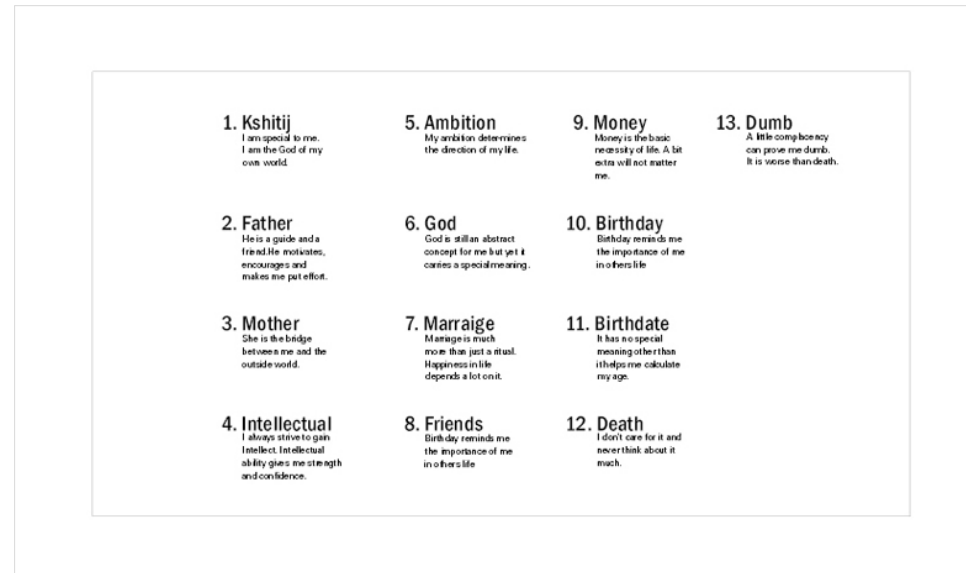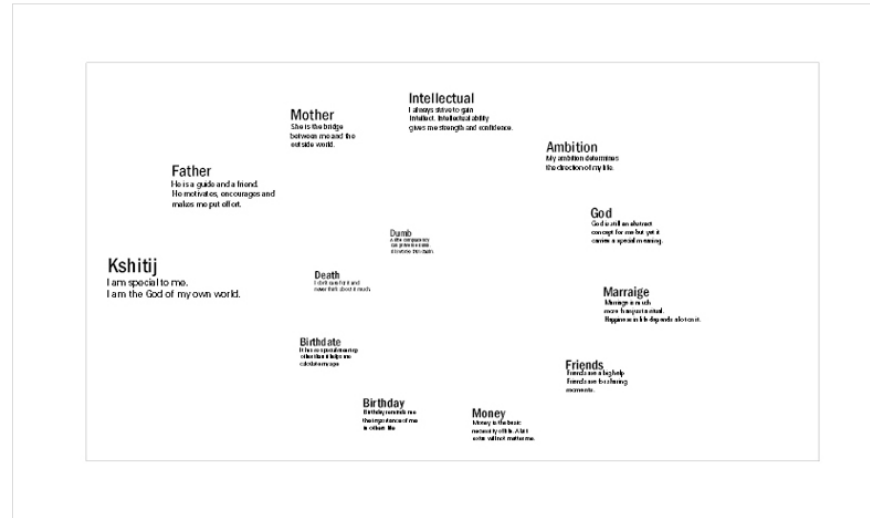Rationalising Design
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• **Visual Order of Words:**



• **Visual Order Words Description:**

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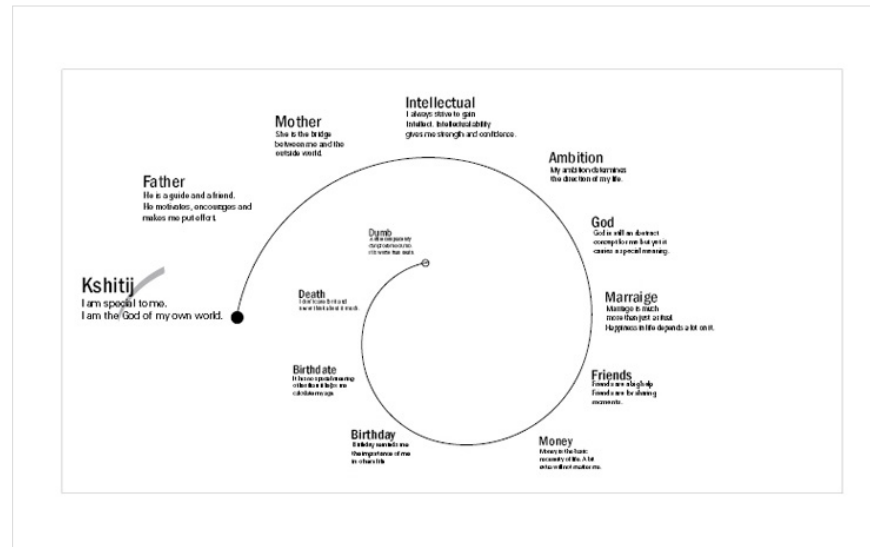https://www.dsource.in/course/design-analysis-and-critics/visual-order-words-part-1

