

Visual Design



SWE 432, Fall 2017

Design and Implementation of Software for the Web

With at least 30 new things you won't believe!

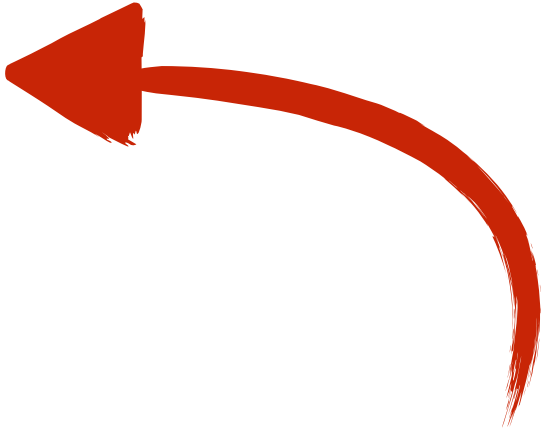
#10 will shock you!

(actually we hope you believe it all)

Today

- Importance of visual design: solving communication problems
- Some guidelines
- A lot of example and anti-examples

Plus a ton of practical visual guidelines!

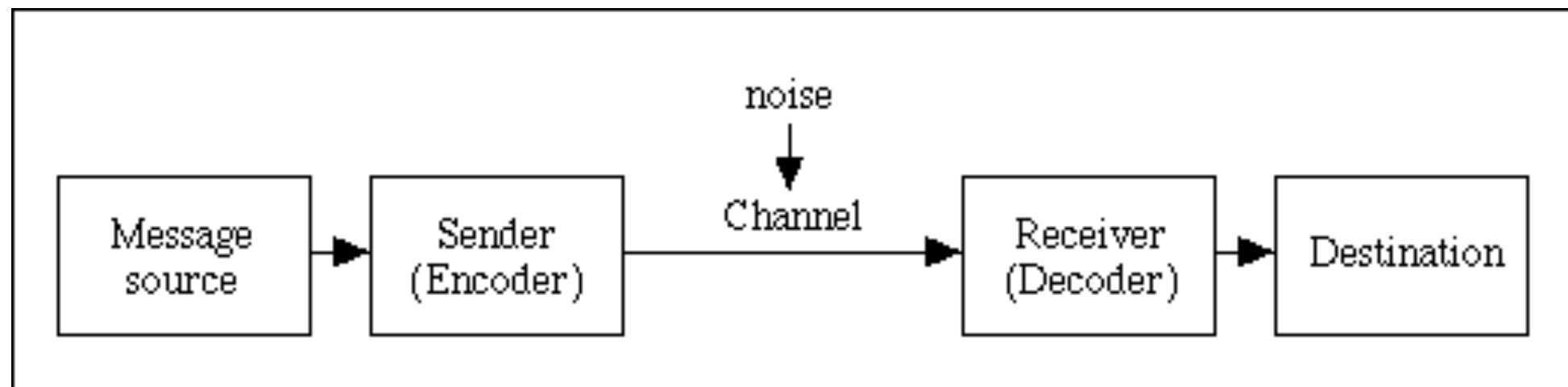


Visual design

- Solving **communications problems** in ways that are both functionally effective and aesthetically pleasing.
- Creating a visual language containing a vocabulary of design elements characterized by
 - Visual variables—shape, size, position, orientation, color, texture, ...
 - Organizational relations—balance, structure, proportion, ...
 - Visual syntax—rules for assembling elements w/in design language

Visual design as communication

- Goal: **efficiently** & accurately transmit information from system to user
- Visual variables & organization encode information



Goals for visual design

- Successfully **transmit** information
- Reduce visual **search** time through layout & organization
- Create desired **emotional** reactions through aesthetic choices
- Present coherent & consistent design that reduces ambiguity and potential confusion

Guidelines for Visual Design

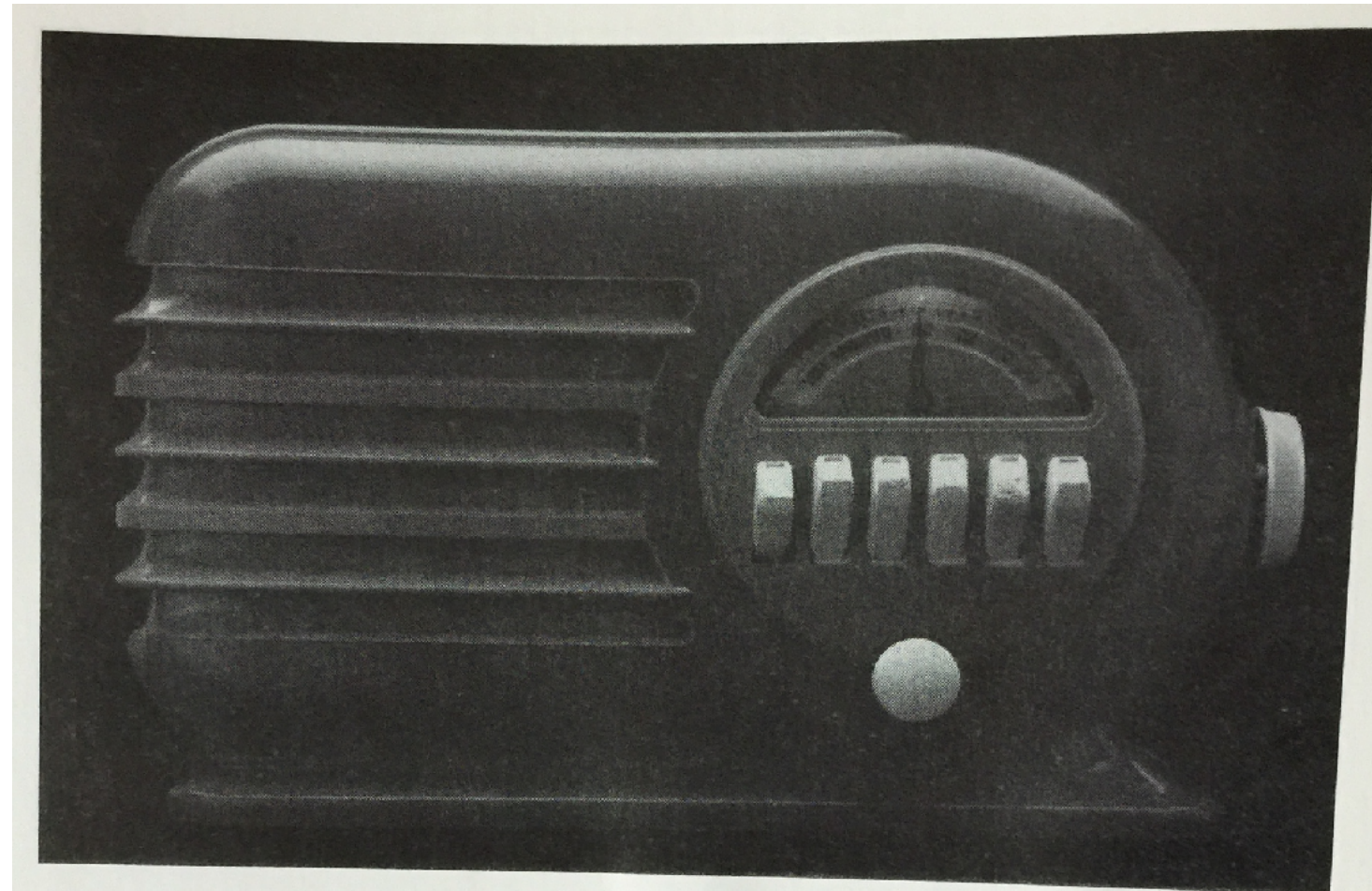
Elegance & simplicity

- *Elegance*—derives from Latin eligere, to “select carefully”
- **Judicious** selection of elements and economy of expression revealing an intimate understanding of problem
- Removing & combining superfluous elements until only the necessary remains

