



It is incredibly inspiring to see how the Visual Thinking community is spreading around the world. We process a dizzying array of visual information everyday!

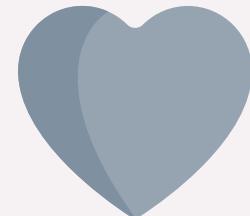


Advertising, social media, infographics, signage. We live in an age of visual information overload.



If you want to grab your audience's attention, it is no longer enough to simply present them dry data that appeals the head.

You have to do more. You also have to touch their hearts!





To win over the hearts and minds of your audience, you need to present clear information in such a visual way that oozes creativity, conviction and passion.

So.. Let's start.



The next level Basics

Taken from Visual Doing - Willemien Brand - 2019

For this lecture you will need



Block of paper / notebook

You will create some metaphors and you need a space to draw ideas.

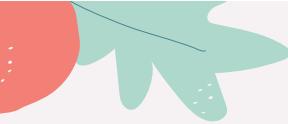


Post-it notes

You will create an exercise about brain-storming and card mapping.

Pencil/ pen/ marker

The selection of the tool is up to you. Use the one that is easier for you.



**You really need these
materials. So, pause.
Get them. Come back
with them.**



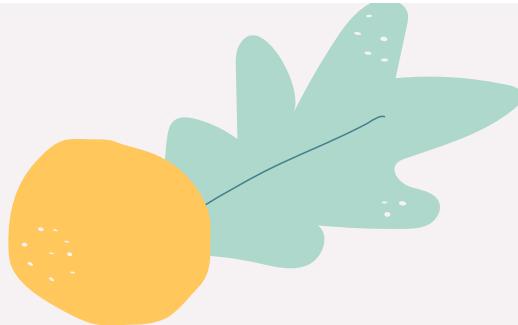
This might just be the most important lecture of the course if you want to take your **visual storytelling to the next level**.

You've decided to tell a story and you are going to do it, visually! You've thought about the goal of your design and selected the information you want to include. You might have even made a sketch or visualized parts of the design.

The basic skills and guidelines in this lecture are **the foundation of every design you will ever make**. You'll learn to:

- a) Prepare the visual
- b) Metaphors
- c) Composition and coherency
- d) Visual hierarchy
- e) Frames and connectors
- f) Visual articulation
- g) How to make a visual



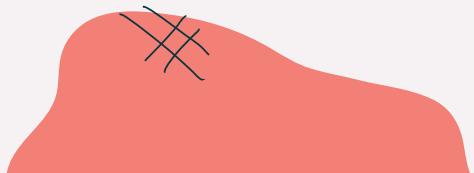


AFTER THIS SECTION,
YOU WILL:

- Realize the importance of good preparation
- Know which steps to take for a flying start

a. Prepare your visual

Determine your visualization goal and map your elements.

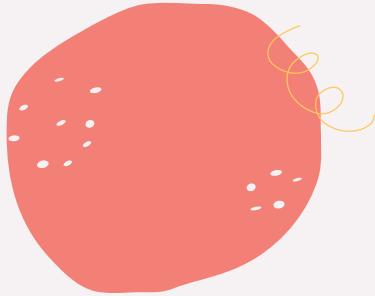


You have decided to make a design, because it will help you with problem x or y. That's great. To really make an impact with your drawing, preparation is key.

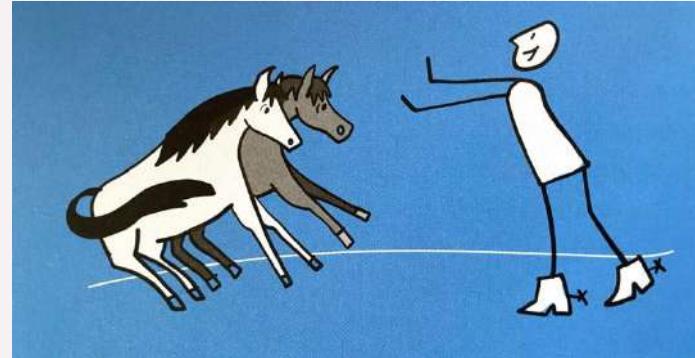
This section will guide you through the steps. You'll get a clear idea of your goal, how you want to use your visual and in what setting. Your teacher will show you how to map your content.

After this, you are ready to get down to creative work. ☺





First things first.



You are enthusiastic about the idea that you are going to make a visual story/design, you can't wait to start. **HOLD YOUR HORSES** for a second, and start by answering a couple of questions first. It will make you aware of your goal and the setting and helps you tune in to your audience.



**A few questions you could (OR
SHOULD) always answer
before you begin making a visual
design:**

1

First, ask yourself why are
you making a visual design.
What do you want to
achieve with it?



WHAT IS THE GOAL?

- inform
- convince
- activate
-
- inspire
-



2

Always important to realize
who your visual design is
for.



WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE / TARGET GROUP ?



3

The core message is vital!
Always make sure you know
what is before you start.



WHAT IS THE CORE MESSAGE?

Try to write it down in a single sentence.



4

If you are not there to walk
people through your design,
it's even more important to
create a self-explanatory
image with clear visual
cues to support your story.



WILL YOU BE PRESENT?

- No, the drawing will be printed or distributed online.
- Yes, I will give a presentation, explanation, workshop or interactive session.

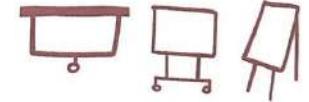
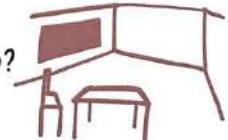
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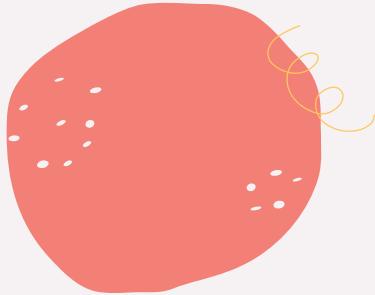
What if you have made a super big drawing and there is no space on the wall to display it?

Or nobody can see it because there is a stage and your design is too small for the audience?

WHAT IS THE SETTING?

- ▷ What is the setting and how is the room set up?
- ▷ How many attendees? 
- ▷ Is there a whiteboard, flipover, projector or a good spot on the wall? consider the wall's dimensions and the size of your drawing!





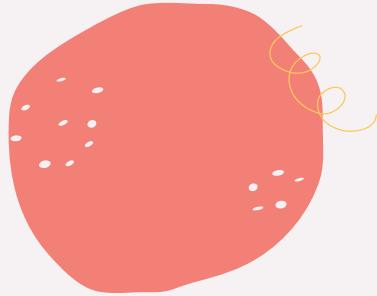
Sort out the *content*

The **core message** may not be the only thing you want people to know. There could be lots of other content you want to share.

To map these elements, **the first step** is to have a stack of blank cards or post-its and write all the pieces of information on different cards.

Try to **think of all possible pieces of content** you might want to use in your visual design.





Once you've written everything down on separate pieces of paper, lay everything in front of you to create an overview. Now the selection of elements begins. Be critical: Is there enough but not too much information to communicate your ideas?



Designers usually refer to this as “card mapping”. Stack cards together that are (inter) dependent.

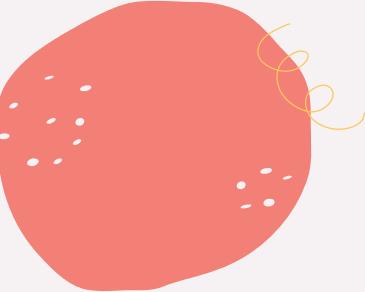


LET'S MAKE THIS WORK.

Grab your post-it notes.

The first assignment is a poster for a **Wellbeing & Culture Festival**. Use at least 30 post-its and write down on each paper one key word that you can relate to the Festival. Place them on a wall or a door and start organizing them. (TIP: do research about this type of festival to have a better knowledge prior writing your ideas).



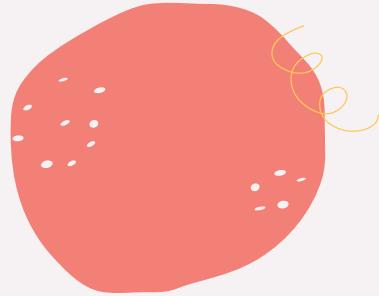


Once all the elements are determined, cluster or categorize them by identifying themes. Optionally, try to establish order by arranging them as you see fit/logical.

