

Repetition

The principle of repetition states that you **repeat some aspect of the design throughout the entire piece.**

A repetition of visual elements throughout the design unifies and strengthens a piece by trying together otherwise separate parts. Repetition is very useful on one-page pieces, and is critical in multi-page documents (where we often just call it *being consistent*.)

The basic purpose

The purpose of repetition is to unify and to add visual interest. Don't underestimate the visual interest of a page—if a piece looks interesting, it is more likely to be read.

How to get it

Think of repetition as being consistent, which I'm sure you are already. Then push the existing consistencies a little further—can you turn some of those consistent elements into part of the conscious graphic design, as with a headline? Do you use a 1-point rule at the bottom of each page or under each heading? How about using a 4-point rule instead to make the repetitive element stronger and more dramatic?

Then, take a look at the possibility of adding elements just to create a repetition. Do you have a numbered list of items? How about using a distinctive font or a reversed number, and then repeating that treatment throughout every numbered list in the publication? At first, simply find *existing* repetitions and then strengthen them. As you get used to the idea and the look, start to *create* repetitions to enhance the design and the clarity of the information.

Repetition is like accenting your clothes. If a woman is wearing a lovely black evening dress with a chic black hat, she might accent her dress with red heels, red lipstick, and a tiny red rose corsage.

What to avoid

Avoid repeating the element so much that it becomes annoying or overwhelming. Be conscious of the value of contrast.

For instance, if she were to wear the black evening dress with a red hat, red earrings, red lipstick, a red handbag, red shoes and a red coat, the repetition would not be a stunning and unifying contrast—it would be garish and the focus would be confused.