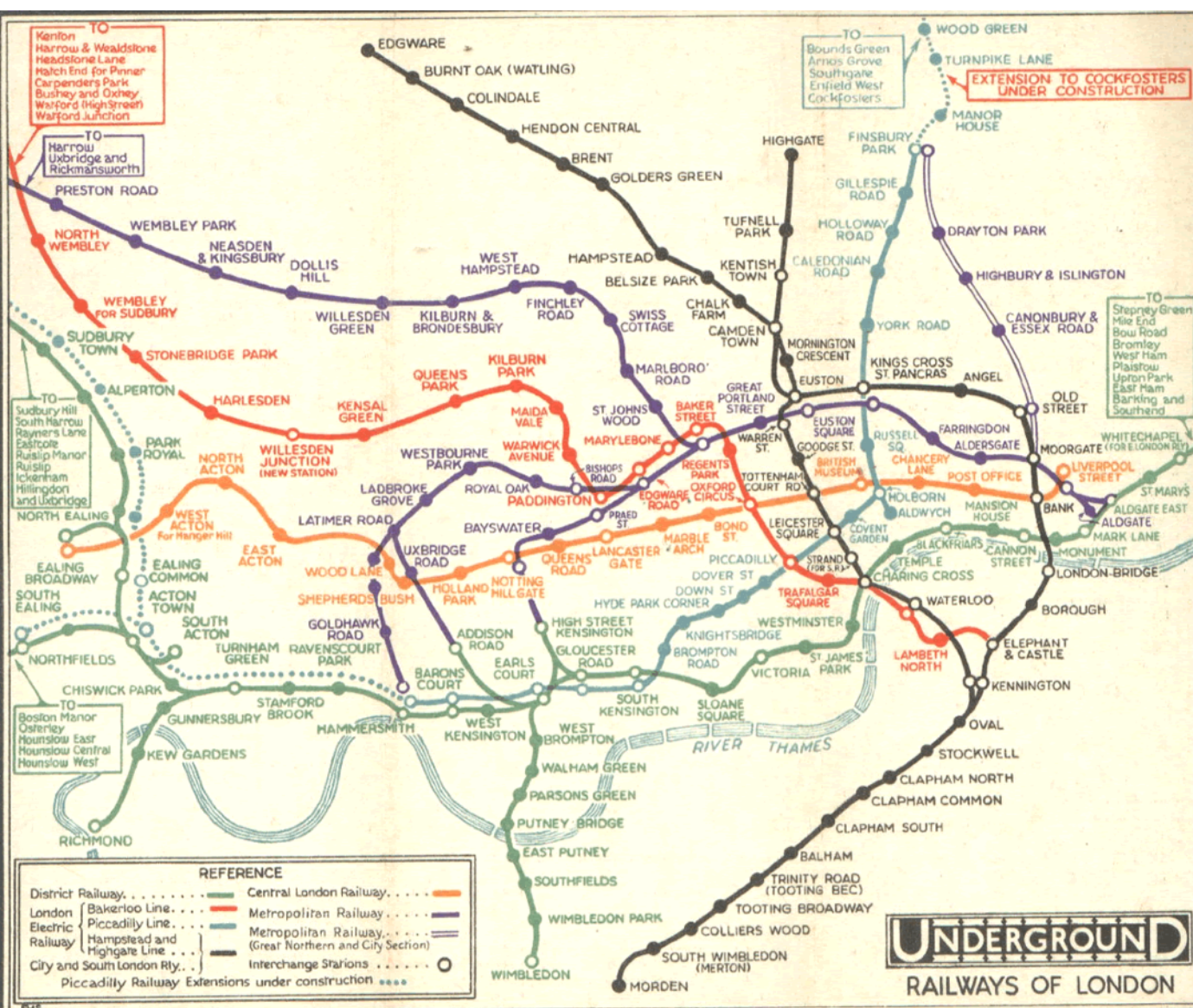


Benefits of simplicity

- **Approachability** - rapidly understood affordances, allowing glanceable understanding of possible interactions
- **Immediacy** - greater emotional impact because interactions can be quickly understood



Guidelines for Visual Design



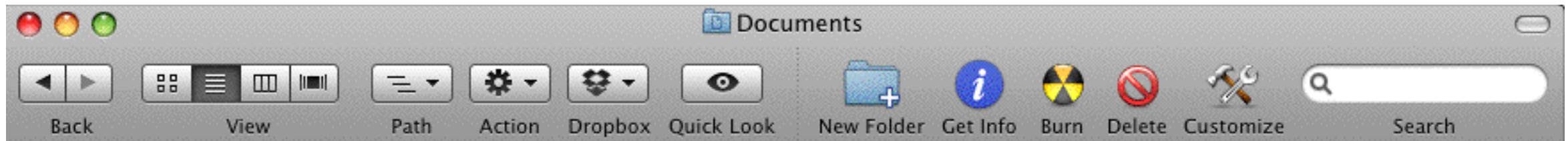
Simplicity in new map: Abstract Geographic Details

Reducing a design to its essence

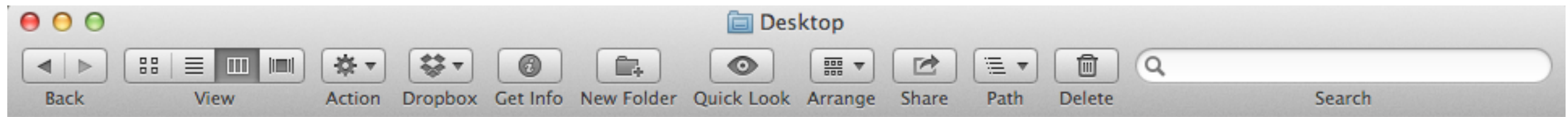
- Make design simple, bold direct by removing inessential details & elements
 - Even essential elements may be suggested
1. Determine essential qualities & information to be conveyed
 2. Critically examine each element & ask how design would suffer without it.
 3. Try removing elements. What happens?