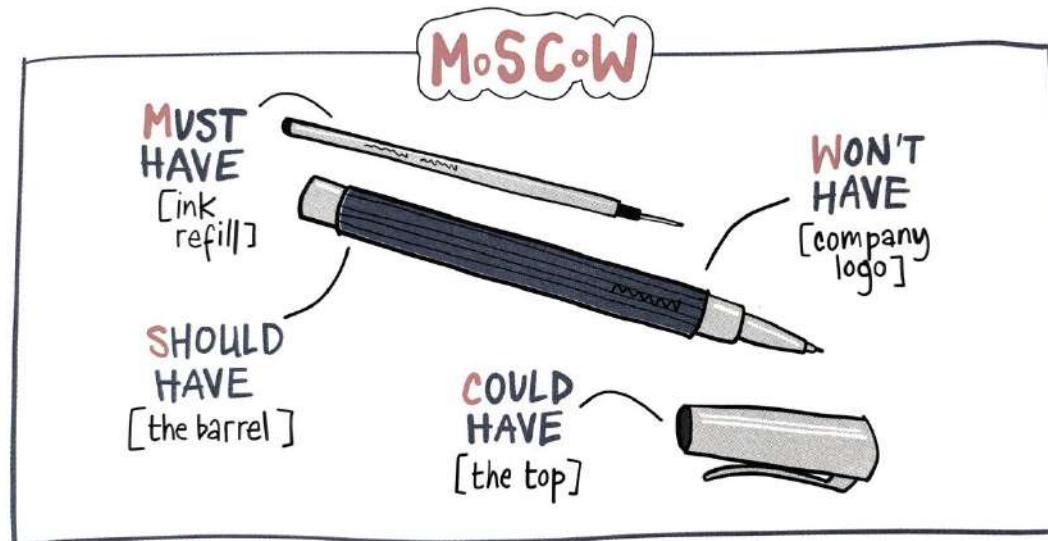
These tips could help:

1. Lay your cards on a table, door, wall, or on the floor, so that you can see them all. Give yourself time to look at the cards, perhaps rearrange them a couple of times and wait patiently until you see logic or patterns that seems important for your visual story.
2. Establish a hierarchy within your cards. Hierarchy is an arrangement of items, where the items are seen as above, below or at the same level as other items.



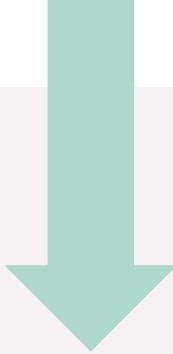


3. You can prioritize your items. Use the MOSCOW method for example, but instead of “must have”, “should have”, think... “must tell, should tell”.
The image at the side is an example for a pen.





Post-its ready? Good.

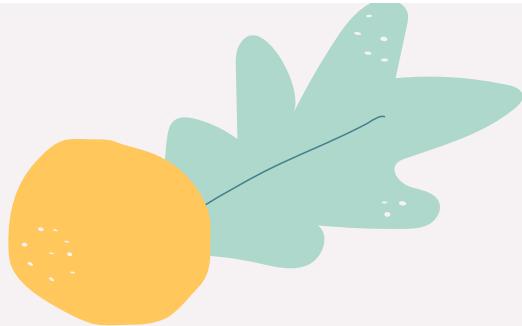


LET'S MAKE THIS WORK.

Grab your phone.

Take a picture to your final organization of the map (post-its). Remember that you are the one who defined the hierarchy, order and relevance. Save it. You will use it later.



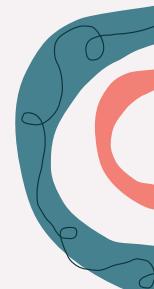
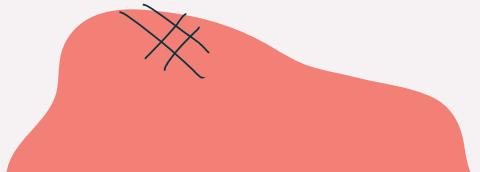


b. Metaphors

Find the right metaphor

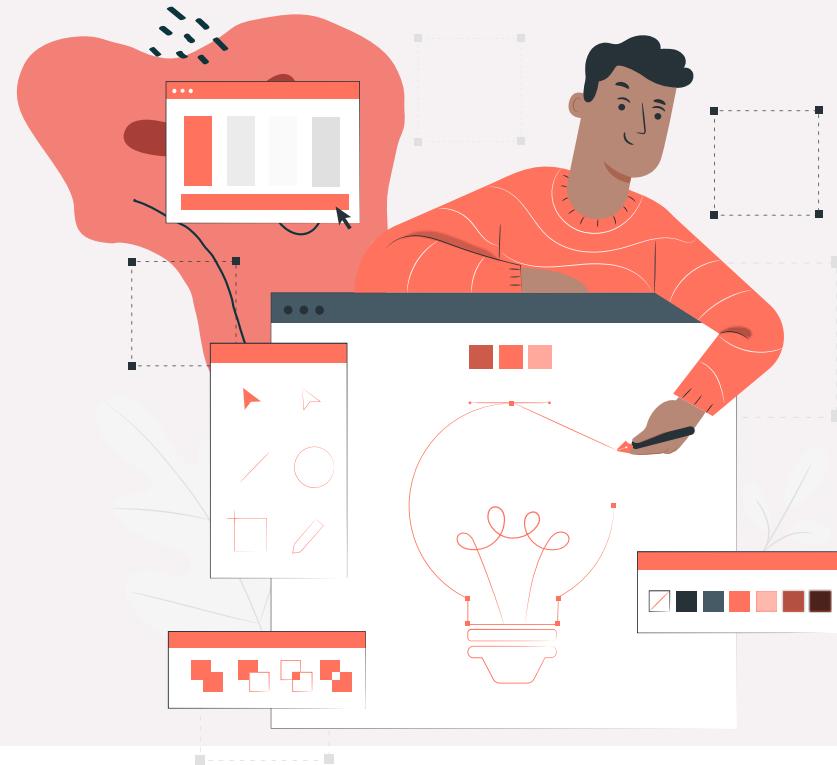
AFTER THIS SECTION,
YOU WILL:

- Believe in the power of metaphor
- Know how to come up with your own metaphor
- Be familiar with a lot of metaphors



According to the dictionary, a metaphor is a “word or a phrase that means one thing and is used to describe something else to emphasize their similar qualities”.

Metaphors grab people’s attention, they connect the audience with our story, and they simplify complex, abstract ideas.





The power of a metaphor.

As you seek to effectively paint a vivid picture in your audience's mind, the right metaphor will spark instant understanding and insight.

By appealing to the part of the brain that processes visuals, you help them make the connection between what they already understand through experience and what they have yet to discover.



AN EXAMPLE



The following example, a 2011 study about urban crime by Thiboudeau and Boroditsky demonstrates how metaphors are key to shaping beliefs and points of view.

In this study, crime was described half of the participants as a beast preying on residents (an animal metaphor).



For the other half, crime was portrayed as a disease. Those who read the animal metaphor suggested **control strategies**, while those who saw crime as a disease proposed **treatments**.



Simply changing the metaphor shaped people's reaction.

How to find your metaphor

UNDERSTAND

Understanding your subject is key to finding the right metaphor. “If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough” – Einstein.

RE (DEFINE)

Think about **how you want to use the metaphor**. For instance, is your aim to clarify the subject matter or inspire action?

IDEATE

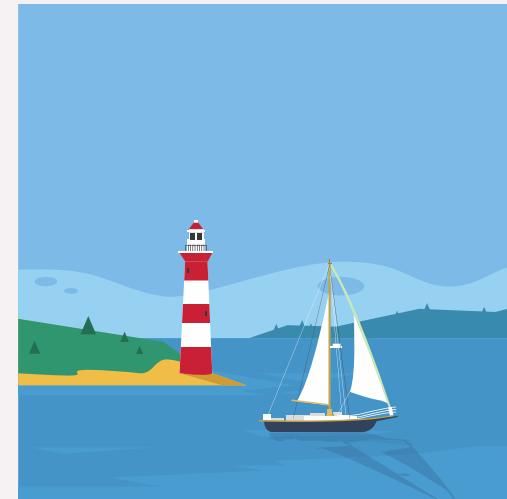
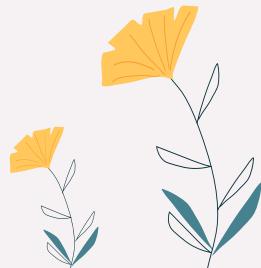
Write down the key words, characteristics, and ideas that pop into your head and explore visual associations. Studies have shown that **writing by hand activates** a different part of your brain and may even improve how you express your ideas.

VISUALIZE

Visualize your chosen metaphor(s) and see if all your story’s elements fit into the metaphor. Keep an open mind and make connections.

Example of visualizing.

If you are using a sailing metaphor, draw the surrounding as well. You can consider all kinds of features – the ocean, the weather, islands, lighthouses. You can then see if you can weave these elements into your visual storytelling.



How to find your metaphor

SHARE

Pitch it to outsiders. Provide them with context and ask for honest constructive feedback.

