



Workshop Three

BACKGROUNDS, SHAPES & LAYOUTS

Lecture notes

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INTRODUCTION

Take your design to the next level by leveraging visual elements that provide structure and hierarchy. This workshop dives into creative ways you can use backgrounds and shapes to both highlight and emphasize, while also reviewing the fundamentals of layout design which ensure that you have a strong composition that communicates your message.

PREPARATION AND DELIVERY NOTES

You will find throughout the presentation, a call to action button where you can launch an interactive design tutorial which relates to the content that was just covered. If you have a particularly large class (20+ students) in which computers are not readily available, we recommend that you skip the tutorials or assign it at the end as a homework exercise. In a smaller-sized classroom where students have access to their own computers, this workshop can be run in a teach/do/teach/do format.

PRESENTATION

Slide 1: Cover

Slide 2: Introduction - Why backgrounds, shapes, and layouts matter

- Backgrounds allow you to take a blank canvas (i.e. your new document type) and set the stage for your design.
- An effective background, whether it's an image or thoughtful manipulation of white space, will allow you to create a balanced design with visual appeal and harmony.
- Shapes and Icons are incredibly versatile tools in your Canva tool kit. Use these elements as an alternative to photographic images to create visual flair in your layouts.
- Layout design is an important skill to understand. It draws on an understanding of alignment, specific placement, white space, and hierarchy.

- A sound grasp of these principles will allow you to create beautiful compositions of graphics and text.

Slide 3: Today's Agenda

- 1) Backgrounds
- 2) Shapes and Icons
- 3) Layout Design

Slide 4: Backgrounds

Slide 5: Marry Text and Images - Consider the empty space

- Photographic images can serve as the perfect background for your design.
- By selecting an image that has limited elements, you can lay text on top that fills the empty spaces in your photos.

Slide 6: Marry Text and Images - Using Transparency

- Increasing the transparency of an image can give the illusion of space.
- In this example, transparency is used in two different ways. First, we've increased the transparency of the background image to provide a muted background against the bold pink and text. Second, the two pink rectangles have been added with increased transparency to add interesting layers of depth to the overall design.
- Keep in mind that making your image more transparent can also result in losing some of its detail. You can avoid this by increasing the contrast levels so that the image's shapes and lines are still prominent.
- In this example, we've created a layered background with the combination of a highly transparent image (at 62%), a bright and bold pink overlay, and an additional transparent block on top of that.

Slide 7: Marry Text and Images - Work with image features

- By adjusting the size of your image (either smaller or larger) or changing its placement within your grid, you can establish a clear space to apply your text in creative ways.

[Proceed to tutorial: [Marrying Text and Images](#)]

Slide 8: Brilliant Backgrounds - Utilize contrast

- Images with bold backgrounds can provide an excellent backdrop for text. In this example, the white text looks crisp and clean against the rich blue background.

Slide 9: Brilliant Backgrounds - Use borders with text

- Adding borders around text can nicely frame and bring focus to your message.

Slide 10: Brilliant Backgrounds - Create your own textures

- You can resize a photo in your grid to enlarge a specific texture or pattern that's contained in the image.

- In this example, the desert photo has been enlarged so that the rippling sand can act as an interesting though neutral background for the text.

[Proceed to tutorial: [Brilliant Backgrounds](#)]

Slide 11: Creative Background Tools - Use blocks of color

- For heavily textured images, add a block of solid color to provide a clear backdrop for your text.
- Make sure to use a color that's in the image to bring cohesion to the overall design.
- In these examples, we've used the deep pink from the raspberries and the green of the tall grass, and have also added some transparency to the blocks to allow for some of the texture of the photos to show through.

Slide 12: Creative Background Tools - Blur your backgrounds

- Choose a photo that is relevant to your message and contains appropriate colors for your design.
- By applying blur to that image, you can create a rich background while also ensuring that the text that's laid on top remains sharp and isn't overpowered by the detail of the background.
- In these examples, the autumn leaves provide a festive and warm backdrop for "Thanksgiving Harvest" and in "Nature Hour," the veins of the leaves offer a smooth but still visible texture.

Slide 13: Creative Background Tools - Desaturate your images

- By desaturating your images, you can create contrast by overlaying bright and bold text.