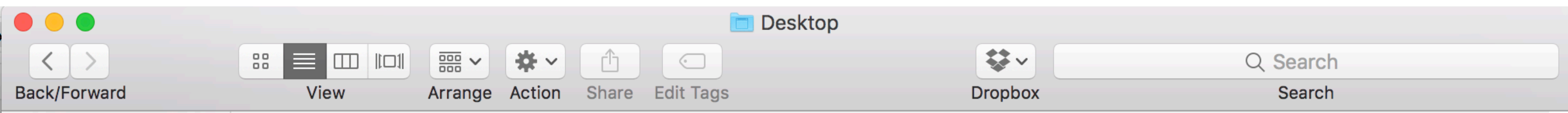
Trade-offs in Simplicity



OSX c.2010

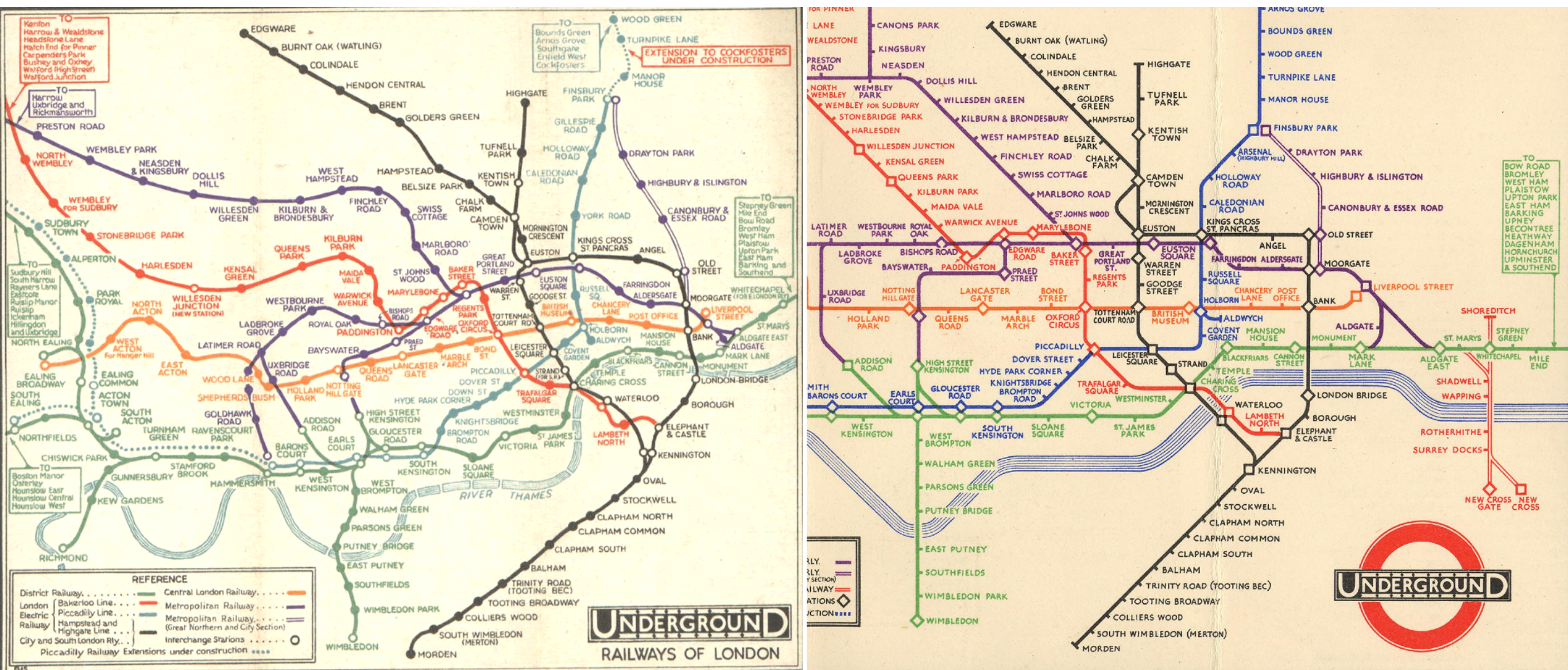


OSX c.2011



OSX c.2016

Guidelines for Visual Design

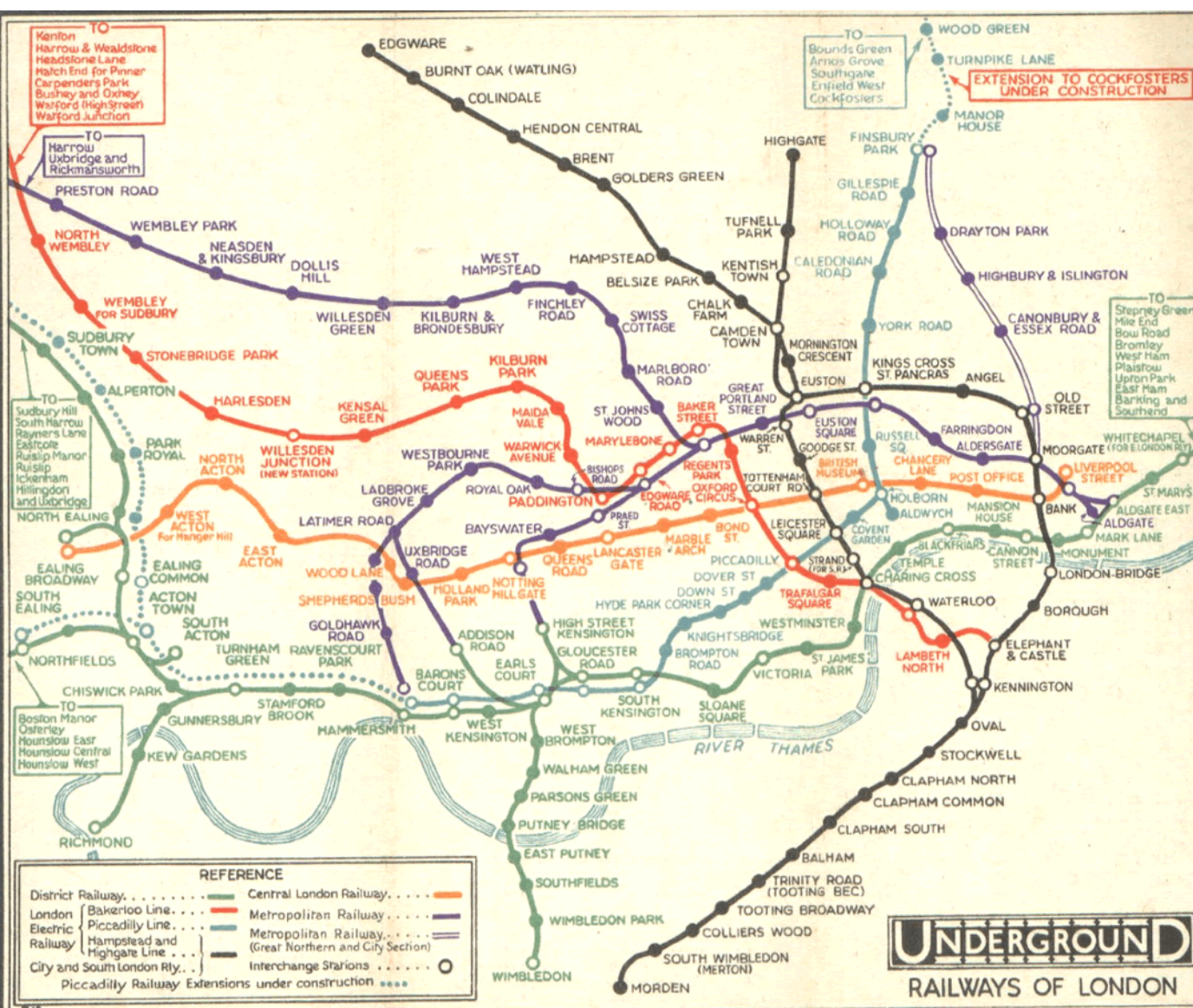


Reduction in new map: relative distances don't matter

Regularizing the elements of a design

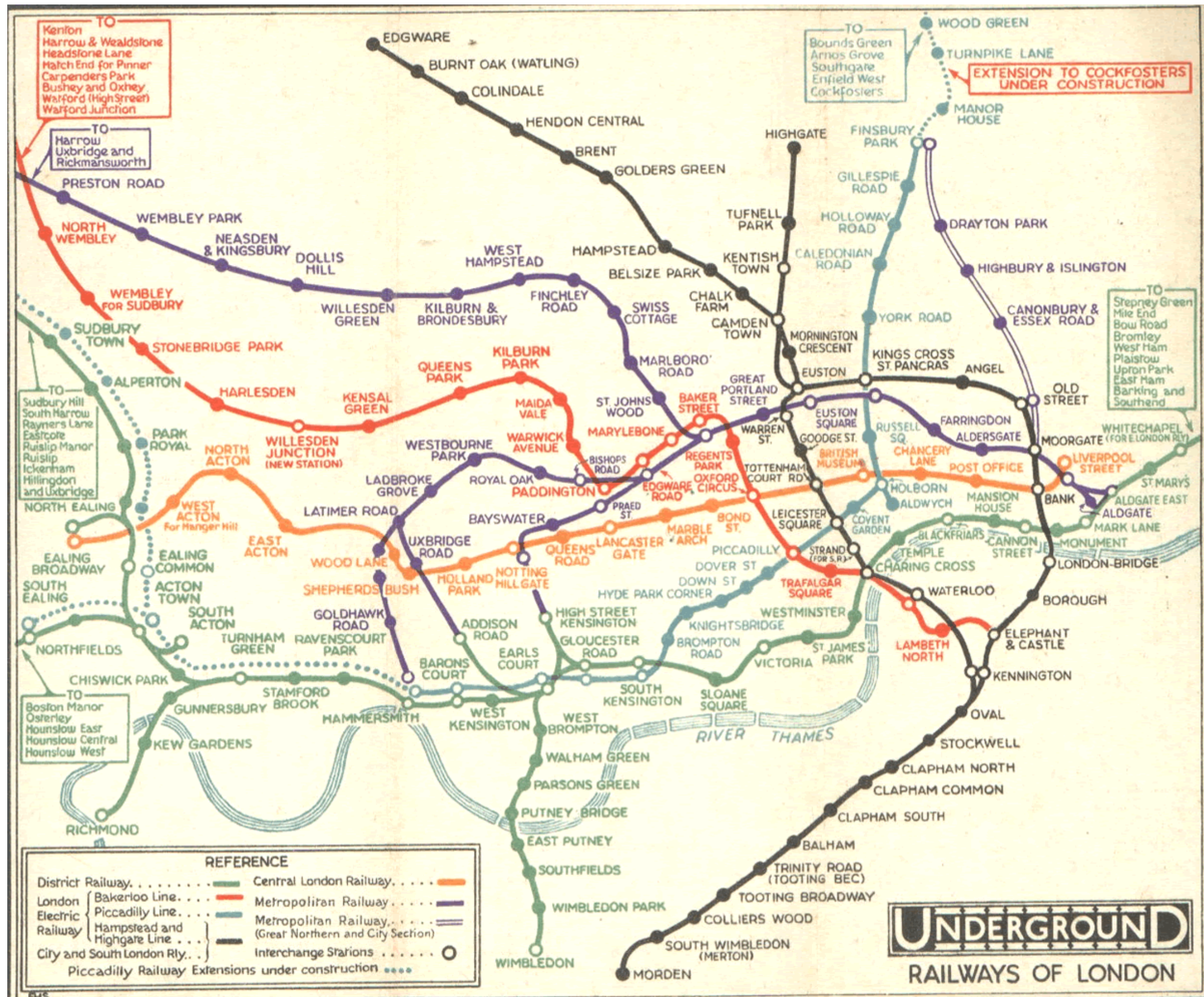
- Reduce information by repeating elements according to a rule, principle or rhythm
 - Enable user to scan ahead
 - Use irregularity where needed to clarify that something is irregular!
1. Use **regular** geometric forms, simplified controls, muted colors where possible
 2. If multiple similar forms required, make them identical as much as possible in size, shape, color, texture, spacing, alignment
 3. Limit variation in typography to a few sizes
 4. Make sure critical elements intended to stand out are **not** regularized

Guidelines for Visual Design



Regularization in new map: Straight lines result in station names laid out in a line, rather than bouncing around

Original (1920's?) Underground Map

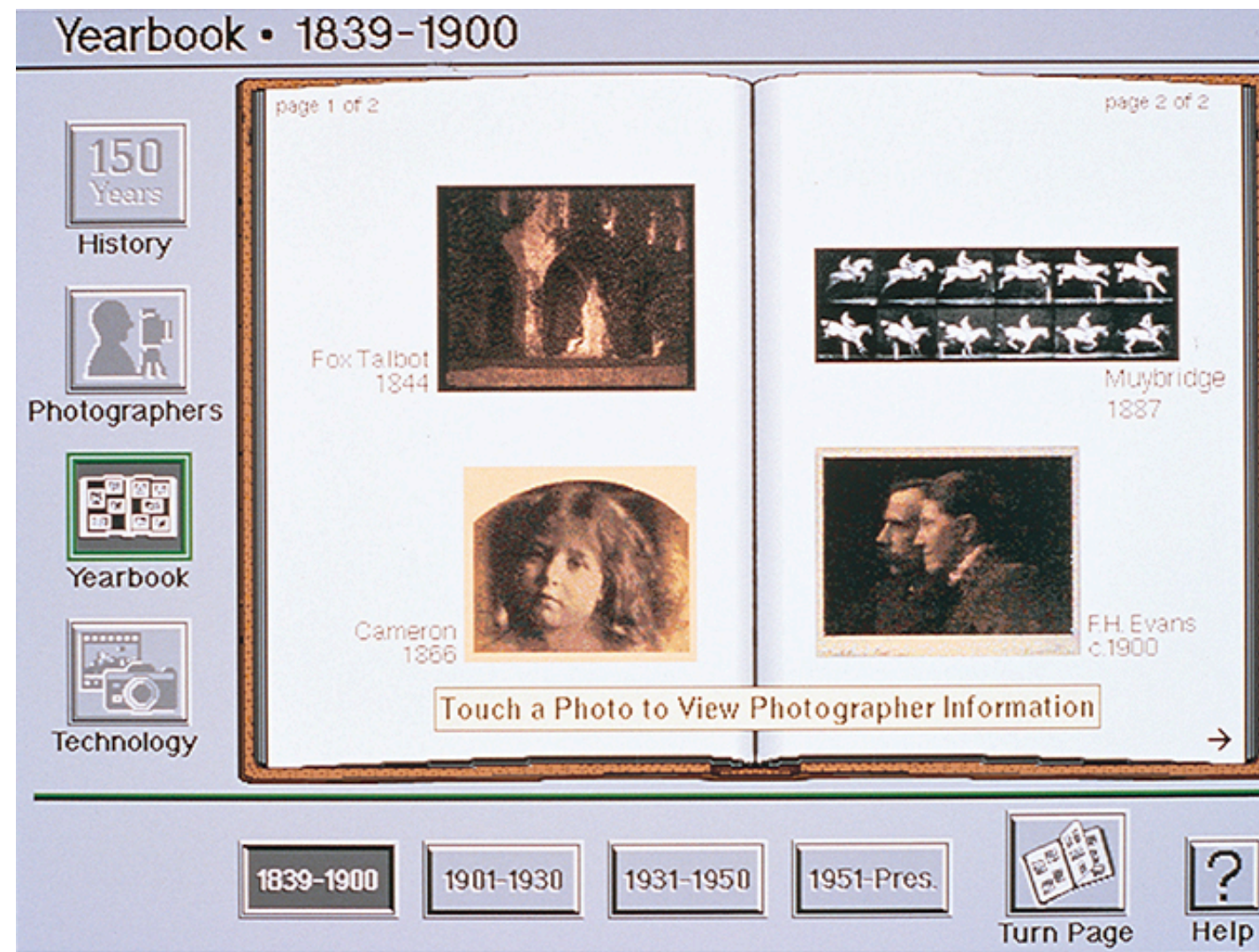


Beck's 1933 Underground Map



Error - excessive skeuomorphism

- Skeuomorphism - making visual design resemble reality (like metaphors)
- Excessive skeuomorphism is distracting and wastes potential visual bandwidth that could encode meaningful information