Questions that could help with **getting feedback** are:

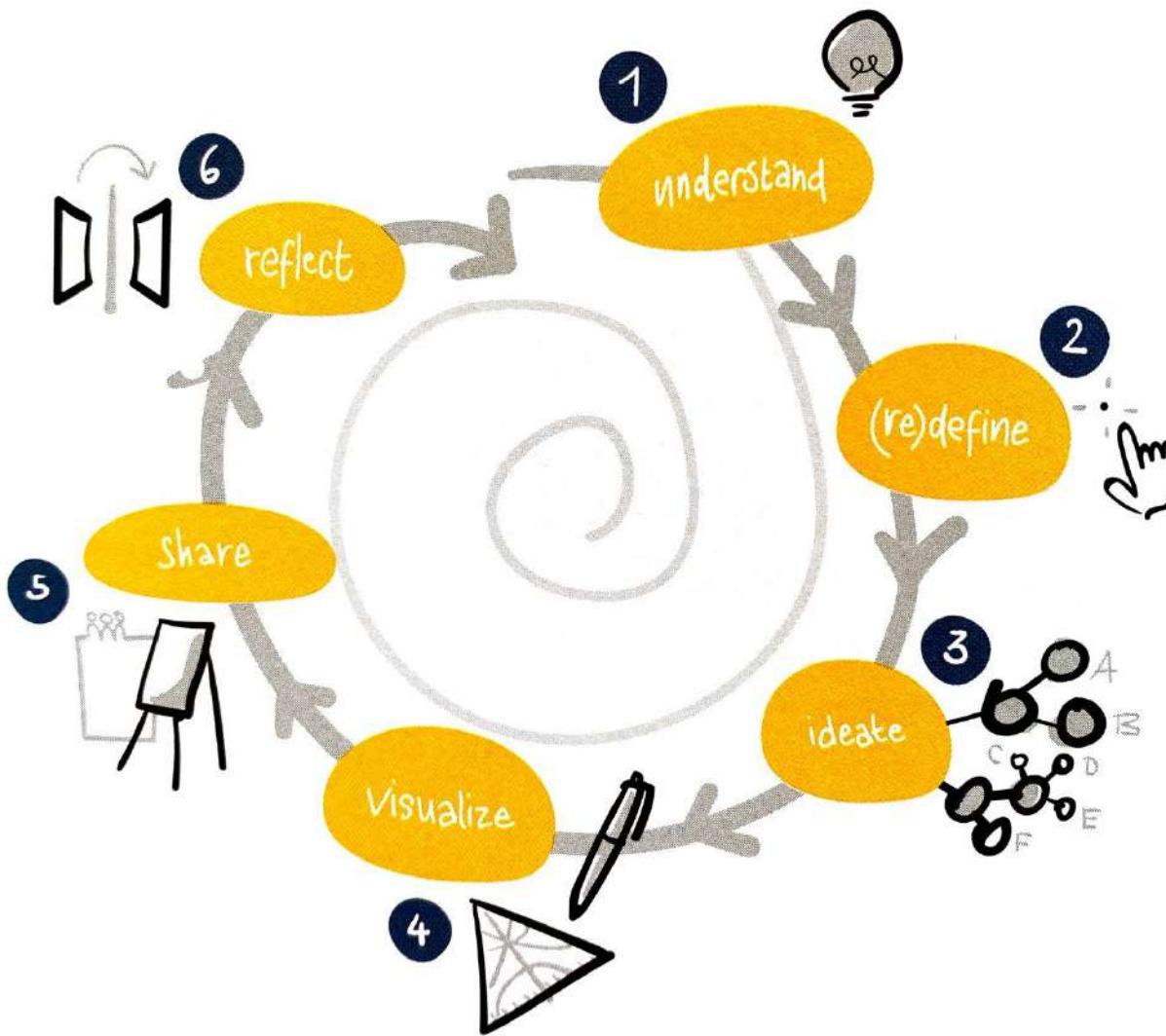
1. Does the metaphor provide more insight into the subject?
2. Do you understand every detail of the metaphor?
3. What do you think about the choice of metaphor?
4. Does it change perception or opinion about subject?

REFLECT

Reflect on what you have produced.
What belongs and what doesn't? A good metaphor resonates immediately. Some metaphors will be known very well by your audience. That can be a good thing, or it can become a cliché.



TIP: Pretend you have to explain your information to a six-year old and pay attention to any visual clues and metaphors you use when doing so.



This is the Creative Cycle!!! You will use it for lots of situations and processes when making designs. Trust me!



LET'S MAKE THIS WORK.

On the following pages, you will find a specific concept usually used for metaphors.

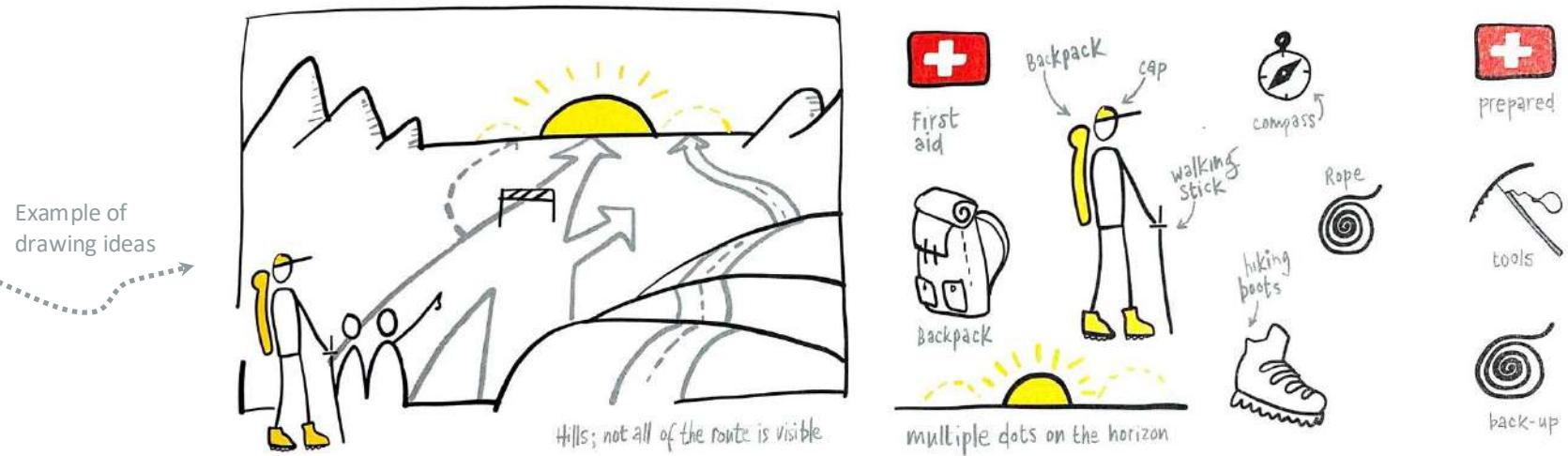
The following 3 metaphors (pages) are used as examples to guide you. The other 5 **are for you to create and think about a metaphor.** You need to create ideas and put your brain to work. So, get your notebook (or paper blocks) and pencil/pen and draw the objects related to the metaphor. Again, we are talking about the Wellbeing & Culture Festival.



Process = journeys

A journey is planned in advance, with a defined starting point, route or destination. Almost any sequence of events can be considered a journey.

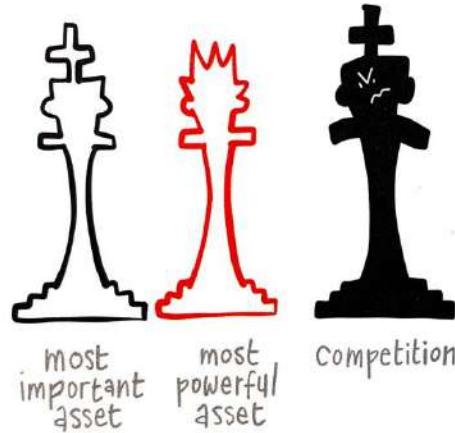
KEY PHRASES that allude to this metaphor include: “The way ahead”, “Mapping out a route”, ”On the horizon”, “Wrong turning”.



Strategy = Chess :

We use chess to symbolize strategy. Chess pieces have different values. A pawn for instance is less powerful generally speaking. Your queen is your most powerful element, and your King symbolizes your most valuable asset.

KEY PHRASES: Accommodating or planning, hierarchy, control, resource allocation, gradual, development, competition, and opening gambit, good (or bad) move, endgame.