• 5a Student Solution - 1:



• **Feedback - 1:**
Considering the freedom to use all the principles and elements of design, a careful visual investigation would conclude that here the emphasis is quite weak in relation to the reference point.

• **5a Student Solution - 2:**

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**• Feedback - 2:**
In the solution illustrated below the stroke cutting through the first element can confuse the user, who might try to discern the purpose/logic behind it. Why is it cutting through the information? Why is it directional in nature? Such questions may arise in the mind of the user. Could there be a better solution for emphasis? Is the stroke required at all? Can it be excluded and the desired result still achieved? These are some of the questions which need to be addressed.

**• 5b Student Solution:**
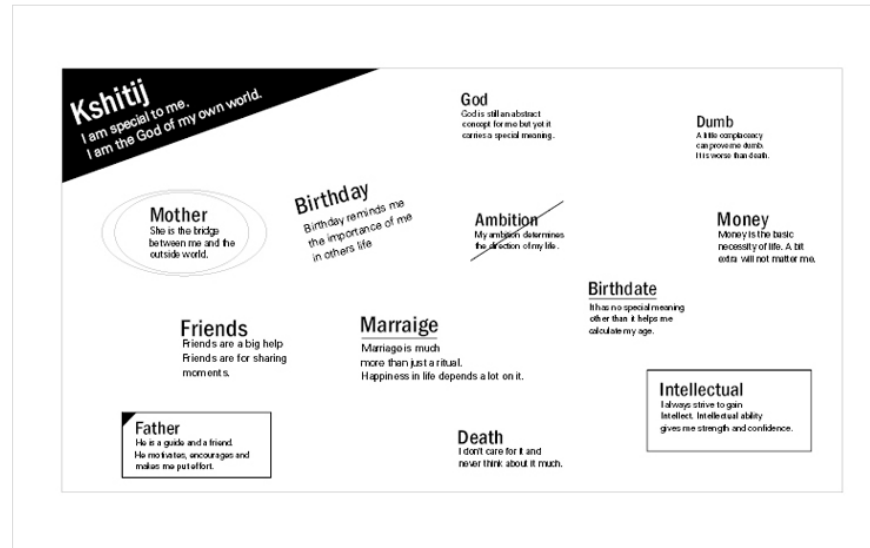


**• Feedback:**
In this solution the flow simply refers to the visual and verbal paths of movement in which the reader's eye tracks through a page or pages. A page with a good flow will visually lead the reader from one element to another in the layout carefully presenting information to the reader. Planning flow in the documents allows better control of the order in which the reader reads the points in the message (Lisa, 2002).

A good layout is one which tries to create a balance between order and chaos. Too much of order will lead to loss of interest and too much of chaos will accentuate emphasis, killing the flow.

Lisa Graham, 2002, Basics of design: layout and typography for beginners, Delmer, ISBN: 0-7668-1362-2

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**• Observations:**
Task 5 dramatically increased the amount of information that the student has to deal within the solutions. Also by removing most of the constraints i.e. providing the freedom to use all three variables to depict a visual hierarchy within this information, this task suggested possibilities to transcend mere functional flow and impart an overall semantic expression to the layout.

Task 5a consisted of guiding the user through the 13 elements in exactly the same order as defined earlier by the student. After dealing with various variables to accentuate/ diminish the emphasis in all the previous tasks, this was the first introduction to visual order. All the text has to be presented in the same font. This objective was successfully achieved by gradual diminishing of all three variables to create a visual flow. But not much attention has been given to break the monotony of the resulting solutions.