Calendars



Invitations (0)

Day

Week

Month

Year

List



Search

July 2013

Wednesday

July 3



Ted Faszter's Birthday

all-day



Mike Yutzy's Birthday

all-day

Thursday

July 4



Cherie Yvette's Birthday

all-day

Monday

July 15



Allie Johnson's Birthday

all-day



Dr Stoll

8:45 AM to 9:45 AM

Thursday

July 18



Richard Gintowt's Birthday

all-day



Jacks birthday

11 AM to Noon

Monday

July 22



Alisha Campbell's Birthday

all-day

Saturday

July 27

Ted Faszter's Birthday

Details

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

all-day events



Mike Yutzy's Birthday



Ted Faszter's Birthday

2 PM

3 PM

4 PM

5 PM

6 PM

7 PM

8 PM

9 PM

Today

Jun

Jul

1

2

3

4

5

6

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19

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Aug



iPad

2:01 PM

92%

November 2016

Day

Week

Month

Year

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

SWE 432

20

SWE meeting

21

11 AM

Office Hours

SWE 432

22

10:30 AM

Noon

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Noon

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27

28

Office Hours

SWE 432

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Dec 1

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Office Hours

SWE 432

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10:30 AM

Noon

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SWE 432

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Noon

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11

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Office Hours

13

10:30 AM

14

15

16

17

Today

Calendars

Inbox

Scale, Contrast, & Proportion

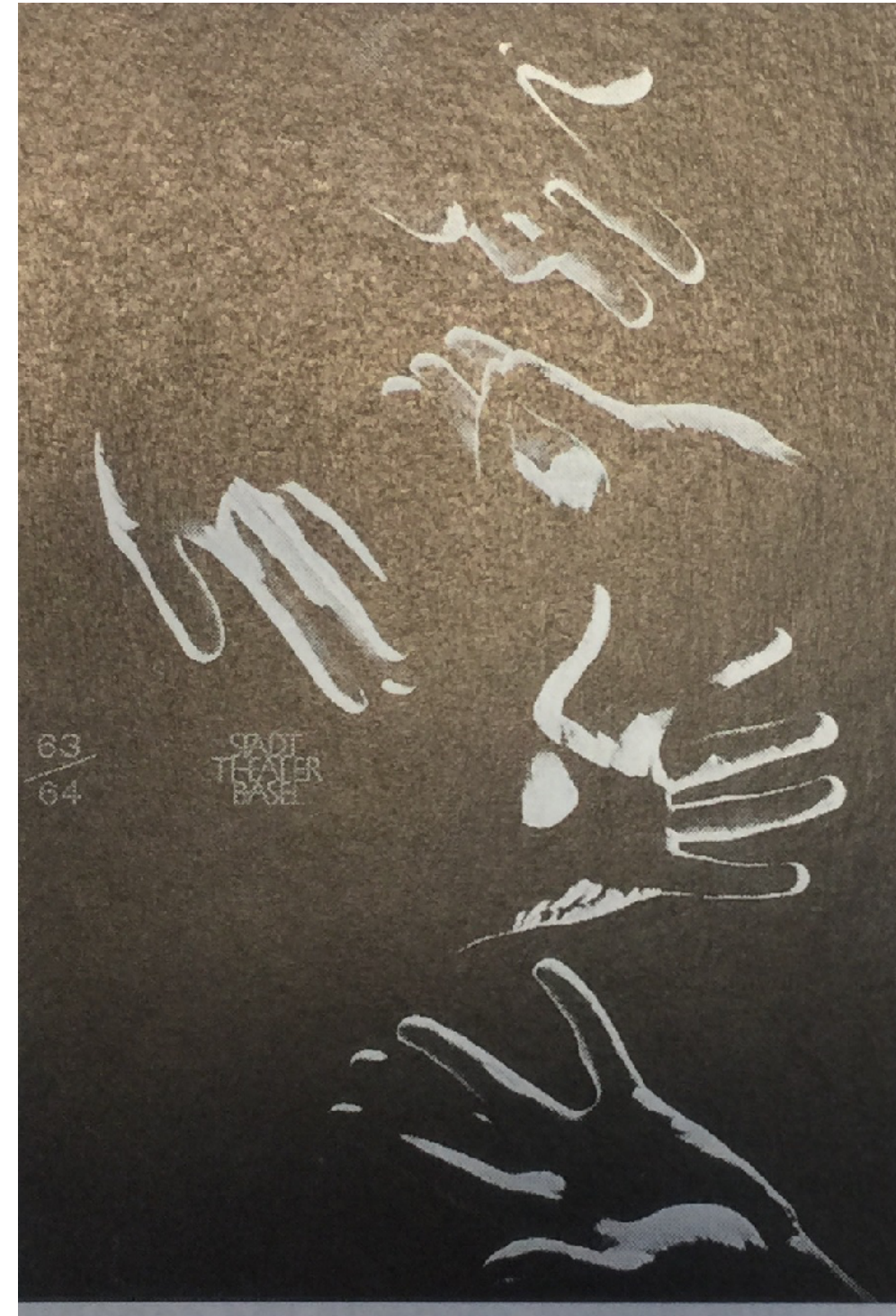
Scale, contrast, & proportion

Information consists of differences that make a difference. (Edward Tufte, Envisioning Information)

Individual visual variables of design that encode information

Terminology

- Scale - **relative** size or magnitude of element in comparison to related elements
- Contrast - visually noticeable **distinctions** along a common visual dimension
- Proportion - ratio and **balance** between elements
- Emphasis - contrasts can emphasize important elements or areas & add visual **interest** by creating tension & drama

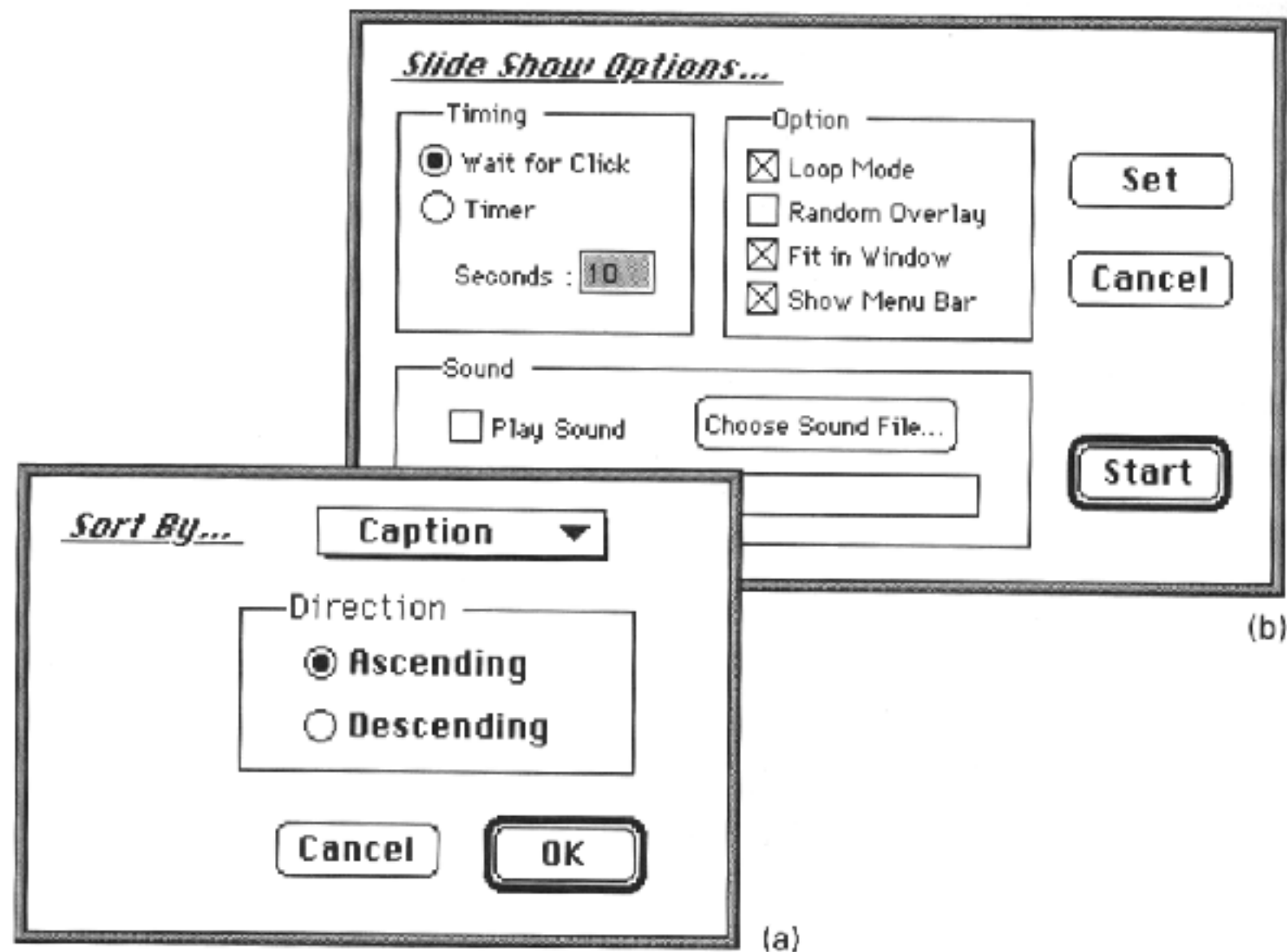


Principles

- Clarity - contrasts should be clear and easily differentiated, not slight and subtle
- Harmony - proportions and ratios should be harmonious
- Activity - use contrasts to maintain orientation & context within design
- Restraint - contrasts should be conscious, strong, few in number, and never overwhelming

Error - excessive typographic contrasts

5 different types sizes in 3 different fonts (!!)