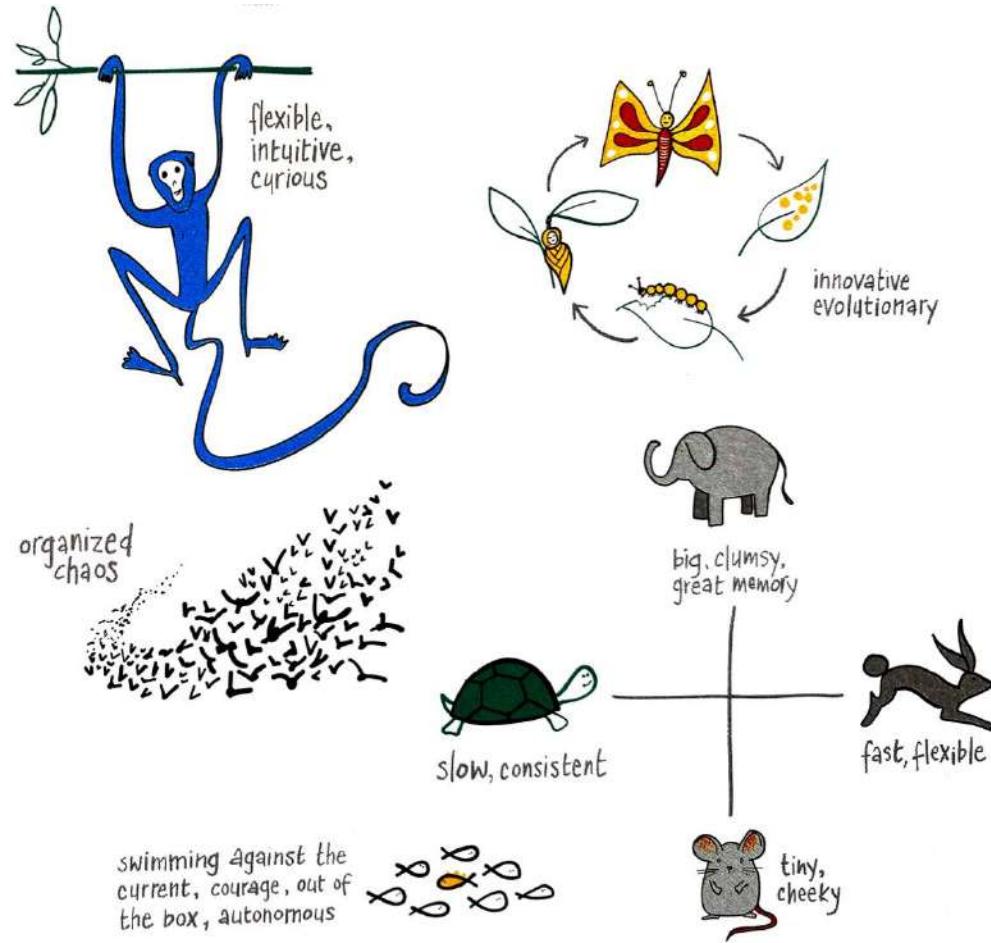
Example of
drawing ideas

Animals = behavior:

Animal imagery is very often mixed into other metaphors.
Pay attention and you'll feel like you are in a farm or a zoo!

Examples: Headless chicken, chickening out, monkey business, dark horse, red herring, elephant in the room, bull in a china shop, rat race.

Example of drawing ideas



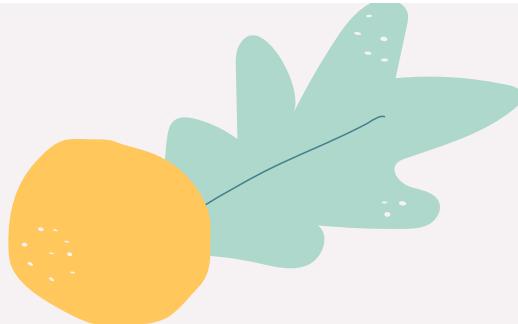
MAKE THE CONNECTION TO A METAPHOR.

Use your notebook and do the sketches. It is about time to rest your eyes from the computer and use your body and mind!

Time to invest: 5 min per each concept/metaphor.
(You might not be aware, but this exercise helps you with your assignment too!).

1. Companies = _____
2. Work = _____
3. Process = _____
4. Progress = _____
5. Organization = _____



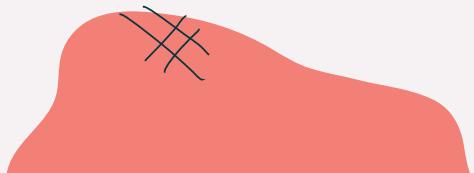


AFTER THIS SECTION,
YOU WILL:

- Know how to create coherency
- Be aware of different layouts
- Know what to do when a composition doesn't feel right.

c. Layout and coherency

Choose the right composition and make
a coherent design.



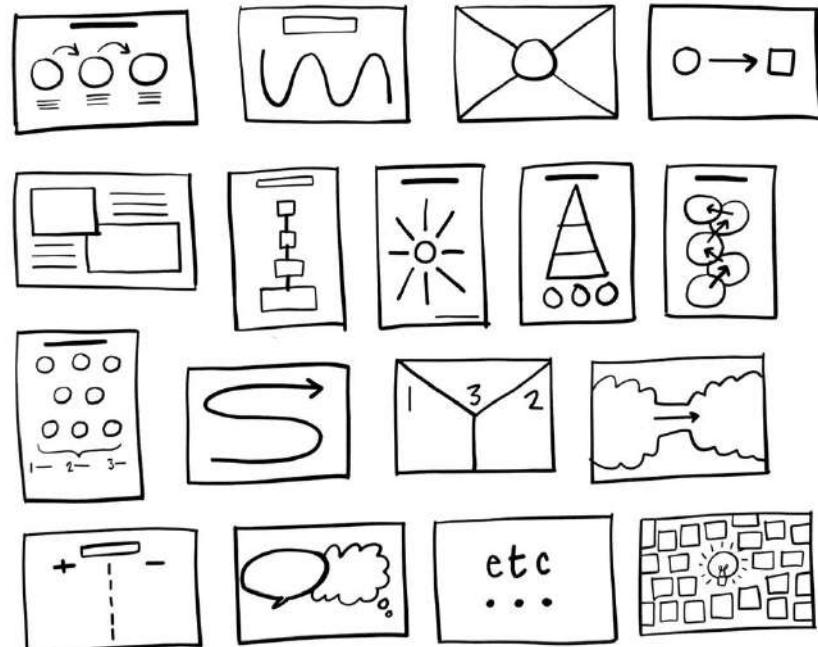
A **good** composition

The most beautiful visuals can become hard to look at if the overall composition is flawed. All separate elements need to combine to form a unified whole. We speak of a good composition when all the elements: visuals, icons, titles and text, come together to form one cohesive design.



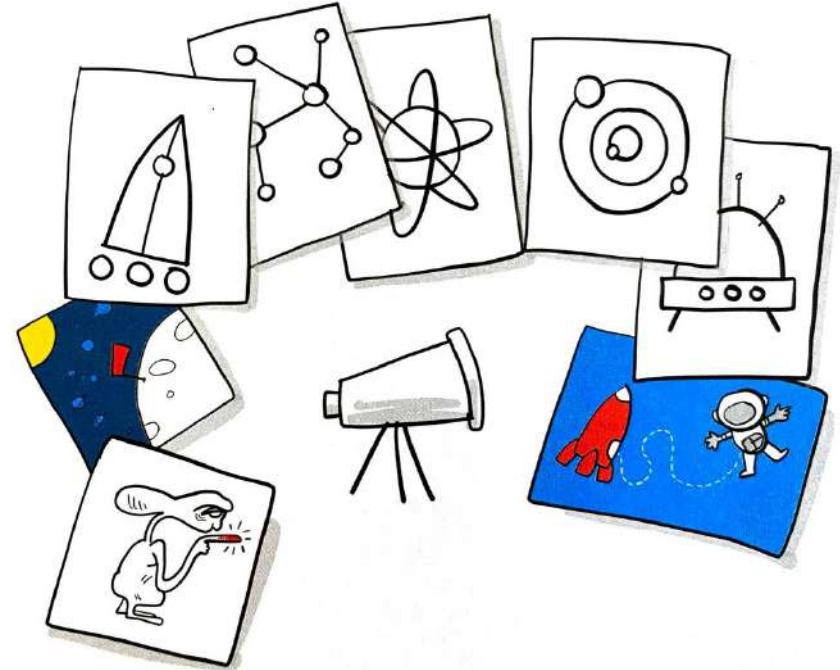
Layouts

- On the right you will find several layouts you could use as inspiration or base for your design.
- These layouts are a little more detailed than the underlying plan, but you can still see the plan hidden in the layouts.
- They are sketches, drafts.. You are trying to define the “visual design”.



Composition & metaphor

- Once you have chosen a metaphor, there are still a lot of compositions and drawings possible. The key is to find the most suitable one; the one that gives all your elements the spotlight they need or deserve.
- To find the right one, take a blank piece of paper (or a stack of papers) and just start sketching.



Metaphor space ideas

Coherency

You are visually communicating. In order to keep your audience's attention focused you have to create a harmonious picture.

Balance visual elements and organize them neatly so your audience doesn't have to do that for you.

