

Design Elements

Always be sure that the elements you put into your project are meaningful. It is important to choose amongst these elements to create a design that most effectively organizes your paper in a digital format. Intentionally choosing these design elements can make your message more cohesive and powerful. If you add design without considering how it portrays your paper, it can become distracting for your reader, and your main point may become lost.

Color

Color is one of the first things your reader will notice upon seeing your document. It can be beneficial to consider the symbols associated with the color of your choice. For example, red, orange, and yellow are warm colors generally associated with happiness or bold statements while blue, purple, and green are cool colors associated with melancholy or serious topics. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, like the color blue can often be associated with calm and peace, and the color red can be associated with anger or roses. A good rule of thumb is not to choose your favorite color, but choose a color that will convey your thesis to the reader.

Shape

Different shapes can also evoke different feelings. Shapes with smooth or curved lines tend to resemble nature more than shapes with sharp corners, which may appear industrial. Shapes can also help your reader make connections between your points. For example, many magazines use squares because it presents material in compact and separated boxes, which can be helpful if your subtopics are very different from one another, but if you're going for more interconnected sub topics, you may consider using circles or shapes that can link together, like hexagons. Shapes can be a great way to begin designing your document since they can form a basis for where your text will be located.

Font

Font is also one of the first things your reader may notice. Along with adding contrast to titles and subtopics, font is useful for helping to develop tone. An academic or serious paper will use standard fonts, like Times New Roman, whereas a wedding photographer may wish to create a flyer with cursive font to portray elegance and class. Text in this font will have a much different tone **THAN TEXT IN THIS FONT**. Be sure to choose a font that accurately displays your main idea and sets the correct tone for your message.

Lists

Lists are most helpful in establishing subpoints in a straightforward and effective way. In an MLA formatted paper, topic sentences are necessary to lead from point to point, but a bulleted list in a digital document can serve this purpose in a smaller amount of space. Lists can also include your sources, or provide definitions for jargon that your reader may be unfamiliar with. Lists become even more helpful in digital settings because they can become hyperlinks to outside sources or links that help your readers navigate throughout your work.

Images and Charts

Images are a great way to represent tone or message in your document. Charts and graphs can also provide an easy way to portray data and research. Using images or charts gives a concrete visual example of your message. Make sure to have a purpose behind each image. It would be strange to have a picture of your dog in a work about carbon dioxide effects on air temperature. Images and charts can also work as evidence for your thesis or supporting points. Adding visual evidence can add to your credibility as an author.

Location

Location is where your text and images are placed in relation to one another. Most closely related to transition sentences, location can be important in establishing connections between pictures and text. You'll want to make sure that pictures are placed relative to the words describing those pictures and that any captions are close by to what they describe. Location can also be used to metaphorically represent your ideas. For example, if you are writing about political parties, you could have the parties' logos placed far away from each other to represent the distance of ideas between the parties. Keep in mind your body text should be easily read without jumping all over the page. It's also good to consider where titles and works cited will be incorporated into your design.

Motion

Motion can be used in your scrolling Spark presentations or in the movement of the camera in your documentary. Motion can also take the form of moving graphics in interactive InDesign projects. Motion can be a good way to make connections between ideas or to transition from point to point. A little movement is a great way to transfer the reader's attention to something quickly. Since motion automatically draws in the eye, you'll want to be sure not to put too much motion in your design since this can become distracting or even disorienting to the reader.

Sound

Sound can be used in your premiere documentary to provide explanation on top of images through voice over. Things like music score and transition sounds can serve the purpose that a metaphorical representation would serve in your paper. Music is also a great way to evoke pathos in the audience. Examples of types of sound- transition sounds, score, audio from interviews, voice over, and sound effects.

You can always check if your design elements are working effectively by taking a step back and looking at your project without reading the words (if you find this hard to do, ask someone else to look at your design). Would you or someone else have a general idea of what your main point is? If the answer is yes, then congratulations! You have created an effective design! If the answer is no, what elements are distracting or leading away from your thesis?