

Proximity

The principle of proximity states that you **group related items together**, move them physically close to each other, so the related items are seen as one cohesive group rather than a bunch of unrelated bits.

When several items are in close proximity to each other, they become one visual unit rather than several separate units. Items relating to each other should be grouped together. Be conscious of where your eye is going: where do you start looking; what path do you follow; where do you end up; after you have read it, where does your eye go next? You should be able to follow a logical progression through the piece, from a definite beginning to a definite end.

The basic purpose

The basic purpose of proximity is to organize. Other principles come into play as well, but simply grouping related elements together into closer proximity automatically creates organization. If the information is organized, it is more likely to be read and more likely to be remembered. As a by-product of organizing the communication, you also create more appealing (more organized) *white space* (designers' favorite term).

How to get it

Squint your eyes slightly and count the number of visual elements on the page by counting the number of times your eye stops. If there are more than three to five items on the page (of course it depends on the piece), see which of the separate elements can be grouped together into closer proximity to become one visual unit.

What to avoid

- Avoid too many separate elements on a page.
- Don't stick things in the corner or middle.
- Avoid leaving equal amounts of white space between elements unless each group is part of a subset.
- Avoid even a split second of confusion over whether a headline, a subhead, a caption, a graphic, etc., belongs with its related material. Create a relationship among elements with close proximity.
- Don't create relationships with elements that don't belong together! If they are not *related*, move them apart from each other.

Excerpted from "The Non-Designer's Design Book" by Robin Williams, published by Peachpit Press, Inc.