Layers

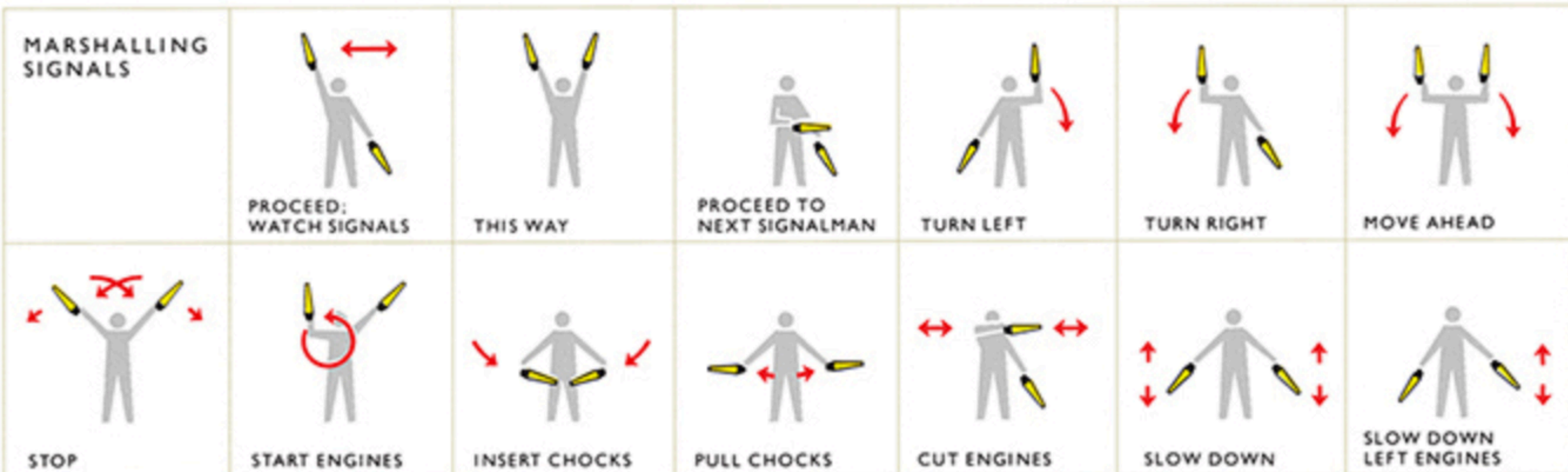
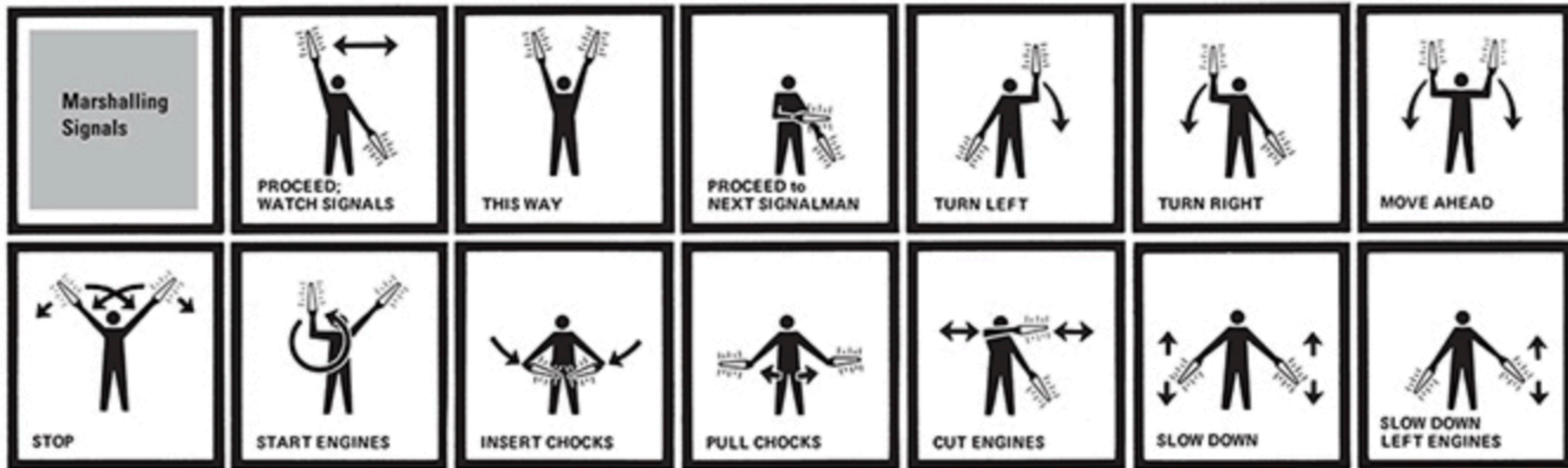
- Contrasting color, value, texture can segregate information into separate layers
- Supports **overlapping** information in displays, allowing selective processing of specific sets of elements
- Allows different layers to be read and interpreted **separately**



Creating layers

1. Group items into categories based on intended use
2. Determine rank & importance of groups
3. Use perceptual variables (size, value, hue, etc.) to establish layering effect
4. Maximize differences between groups while minimizing differences within groups
5. Use squint test to ensure elements in group retain together but visually separated

Layers



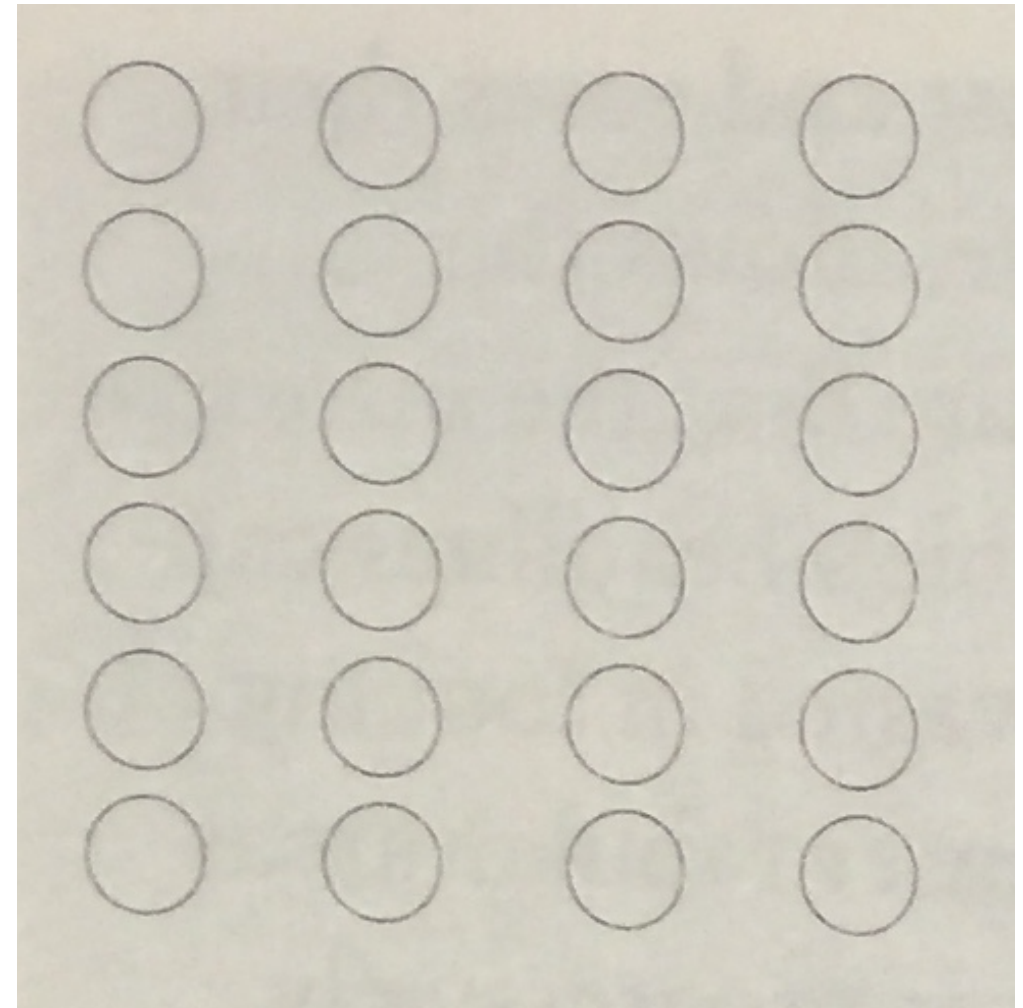
Organization & Structure

Organization & structure

- Organization needs to be **designed**
- Benefits
 - Unity - ties together related elements so that they work **together**
 - Integrity & readability - offers structure that helps user to easily scan & make comparisons
 - Control - determines where user will focus **attention** in the design
- Gestalt -> psychology of perception