Task 5b provided students the additional freedom to use various fonts and external graphic elements to guide the user through the same visual order as presented on task 5a. With so much freedom and increased information as compared to the previous tasks, visual clutter emerged as a real problem to be dealt with. On the other hand this freedom also provided an opportunity to impart an overall semantic expression to the layouts and increase persuasion for any user delving into this information. This latter aspect was not explored in this task. In fact, the semantic aspect of the layout is an important consideration. Comparison of various solutions for task 5b reveals that the solutions with a definite semantic connotation instinctively persuaded the user to scan the information and augmented interest even before the user entered this information.

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## Visual Order with words Part 2

**Assignment: Image**



```
01. Your name
02. Birthdate
03. Death

04. Birthday
05. Dumb
06. Intellectual

07. Mother
08. Friends
09. Marriage

10. Ambition
11. Money
12. God
13. Father
```

A sample depiction of chunking of words in groups. You should still adhere to the defined order of perception.

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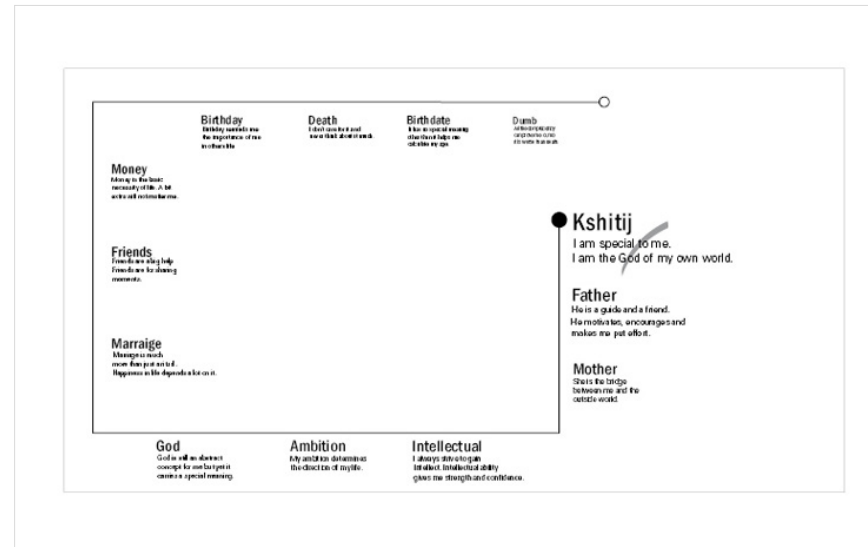IDC, IIT Bombay

• **Visual Order for Words:**
In communication design, an important factor to be considered is the amount of information to be conveyed. It may vary upon what one wants to communicate, in what quantities, and to whom. Communication, therefore, could be for a leaflet, a telephone directory, a brochure, or a poster.

The common criterion that stands out in all these mediums of communication is to define the order of priority to their related information. When the amount of information is less or the types of information are limited, hierarchy of information in a group or groups needs to be highlighted. In such situations the role of emphasis shifts with respect to each group. It can be also termed as developing a sense of visual/logical sequence in the information. For the upcoming task (task 6) we will try to chunk information in groups to understand the concept via the presented hypothetical situation.

**Task 06:**
The users are supposed to perceive the same numerical order of words in the solution of this task, as they did in the preceding task. But additionally, the objective is also to make the user perceive four distinct groups consisting of elements (1 to 3), (4 to 6), (7 to 9), and (10 to 13), respectively, of the predefined numerical order. This chunking of elements into four groups should not conflict with the individual perception/sequence of these elements from (1 to 13). Here the subject is free to use all elements and principles of design, except the element colour.

• **6c Student Solution:**

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**• Feedback:**
A designer has successfully employed the principle of proximity when the reader instinctively reads the correct caption for each illustration on a page.

Considering the objective of the task, grouping does not seem to be evident in the solution illustrated here. The user tends to follow the flow of a form and this principle has been effectively used in this solution. But the flow should also validate another important task of the reading direction. The reverse flow of reading direction from the word 'intellectual' to 'God', even if it inherits the conventional tendency of left to right, is bit uncomfortable and add stress on to the reader, encouraging them to jump to a different group thus breaking the flow. If we make groups with our variable of distance (proximity) in task 01, increasing elements given in the pre-defined format with the objective of forming groups in chunks should lead one to understand the importance of the variable of distance, to the relative positioning of two elements, jostling amongst themselves, sensitively enough, either for them to make or break groups.