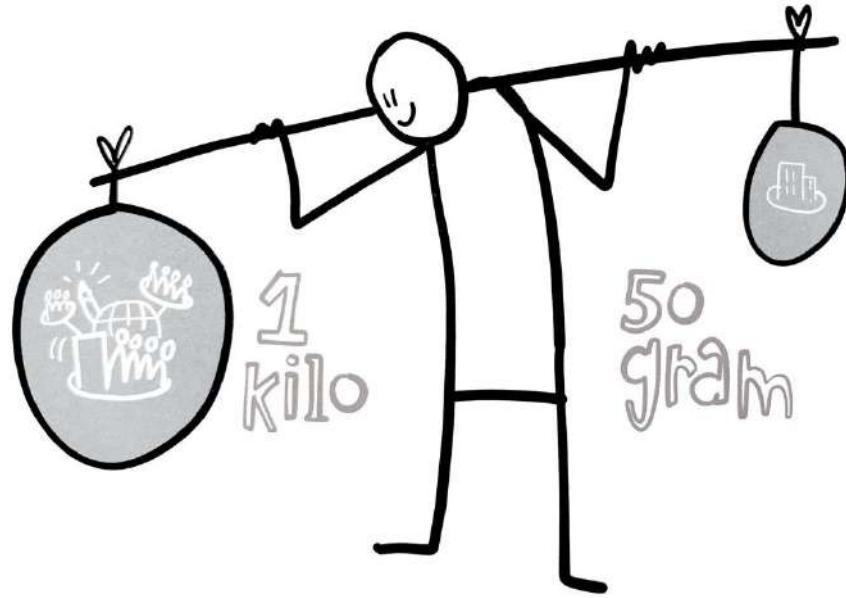
Coherence and meaning: repeat visual characteristics to tell people certain elements are linked or belong to the same category.





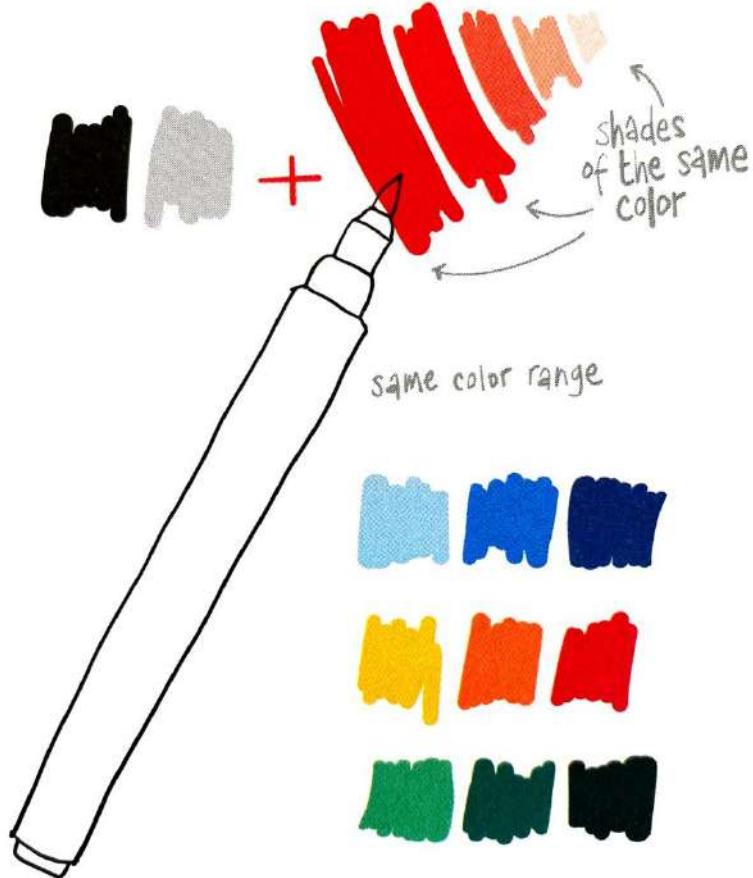
This can happen for example when you have a left-to right symmetrical imbalance by leaving a lot of white space on the right and none on the left.

A good technique to avoid imbalance is to think of each element as having a weight. Smaller objects might 'weight' less than larger objects, and heavily crowded elements might weight more than relatively empty elements.



Color scheme

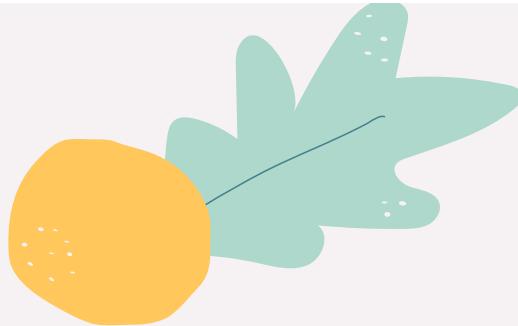
- A good color scheme is a simple yet effective way to create coherency, too. Color schemes based on a single-color tint are one of the easiest to use. This doesn't mean you should only use a single shade in multiple places in your design (although you could). Instead, choose one main color, and pick any number of variations of that color.



LET'S MAKE THIS WORK.

Take your notebook or stack of papers (block). **Define at least 3 different layouts for your poster.** By now, you only know that it is for a Wellbeing & Cultural Festival; but you can start defining the position of the title; the name, the date, the location, the images. Continue with this lesson. You will finish it with your assignment almost done! Just make a sketch and define where you will place the text and images.



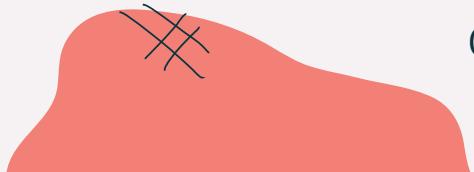


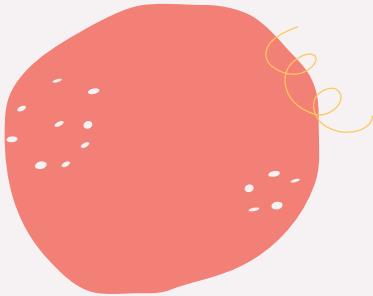
AFTER THIS SECTION,
YOU WILL:

- Understand the value of visual hierarchy
- Have learned different methods used to distinguish elements
- Know how to check whether a design has a form of visual hierarchy

d. Visual Hierarchy

Communicate clearly with a visual hierarchy





You want people to look at your drawing and actually “read it”. **As viewers, we see the whole before we break it down into individual parts.** This is important to realize, because once we have seen the whole and our focus shifts to see the individual parts, they (*the individual parts*) start to compete for our attention. This is where you want to guide your viewer through the visual.

When you have a good visual hierarchy your viewers can also scan and skim your design.



Focal Point

Your key message, idea or most important visual needs a strong focal point. Be sure to chose a focal point that helps tell your story in the strongest, most effective way. Here are some methods and examples of how to create a focal point in your design

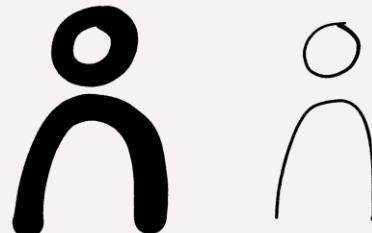
Black over gray

The black element is more eye-catching than the gray element, thus is “above” the gray element.



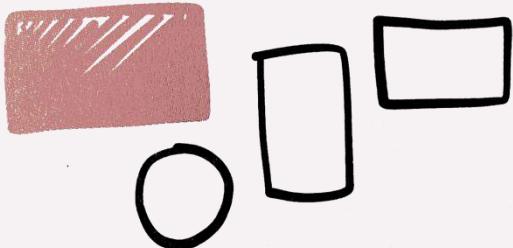
Thick over thin lines

When you look at the image below, the element that jumps out at you is the one drawn with thick lines.



Color

By adding a bright color to (a part of) your drawing you create a natural focal point. Color is a powerful tool. But be careful. Its strength can become a weakness if you use too many different or clashing colors. Less really is more.



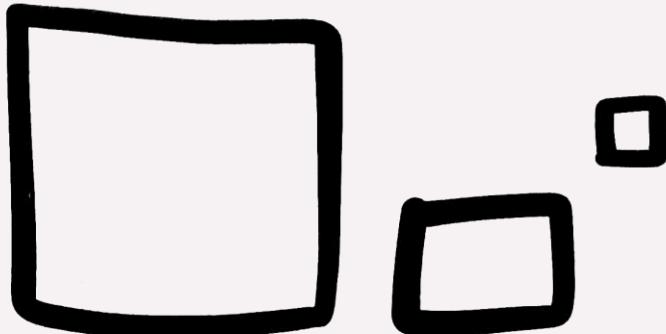
Positive use of negative space

Whitespace, often referred to as negative space, can be used to establish a hierarchy too. In this example (below) your eye is drawn to the part of the drawing that is the most dense and has the least whitespace.

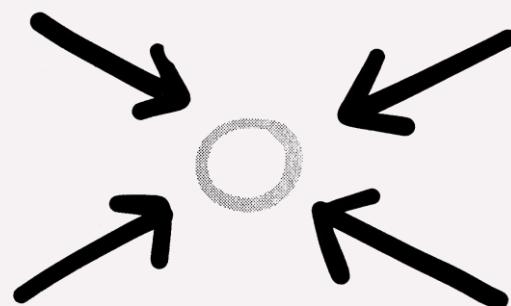




When one element is way bigger than another element it is placed on a higher level in the overall hierarchy.