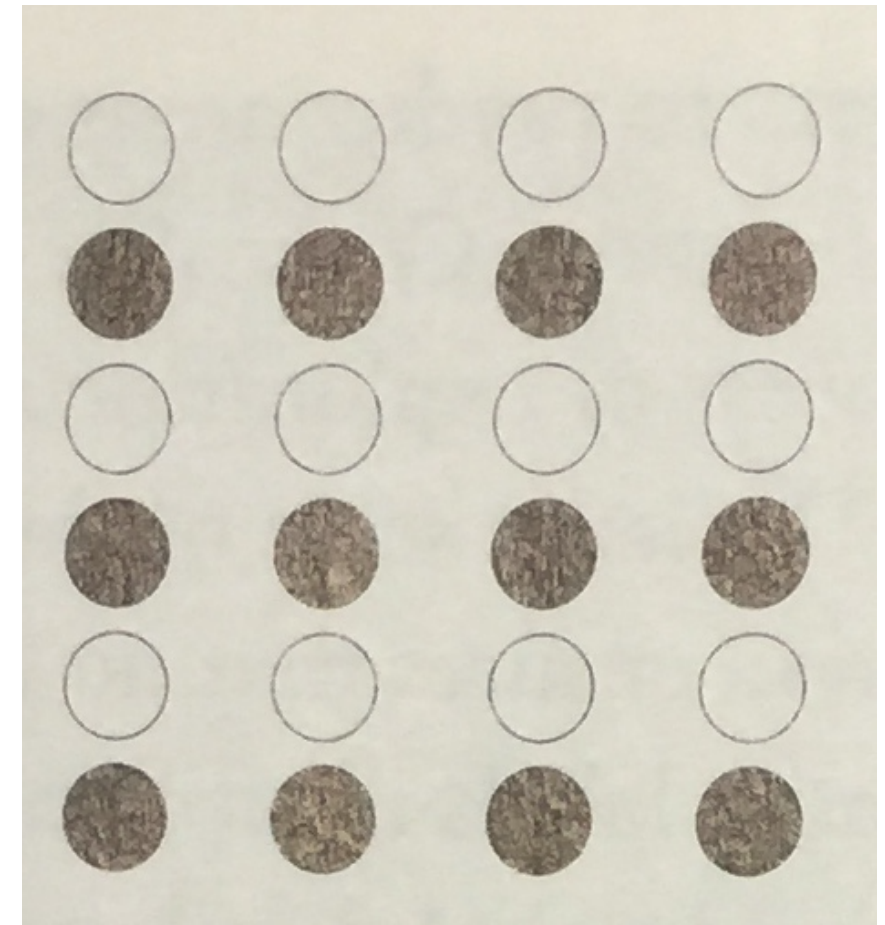
Gestalt principle - Proximity

- Elements associated MOST strongly w/ nearby elements
- parsed as 4 columns based on close vertical spacing
- then parsed as two sets of two columns based on spacing



Gestalt principle - Similarity

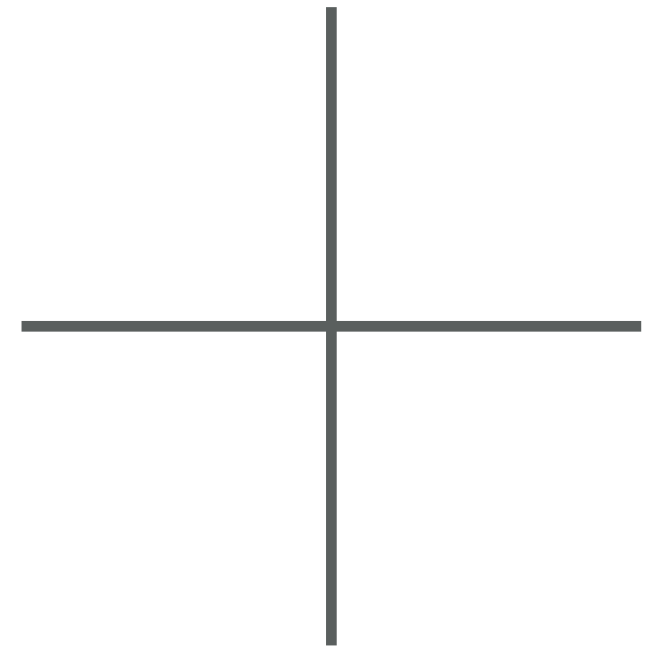
- Elements associated more strongly when share common visual attributes than when they differ
- parsed as rows based on fill similarity, despite closer column spacing



Gestalt principle - Continuity

- Preference for **simplest** physical explanation of complex figure

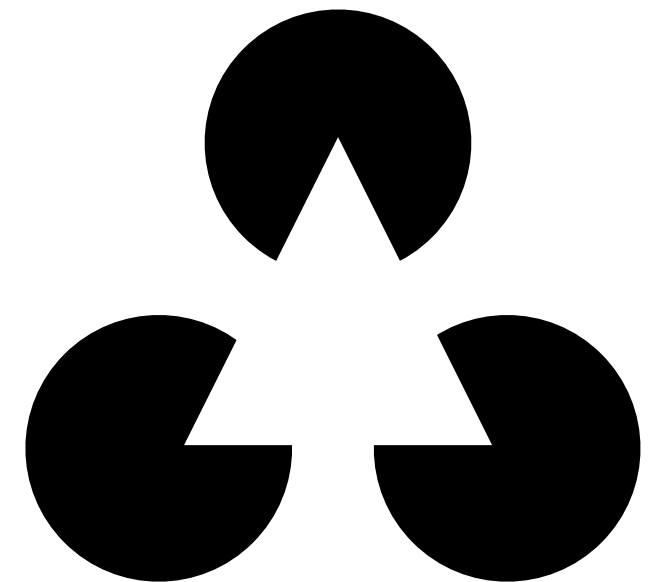
parsed as two lines, rather than
4 separate lines or 4 opposing
angles



Gestalt principle - Closure

- Preference to interpret figures as complete, even when missing information

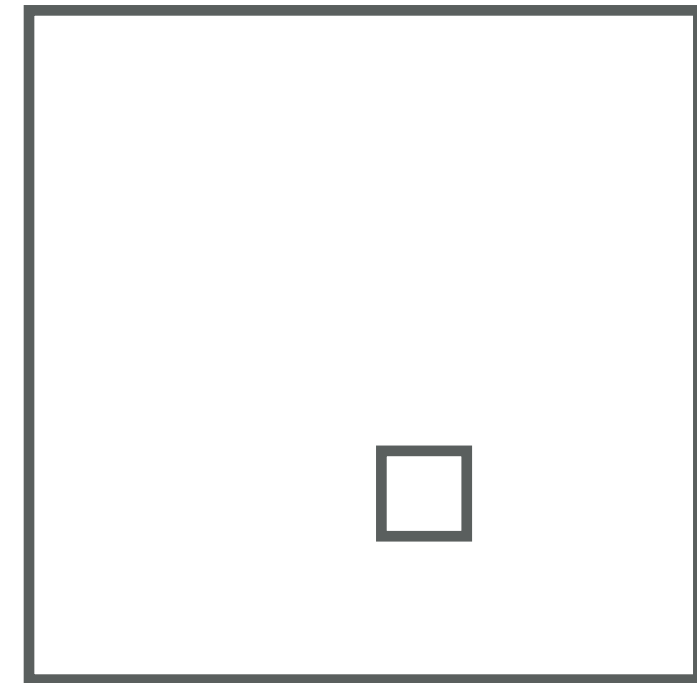
Parsed as triangle
superimposed on 3 complete
circles, even though none of
these is actually present



Gestalt principle - Area

- Preference to interpret smaller overlapping elements as figure, larger as ground

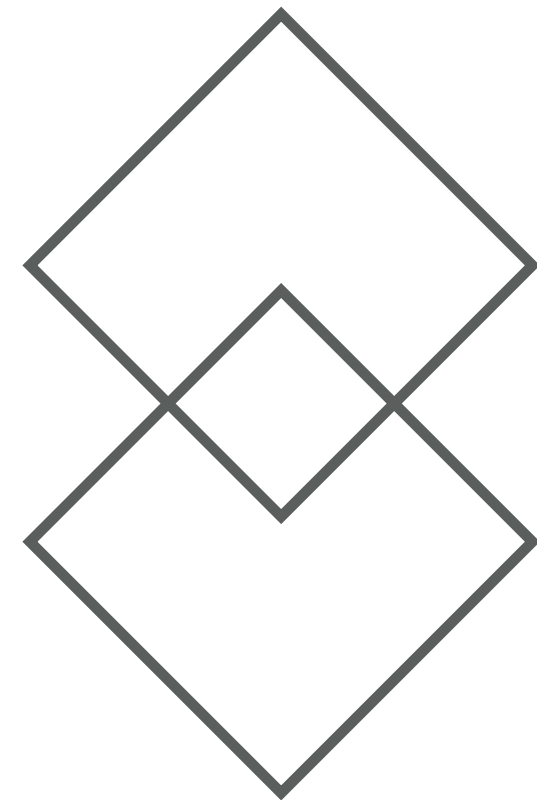
Small rectangle parsed as small rectangle on top of larger, rather than hole



Gestalt principle - Symmetry

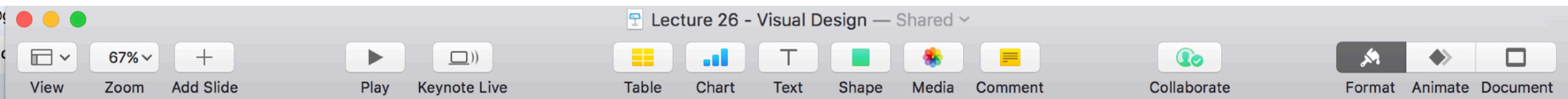
- Preference to interpret ambiguous form as multiple symmetric elements

Parsed as two overlapping objects rather than 3 separate shapes



Grouping

- Binding UI elements tightly together while distinguishing them from surrounding controls
- “Showing” not “telling”
- Can be achieved through
 - Bounding boxes (not recommended)
 - Negative space & contrasts
 - Arrangement & alignment