**• Observations:**
Task 6, while being similar to task 5b in all other aspects had the added clause of chunking thirteen elements into four distinct groups and still preserving the same order overall, as well as within each smaller group. The idea was to reduce the number of distinct elements being observed by the user by chunking them into groups, and hence visually reducing the information load. Emphasis could be then used to highlight just the headings or labels of these smaller groups and comfortably allowing the user to browse through the increased information. But since emphasis was operating at more than one level now, a common tendency to introduce a lot of different variables and create too many distinct identities was observed. In most cases the solutions ran the risk of bordering on chaos or stark monotony at the other end of the spectrum. The balance between order and chaos is the elusive ingredient.

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## Use of Pictures

**Assignment: Image**

01. Your name*
02. Birthdate
03. Death

04. Birthday
05. Dumb
06. Intellectual

07. Mother*
08. Friends
09. Marriage

10. Ambition
11. Money
12. God
13. Father*

*Replace with Black & White Photos.

Replace the mentioned words with photographs without altering the predecided numerical order of the task. Execute your solutions to the order predefined by you replacing the three words, your name, mother and father with their respective photographs.

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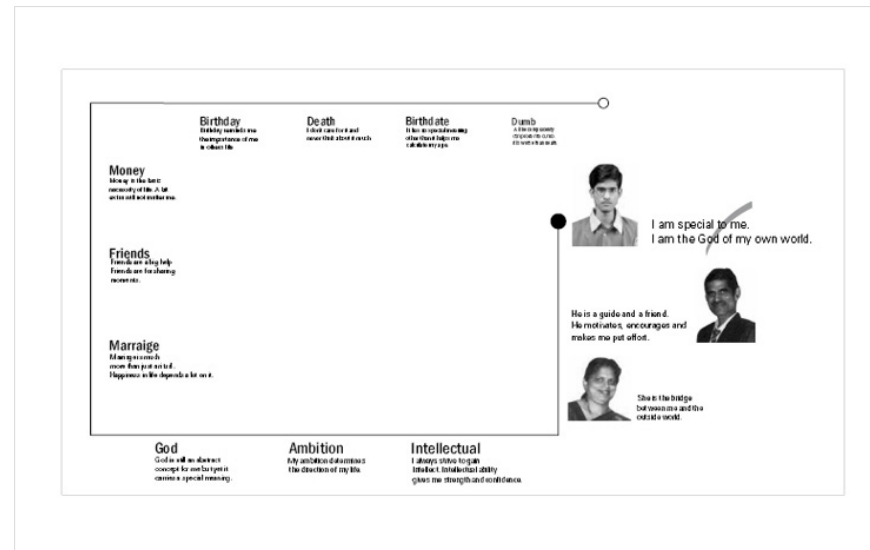IDC, IIT Bombay

**Task 07:**
As instructed in advance, you all should have clear, black and white pictures of minimum 150 ppi (postcard size) of you and your parents. In task07, you will be replacing words with images, i.e., replace the words, your name, mother and father with their respective photographs.

After these three changes, draw upon your solutions to the preceding task to maintain the same numerical order and perception of the same four groups of elements. Please note that even after the introduction of strong visual elements such as photographs, the user's perception of your pre-defined numerical order and the hierarchy of groups should not change.

**Please Note:**
• All solutions are to be rendered in grayscale.
• No Colour/ Sepia tone photographs should be used, only black and white photographs are allowed.

**Student Solution:**

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Source:

**Feedback:**
With reference to the previous solutions, this solution seems very obvious and lacks innovation. The layout is just replaced by photographs. New orientations of pictures to one's own advantage could have enhanced the layout. Similarity is one of the important ingredients in formation of a group, a lack of which is likely to create individual identities of each element. Minute dissimilarities are created by small misalignments.

**Observations:**
Task 7 required replacement of three words – your name, father and mother with their corresponding photographs and still depict the same predefined order of thirteen elements just like task 5a. An image replacing a cluster of text becomes much easier for the user to scan, by creating a soothing information experience and also doing away with necessity of reading and understanding the written text. An image instinctively creates emphasis. This was a difficult task, and the solution were trying to negate the emphasis created by the image to accentuate other elements. The photographs were not looked upon as a tool in themselves to create emphasis at different levels and blend with the layout or even to define it.

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## Contact Details

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For more details, please click on the following link:
http://www.mrane.com

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