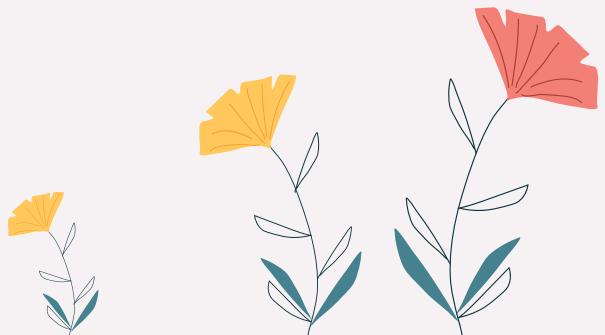


Literally pointing out where to look with either arrows or lines is an effective way to create a focal point.



Contrast

If your design has a white background you can create a contrasting (colored or even black) plane to draw people's attention to the information it contains.



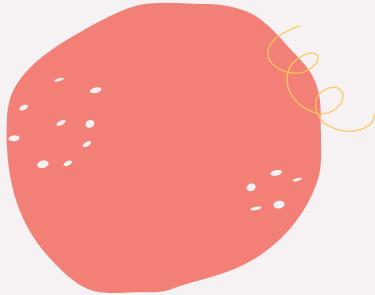
Just like talking or writing

If we compare designing to talking, think of storyteller who instead of talking louder, starts whispering to create tension and demand your attention. The visual equivalent of this could be using a lot of whitespace. If you are talking and you're using a lot of words than indicates contradictions... using contrast could be a logical visual way of expressing the contradictions.



Even when you only use text, a visual hierarchy is important. Think of the front page of a newspaper. The big, bold headline grabs your attention.; a photo and caption give a visual overview of the main story an bold subheadings break up the main text.



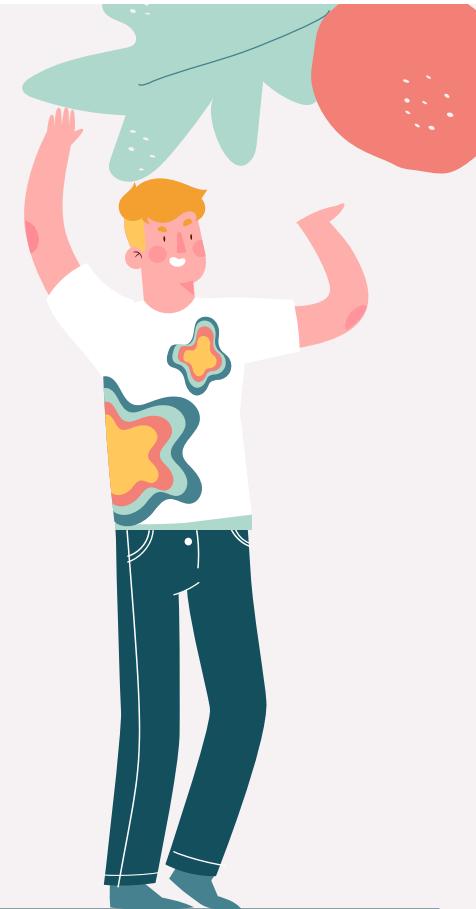


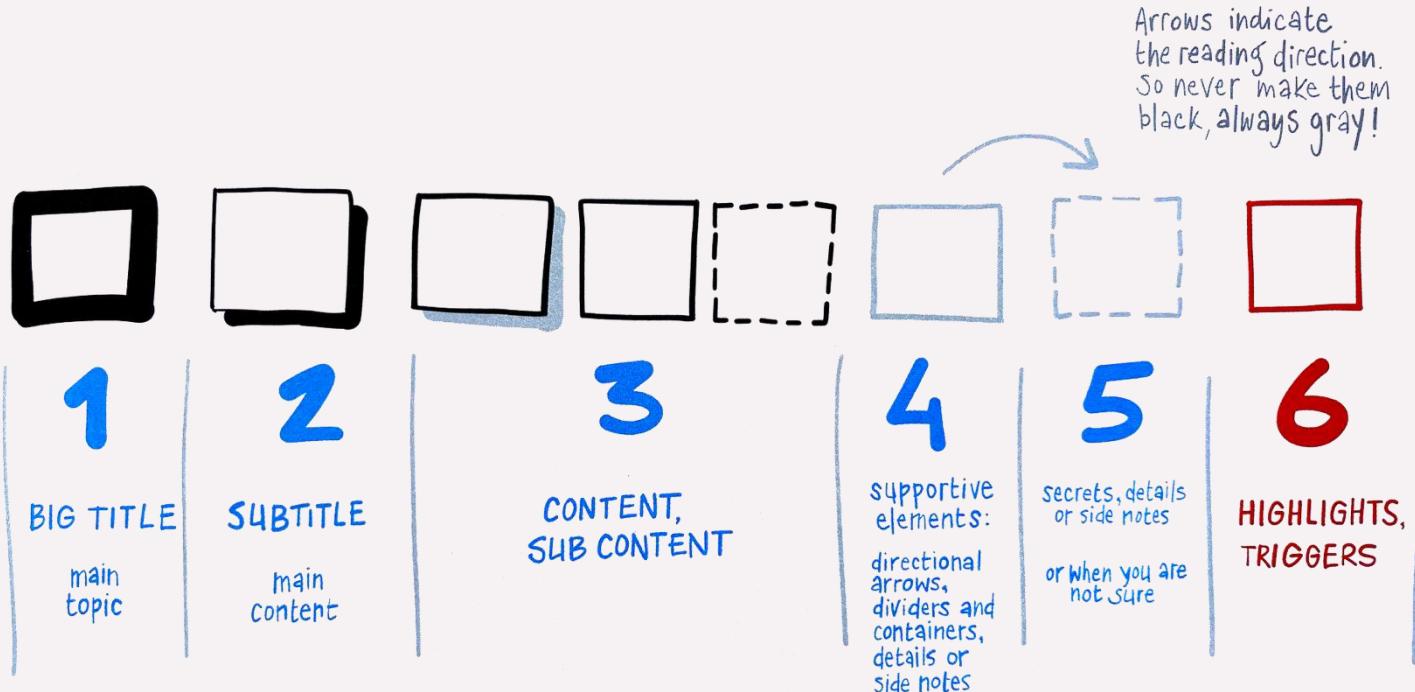
Hierarchy how-to

A visual hierarchy embodies more than just a strong focal point. It has more levels of attention. However, when you create a hierarchy in your designs you can use the same methods as mentioned before, you just have to extend and exploit them. There are a **few rules of thumb** that, to certain extent, we always follow to add visual hierarchy to our design:



- Your title is always important and “above” anything else (in terms of hierarchy). It has the same value of attention as thick black line.
- Change from thick to an increasingly thinner line to visualize something that is slightly less important (the subtitle for instance)
- Use thin black lines for regular content such as shapes and faces.
- Arrows and dividers are (almost) always gray. Often they are inferior to and supportive of the content and thus should not be black.
- If you would explain something in a whisper or if you are not sure about something, use gray dotted lines.
- Color can be added literally to highlight. Use this for the conclusion or summary, or use it to focus on something funny or exciting. Don’t over do it.





Tip: We would advise having no more than six "levels" on which you plot all your elements.

Tip: Not every element has a place "below" or "above" other elements. You can have a variety of elements on the same level as each other.

A visual example of hierarchy

Let's take a look at the design to your right.

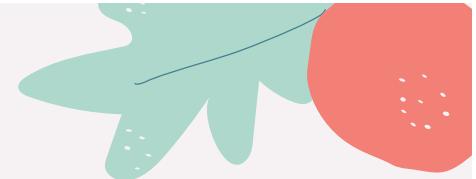


The first thing that catches your eye is the big banner that says Willemien Brand. Thick black lines are used and a color highlight the element even more.

The self portrait is the second element that asks for attention. It is one level below the banner but still very prominent.

The third level in this design consist of several elements: those located above and around the self portrait. Last but not least you have a couple of elements inside the body.

In contrast to all other elements they are drawn in gray, no thick lines are used and therefore they are on the lowest level of the visual hierarchy.





LET'S MAKE THIS WORK.

The poster assignment is for announcing a Wellbeing & Culture Festival. **Select one** of the following:

- a. World Culture Festival
- b. HEAL Festival (UK)
- c. CARE Festival (Europe)
- d. Festival of Wellbeing (India/UK)

The next step is to do research about the festival.

What type of people attend to this festival?

What do they offer?





The proposal must be developed for **this year's edition** of the selected festival.

If the festival **already has official dates**, you must use those dates in the poster.

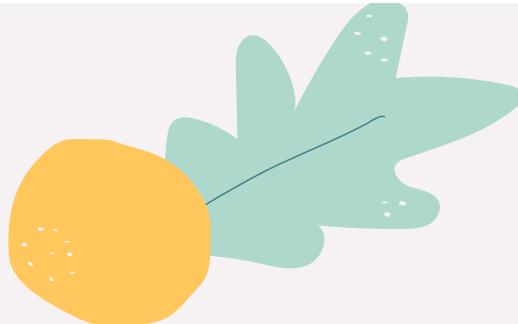
If the dates **have not yet been announced**, you must **propose realistic and coherent dates** based on the festival's context and location.