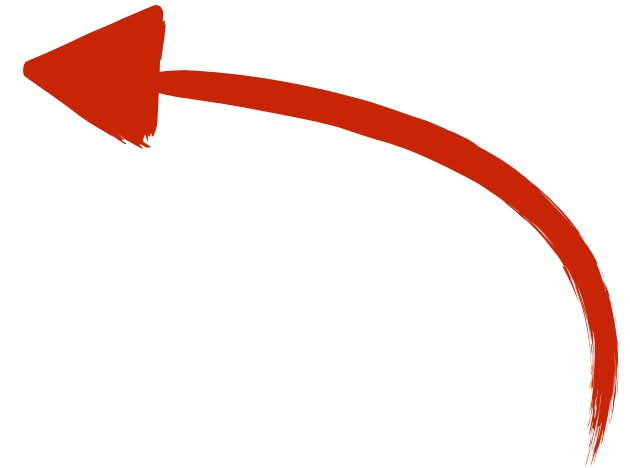
Hierarchy

Order groups based on perceptual prominence
corresponding to intended reading sequence

Can help solve “skimming” problems

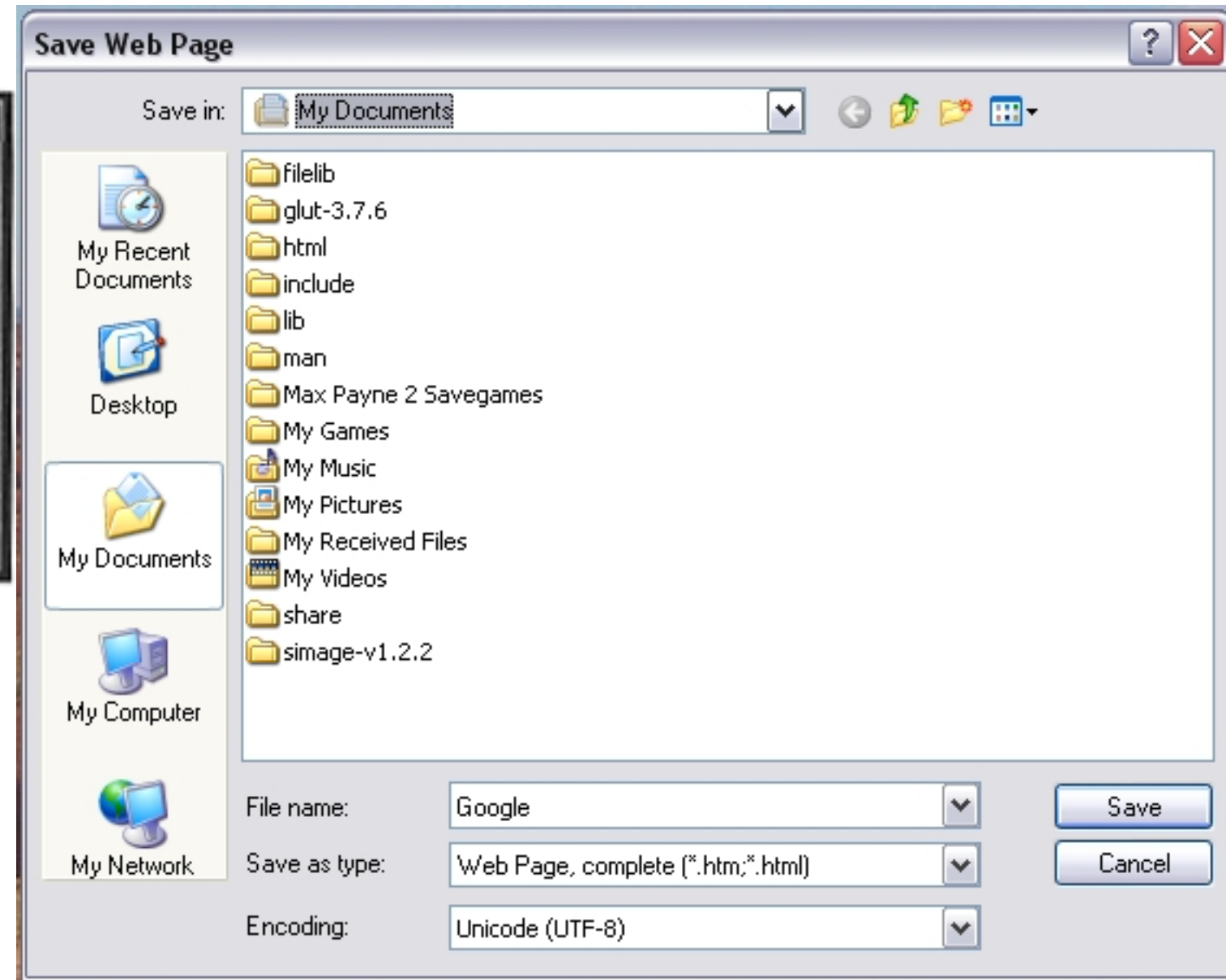
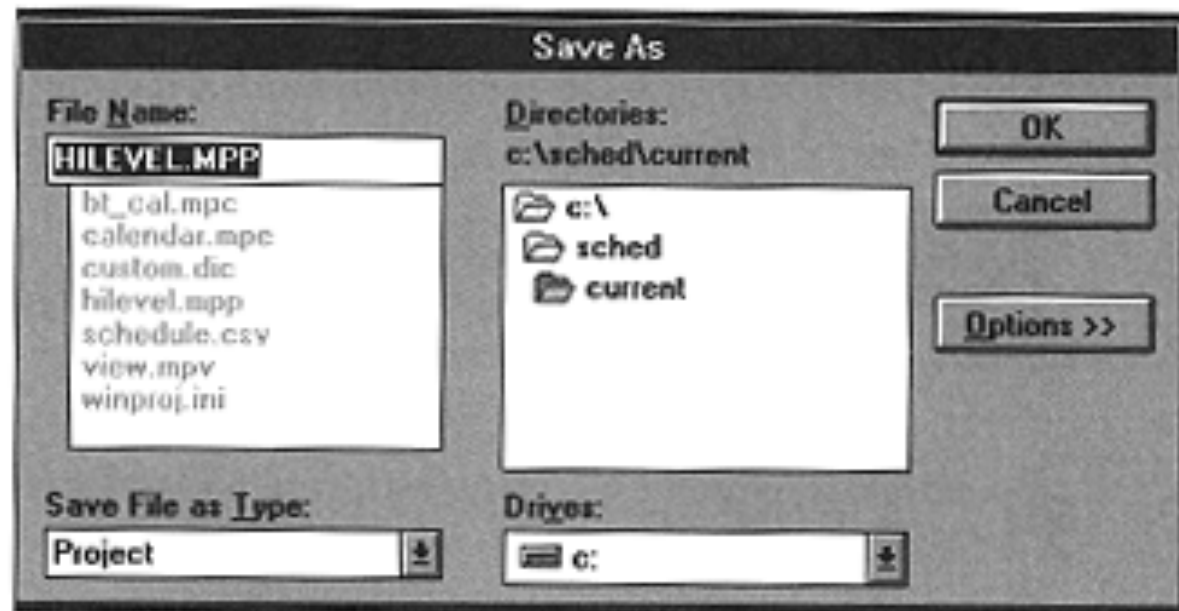
Structure can help people focus attention on key parts

