

Contrast

Contrast is created when two elements are different. If the two elements are sort of *different*, but not really, then you don't have contrast, you have conflict. The principle of contrast states that **if two items are not exactly the same, then make them different. Really different.**

Contrast on a page draws our eyes to it; our eyes *like* contrast. If you are putting two elements on the page, that are not the same, (such as two typefaces or two line widths), they cannot be similar. For contrast to be effective, the two elements must be very different.

Contrast is kind of like matching wall paint when you need to spot paint—you can't *sort* of match the color; either you match it exactly or you repaint the entire wall.

The basic purpose

The basic purpose of contrast is two-fold, and both purposes are inextricable from each. One purpose is to create an interest on the page—if a page is interesting to look at, it is more likely to be read. The other is to aid in the organization of the information. A reader should be able to instantly understand the way the information is organized, the logical flow from one item to another. The contrasting elements should never serve to confuse the reader or to create a focus that is not supposed to be a focus.

How to get it

Add contrast through your typeface choices, line thicknesses, colors, shapes, sizes, space, etc. It is easy to find ways to add contrast, and it's probably the most fun and satisfying way to add visual interest. The important thing is to be strong.

What to avoid

Don't be a wimp. If you're going to contrast, do it with strength. Avoid contrasting a sort-of-heavy line with a sort-of-heavier line. Avoid contrasting brown text with black headlines. Avoid using two or more typefaces that are similar. If the items are not exactly the same, *make them different!*