The design should feel **current, relevant, and culturally appropriate** for today's audience.





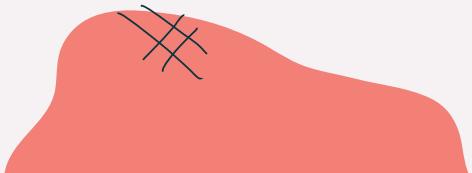
1. Once you have selected the festival and made a good research, do the card mapping and compare it with the one you already have; arrange the cards and classify them according to the parameters you consider relevant (you are the designer and you make your own decisions and ideas).
2. Review the metaphors you have written. Maybe now, after the research, you have more information about it. Write them down.
3. Review the layouts you made. Is there at least one idea that you can still work on? If the answer is no, do a new one. It is ok to re-think your ideas (you are making them stronger in concept).
4. Do some sketches by hand. **Don't go to the computer.** It is proven that if you use your hand to draw and land ideas, your brain will help you to create good and different proposals. Trust these words!
5. You don't need to use a specific font or color (by now), you just need to have the idea by lines and once you have it, the other elements will flow without problem.
6. You can include whatever you consider adaptable to the festival. Don't forget to include the place, date, and name.
7. Think about the target. You are not designing for yourself (never ever). What will get their attention? Let's continue reading and learning.



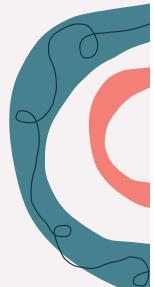
AFTER THIS SECTION,
YOU WILL:

- Have learned some building blocks to create a compelling visual story

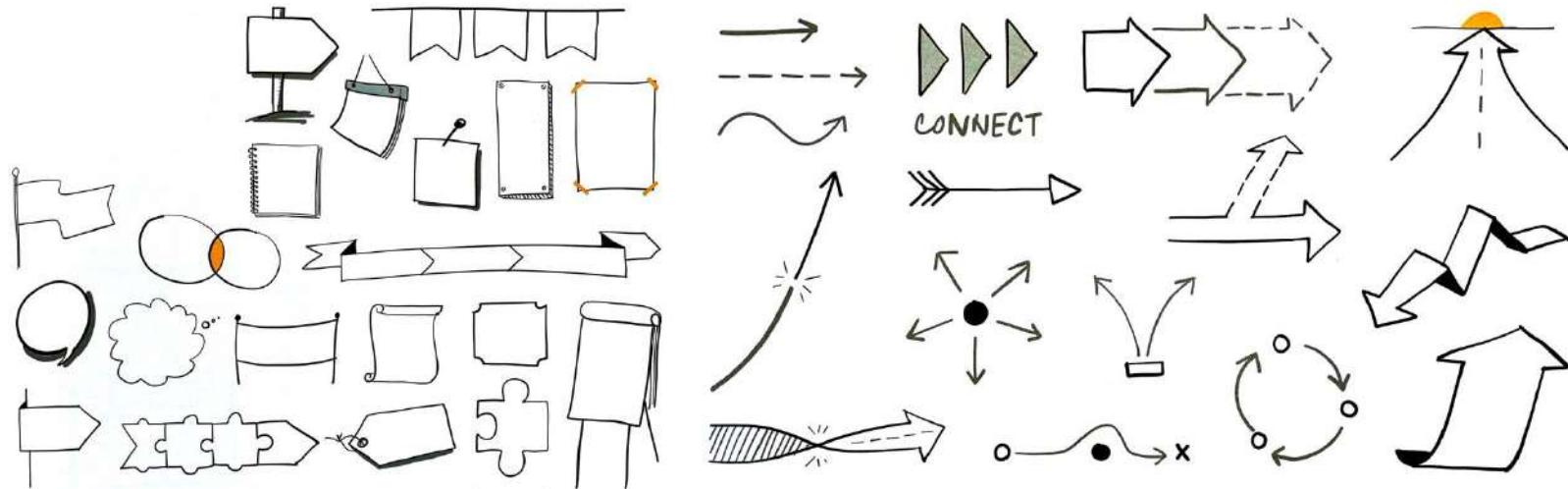
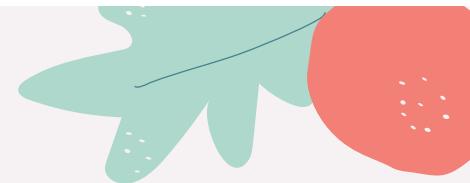
e. Frames and connectors



Learn tricks to frame and connect elements



Here you will find visuals to connect elements with each other, divide one area in your design from another, and visuals that contain elements or frame groups of elements.



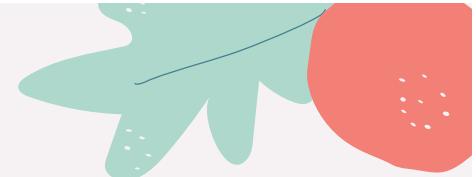
If you want to split up your design, use dividing line! You can vary their structure and maybe even color, but don't draw too much attention to them! You can give visual cues with your frame. The frames themselves can let people know what they can expect to find inside the frame.

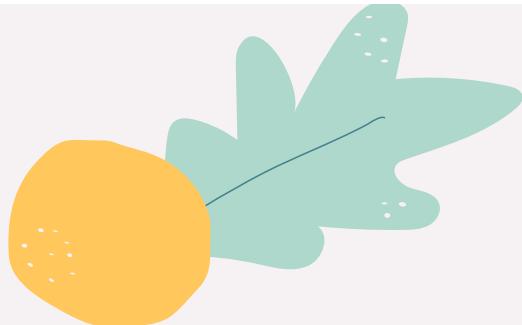
Remember that the goal of this activity is...

To create a visually compelling poster that communicates:

- Wellbeing and mental health awareness
- Community, connection, and inclusivity
- A contemporary cultural experience
- Clarity, hierarchy, and strong visual storytelling

This is not a medical or corporate event. The tone
should be **human, positive, and culturally engaging**.



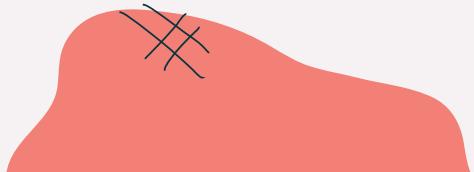


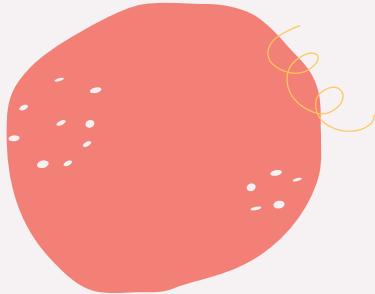
AFTER THIS SECTION,
YOU WILL:

- Understand the value of articulation

f. Visual articulation

Creating comprehensive ideas.





Articulate

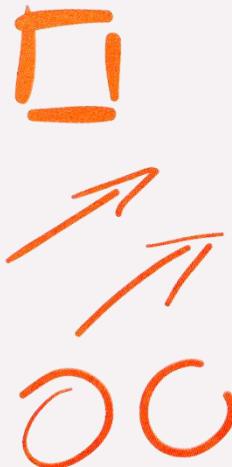
When you talk, you aim to speak in full, comprehensive sentences. You don't (or at least you shouldn't) stop midway through a sentence or leave it incomplete. When you are giving a speech, you don't mumble; you articulate clearly to get your message across. You have to apply these same natural and obvious "rules" when communicating through design. Because when drawing, it seems that these rules are not always that obvious. Let's break them down.



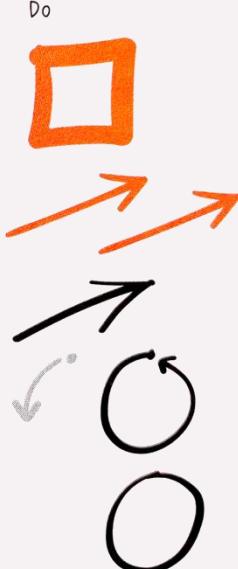
Close your shapes

Look at the 2 squares below. When your eyes look at the first square, they register 4 lines. Almost unconsciously your brain transforms it into a square.

Don't:

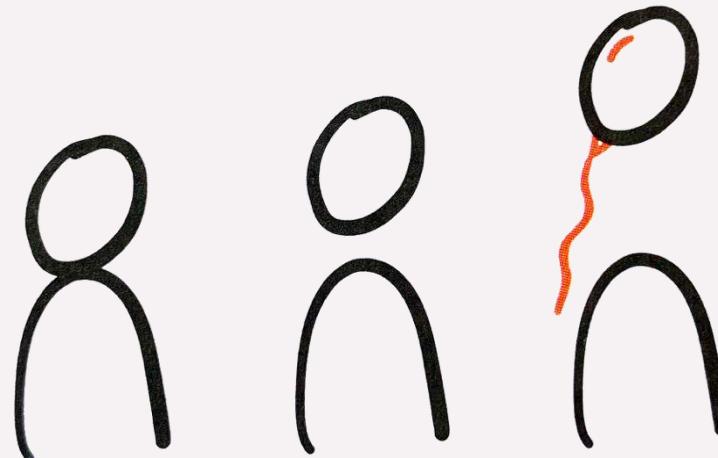


Do



Connect combined elements

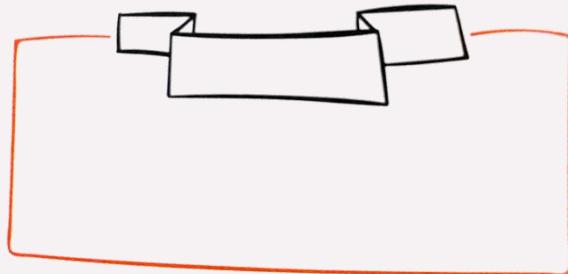
When two elements belong together, make sure they have a visual connection, as seen in the drawing below.