Key points might **get lost though.**



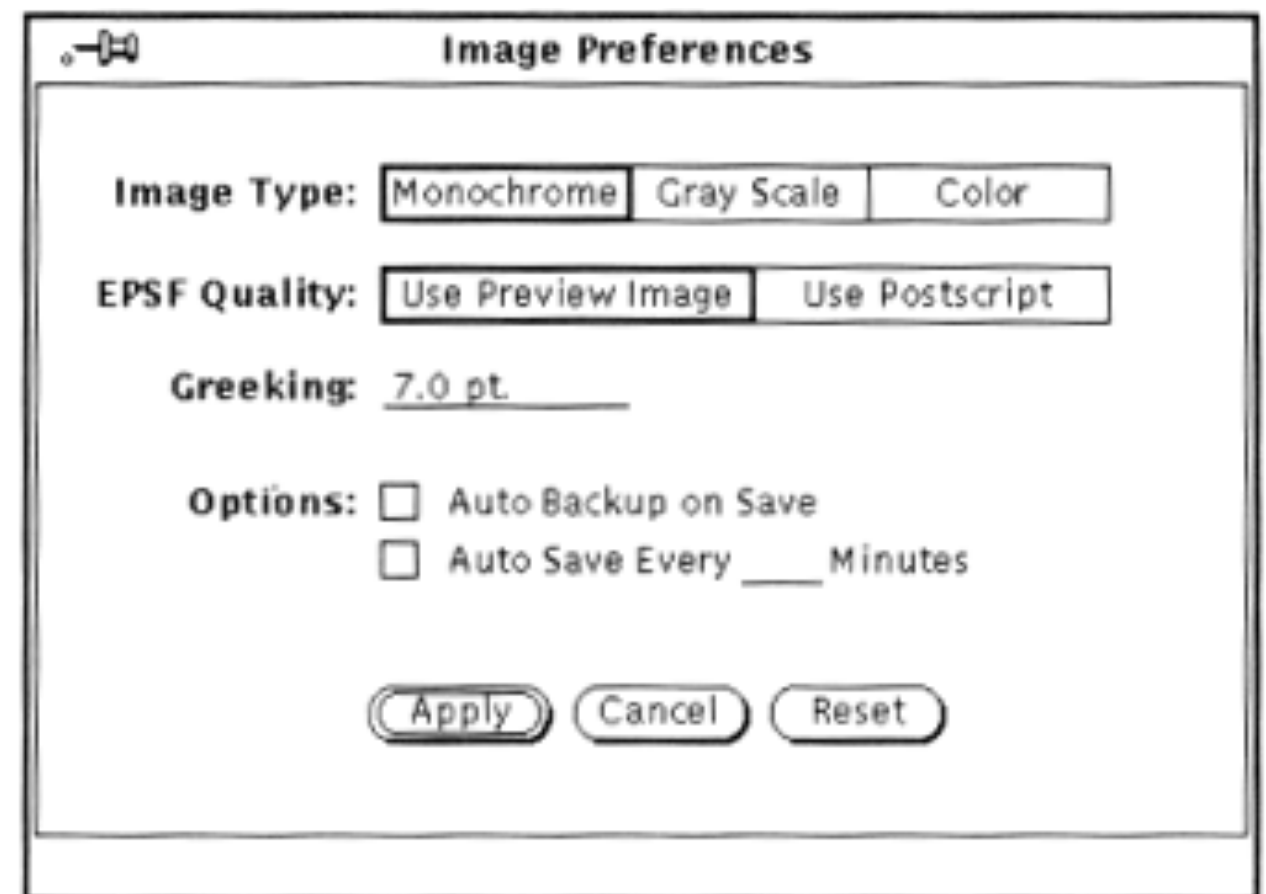
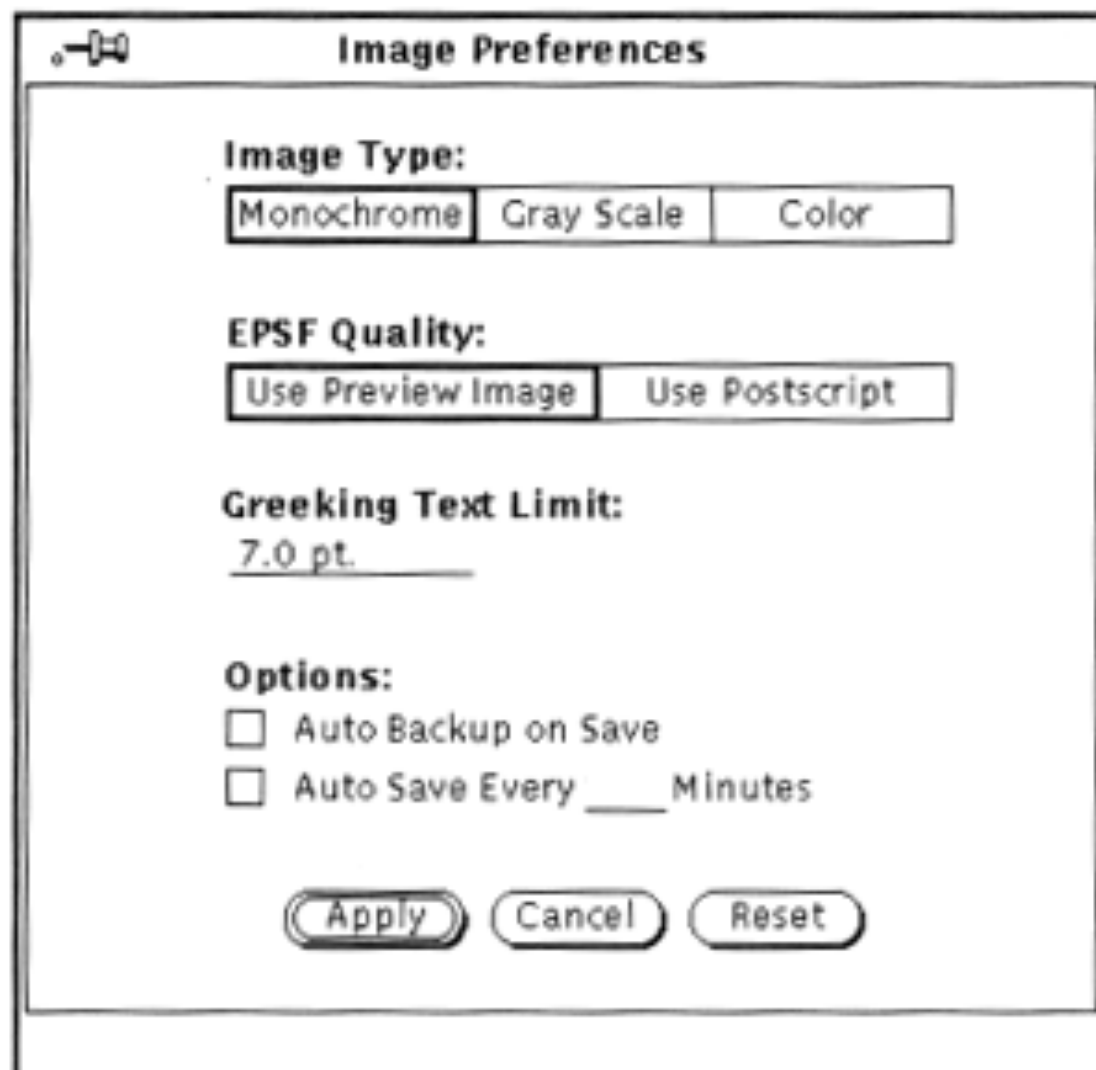
**But bolding helps! Plus this obnoxious red arrow
and text in a totally different font!**

Hierarchy in UIs



Use negative space

- Directs **attention** to critical regions of display
 1. Review design, prioritizing groups
 2. Add extra **space** to ensure spatial separation & emphasis, particularly for important elements



Images & Icons

Images & Icons

- Benefits
 - Identification - images are easy to recognize
 - Expression - breadth of artistic expression that can make design more engaging & enjoyable

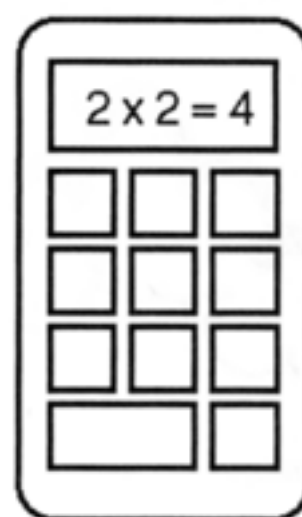
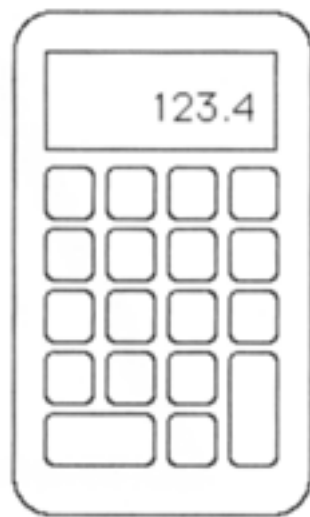
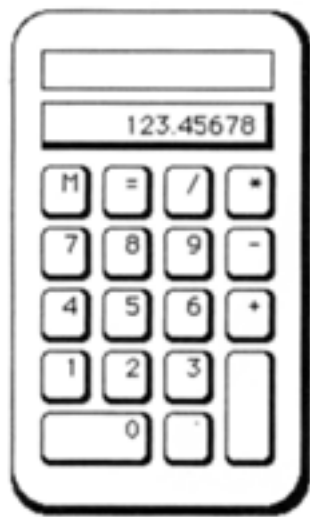
Types of iconic representation

- Similar - visually **analogous** to action, object, concept
- Example - things that exemplify or are commonly associated
- Symbolic - represent concept at higher level of **abstraction**
- Arbitrary - little or no relationship to concept, must be learned through **standard**



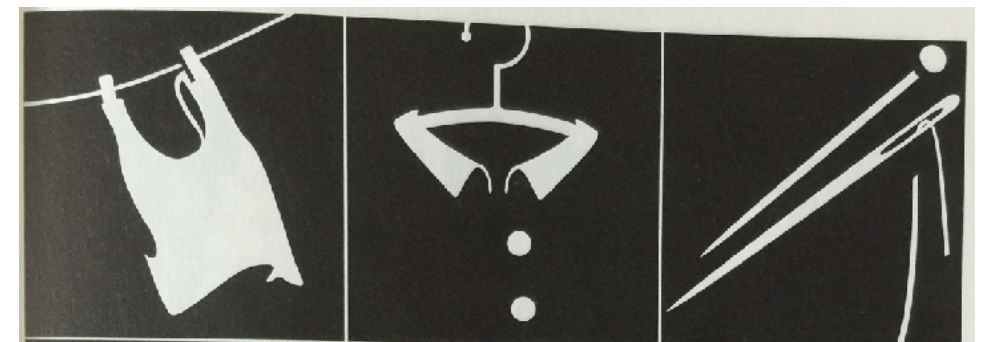
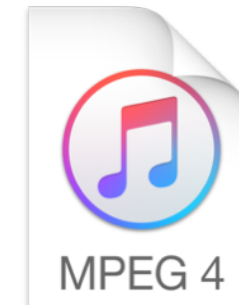
Use of abstraction

- Simplifying highly concrete, realistic representations makes them easier to interpret up to the point at which further abstraction obscures icon's semantics
- Makes icon more generic, more canonical, less complex



Principles of icon design

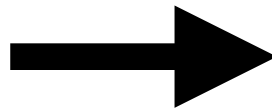
- Immediacy - can be perceived effortlessly & involuntarily by being **bold**, clear, balanced
- Generality - represents a **class** of items, rather than an individual element, by removing details that may vary
- Cohesiveness - set of icons that function **together** by sharing visual variables
- Characterization - call to mind one or more **distinctive** features



Selecting the right type of icon

- If concept is concrete, familiar, tangible, use similar or example icon
- If concept will be used repeatedly, consider using more symbolic or arbitrary icon based on convention
- If concept is abstract process or subtle, use textual label

Misleading Syntax



Activity: OS 10.2 Preferences Icons



Best 3, worst 3 and why? Then: How to make worst 3 better?