[Proceed to tutorial: [Creative Background Tools](#)]

Slide 14: Shapes

Slide 15: Designing with Shapes - Resizable squares and circles

- With resizable squares and circles, you can draw emphasis to components of your text or provide interesting framing.
- In "Jane Grey Artistry," we've added a square and resized it to a very narrow rectangle to provide separation between the name of the company and its description.
- In the second example, "New!" has been placed in a decorative circle, drawing immediate attention to the most important text element in the design.

Slide 16: Designing with Shapes - Use shapes to highlight text

- Instead of squares and circles, you can add more interesting shapes to provide the perfect placement for important text elements on the page.
- In these examples, the 'f' in Facebook and the Canva logo have been laid on top of color tags, bringing emphasis to the brands behind each graphic.

[Proceed to tutorial: [Designing with Shapes](#)]

Slide 17: Infographics - Use infographics to represent data

- Integrating infographics into your design can provide a visually interesting way to present otherwise dry statistical information.
- Studies have shown that the brain is capable of processing visuals 60,000x faster than text and that 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual. (Sources: 3M Corporation and Zabisco). These are compelling reasons to consider adding infographics to your data-driven designs.

Slide 18: Infographics - Use infographics to represent data

- Infographics can also serve to present complex information and relative data points in a way that can be quickly and clearly understood.
- In this example, we've used the same circular graphic but with varying degrees of solid-colored segmentation to represent Meadow Public High School's increasing graduation rates.
- The increasing graduation rates over time is represented in an obvious and impactful way, reinforcing the actual percentages which are found inside the circles.

[Proceed to tutorial: [Introduction to Infographics](#)]

Slide 19: Starting with Scale - Consider the text size

- Leveraging scale in your text sizes can be an effective way of enforcing specific sentiments in your message.
- In the first example, "Pink" is the largest element on the page, referencing the pink ribbon which is the international symbol of breast cancer awareness.
- In the second example, we've highlighted the enthusiasm of the child by increasing the size of the word "Wow!" in this image, which is advertising a children's summer camp.

Slide 20: Starting with Scale - Consider the image size

- By enlarging your images, you can reinforce the message that's conveyed in your text.
- In "A Berry Good Life," the photo of blackberries has been enlarged so we can see the detail of each piece of delicious fruit while in "Protection Wildlife," the central image is a very large iguana.

[Proceed to tutorial: [Starting with Scale](#)]

Slide 21: Layout Design

Slide 22: The Art of Alignment - Center the elements on the page

- There are many ways you can arrange your text and shapes but one way to create a clean and focused design is by centering those elements.
- In these examples, one's attention is drawn immediately to the center of the page, which is where the important text elements live.

Slide 23: The Art of Alignment - Use consistent margins

- Padding is the margin space that's applied around elements of your design.
- You should use consistent padding around objects to frame and draw attention to them; this will help maintain balance and consistency in your design.

[Proceed to tutorial: [The Art of Alignment](#)]

Slide 24: Working with White Space - Create clarity and emphasis

- White space is any area within a design that's free from text, images, or embellishments.
- Understanding how to leverage the white space in your design is an incredibly powerful tool as it can add emphasis and improve legibility.

Slide 25: Work with the White Space - Use color to create white space

- People sometimes assume the white space is always white, but that's not the case.
- Any space within your design that's free from text or visuals is considered white space.
- Using a vivid, colored background can be a great way to create lots of space around your text, like a quote, allowing it to stand out on the page.

[Proceed to tutorial: [Working with White Space](#)]

Slide 26: Harnessing Hierarchy - Use text hierarchy

- In your layout, use text hierarchy to dictate what the viewer's eye will see first, second, and last.
- Your most important text (like in this example, "Milk") should be the most dominant element on the page, followed by secondary titles ("and cookies"), and body text (the recipe found on the milk bottle).

Slide 27: Harnessing Hierarchy - Use color and type treatments

- Your overall composition should be comprised of elements which consistently speak the message of your design.
- Make sure you're using colors and type treatments that reinforce your message, like in the playful "Waffles" example or with the "Tennis" varsity lettering in yellow.

Slide 28: Harnessing Hierarchy - Contrast large and small images

- A layout can be comprised of multiple images which have been resized to create contrast and bring emphasis to a specific area of the page.
- In this example, we've used varying sized images related to a spa but the top image, a beautiful and serene composition of spa items, draws the most attention due to its size.

[Proceed to tutorial: [Harnessing Hierarchy](#)]