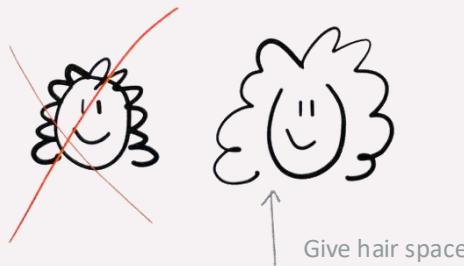
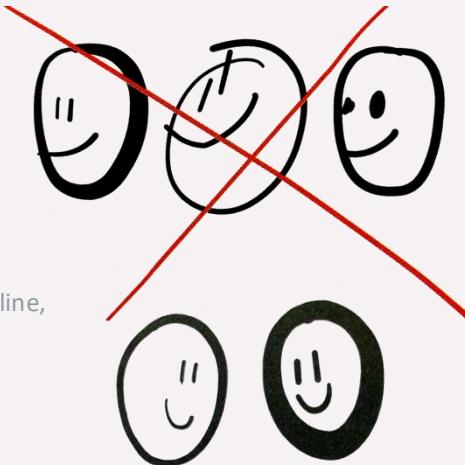
Separate different elements

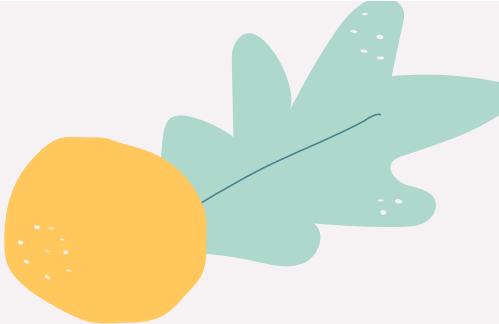
A simple example: when you draw a face, the mouth and the eyes have to be detached from the outline of the head.

A banner and a frame, or a building and a globe: the examples where you can separate the elements even more, visually, by using different colors.



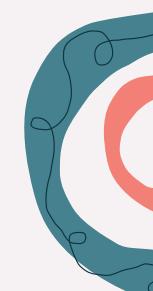
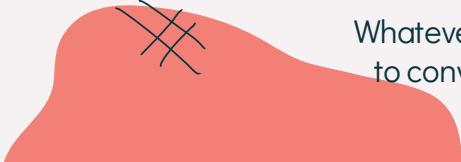
Don't hit the outerline,
keep white space
around the facial
expressions.





THIS IS A SUMMARY

g. How to make a visual



Whatever poster we make, we always follow the same steps: from divergence to convergence. From your starting point, diverge; explore all your options.

Next, converge; eliminate ideas that don't work and focus on those that make the most sense.



Prepare your visual

Prepare by nailing down the poster's goal and target audience. Note down all the content you need to communicate your story.

Metaphors

Come up with a suitable metaphor. In reality, people often already talk in metaphors while discussing the subject at hand.

Layout and coherency

Time to use the metaphor and design a composition. Ask yourself which plans or layouts match your story and metaphor. Sketch possible compositions. Once you have chosen a design it is important to check whether it is balanced and to create a coherent visual when drawing up. Remember that creating balance in a picture can be achieved by thinking of each element as having weight.

Visual hierarchy

When drawing the final design of the poster make sure your drawing has a clear visual hierarchy.

Frame or not to frame

We often draw a frame around the poster to bring it together and literally frame where people should look. BUT a frame doesn't always work.

Visual articulation

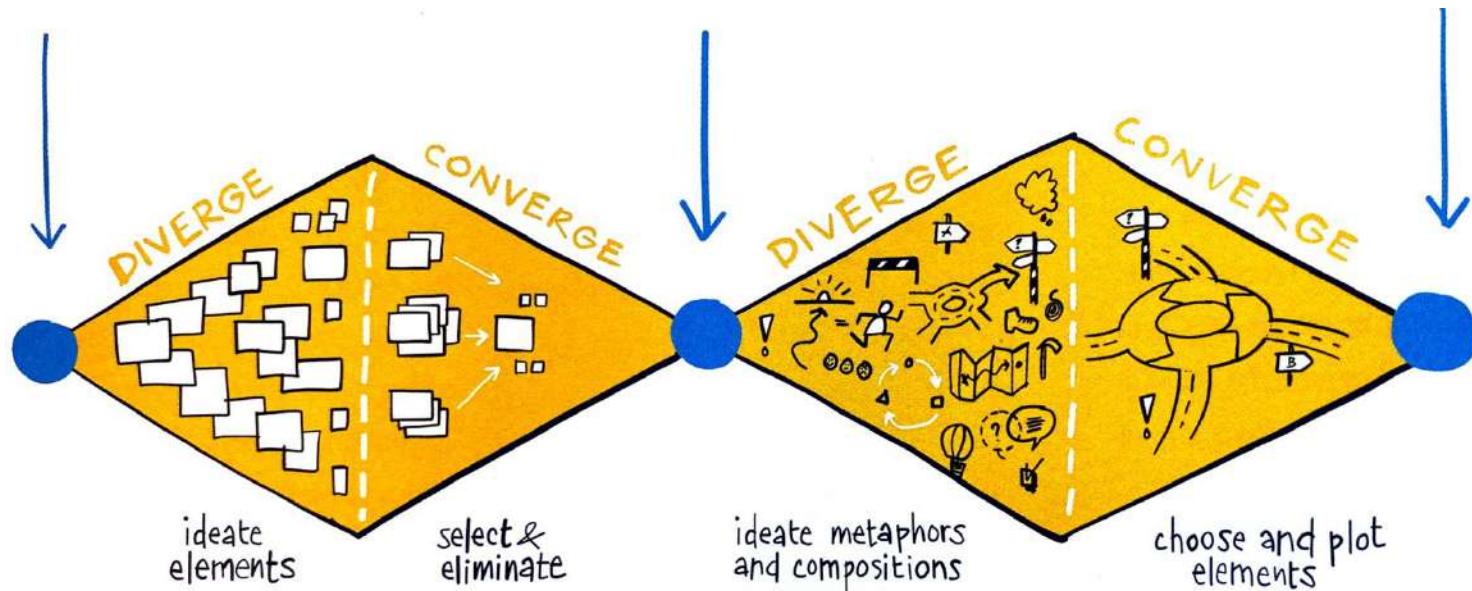
Draw with care! Be confident. You don't need to be an expert drawing things. You only need creativity.



It is not yet known what the content or look and feel of our visual will be.

It is clear what to tell and which elements to include.

There is a visual product (that can be used to communicate).





LET'S MAKE THIS WORK.

By now, you already have enough material for the poster. Consider the following points to complete the task:

1. Size 11 x 17 inches (tabloid)
2. Color Mode: RGB Resolution: 200 dpi.
3. Format: PDF
4. You can use adobe illustrator, Photoshop, Canva, powerpoint, procreate, etc.
5. Once you finish it, send it by email to your teacher. If it is a big file, consider to downsize the file with www.ilovepdf.com
6. Consider: No use of existing official posters or direct visual imitation. For this exercise ai should not be used.
7. Stock images may be used only if they are clearly transformed and integrated conceptually. Consider freepik, pexels or unsplash.
8. Save it as yourname_Poster.pdf (example: brenserrano_Poster.pdf)



Students must define and justify:

- Visual concept and idea
- Color palette (emotional and strategic use of color)
- Typography (legibility, tone, and personality)
- Visual hierarchy and composition
- Tone of voice (calm, empowering, inclusive, hopeful, etc.)

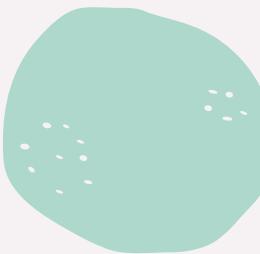
A short written (150 – 200 words) rationale must explain how the visual decisions support the festival's purpose and target audience. Don't forget to attach it to email. PDF too.

What we are evaluating.

- Strategic clarity
- Conceptual strength
- Visual coherence and consistency
- Appropriateness for the selected festival
- Ability to communicate wellbeing through design, not clichés

Stay Creative and do research!





Do you have any question?

Send your teacher an email or whatsapp.

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