

**Elements and Principles of Design**  
**Spring 2007**

**The following pages list five definitions for each of the Elements and Principles of Design. These definitions were written for the Elementary School Art Classroom. Children in grades K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade should clearly understand the Elements and Principles from these definitions and examples.**

**Please read each definition and circle the number from 1 to 5 that best describes whether each one is appropriate for Elementary School children.**

**1 – Strongly agree; 2 – Agree; 3 – No opinion; 4 – Disagree; 5 – Strongly disagree**

**Shape**

Shape is the form or outline of an object or a figure. For example, the picture shows a range of flat and solid shapes.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Shapes are flat, two dimensional (on paper) lines. There are two different kinds: Geometric (squares, circles, triangles, etc.) and Organic (animals, people, plants, etc.)

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

A line that connects tip to tip to create a form is a shape. It can be just outline or filled in.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

An area that is different and stands out because of a difference in size, color, or texture. Shapes can be simple like circles, triangles, and squares, or more complex like stars, crescents, and trapezoids. Shapes are flat.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

The appearance of something, especially its outline or form. Shape refers to the condition, quality, or state that something is in. It also means to form or make something.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

## **Color**

Color is a property of an object that reflects light of a certain wavelength. The eye perceives such light as being red, yellow, and blue.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

The eyes' response to different reflections of light. Ex. Yellow, Red, Blue, Green

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Color is what makes up the rainbow. Certain colors can be mixed to create more colors.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Imagine the world without color? How dull it would be! Color is actually light. For example, think about when it is raining and suddenly the sun comes out. The rain and sun together make a rainbow of color: red, orange, yellow, green, purple, blue.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Three elements of color are hue (the name), intensity (bright/dull), and value (light/dark). The colors we use most are seen on the color wheel and include the primary colors: red, blue and yellow, and secondary colors: orange, green and violet.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

## **Texture**

How something looks and/or feels. Ex. Rough and smooth, hard and soft.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Texture is what you see and feel on different things. Textures can be very smooth (like glass) or very rough (like sandpaper) or somewhere in between.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

The way that something feels. For example; a spiky cactus, a soft feather, or a furry dog. Adding texture to an artwork makes it seem real.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

The way something feels or looks like it has a raised surface. It can be shown by adding line work, a pattern, for example or by adding surface texture that can be felt.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

The feel or look of something. The feeling of the outside surface of an object or the characteristic of threads or strands that make up a fabric.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

### **Space**

Space is the area around an object or the area inside an object or the distance between two things.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

How near and far objects look to us. Depth is created in a picture by using positive and negative space. Positive space can be objects in the foreground and negative space can be the area surrounding the object.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Positive spaces are those occupied by the main subjects of the work. The negative spaces are the areas around and behind the positive spaces.

Negative space can also be referred to as the background.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

It can be shown as the difference between the objects and what is behind them. When depth is created by making a foreground, middle ground and background.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Space determines how close or how far away something may be.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

### **Line**

A straight mark made with a tool.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Any mark made by an artist.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Line is a mark that has length. It can be straight or curvy; it usually has a beginning and an end. If two points of a line connect then what is it called?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

A path created by an art material like a pencil or paint. Lines can be 3-dimensional as well, like strings or wire.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Marks made on something flat. They can be straight or wiggly.

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1                    2                    3                    4                    5

### **Form**

The shape of an object that is 3-D, like a person, or a piece of fruit. Like shape, form is something that is distinguished by a difference in size, color, texture.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Form is the appearance of something. If you can clearly tell what the object is, it has good form.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Objects that have height, width, and thickness. Form is different from shape because it is not flat.

Ex. A triangle is a SHAPE, but a pyramid is a FORM.

Ex. A square is a SHAPE, but a box is a FORM.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

A shape of something: example, to form a ball out of clay to give it a circle shape.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Form is what makes up an object. Form can have a particular shape and texture.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

### **Contrast**

Difference between the elements or hue.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

A principle that shows the big differences in two opposite things. An artist can contrast colors, like red and green, textures, like smooth and bumpy, and also light and dark.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

A big difference between two things: example, night and day, rough and smooth. Contrast usually adds excitement, drama and interest to artworks.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Two things that are very different from each other such as: black and white, dark and light, or thin and thick brush strokes. Artists use contrast to create excitement by making something stand out. An example is a bright full moon standing out from the dark night sky.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Contrast gives a drawing/painting the appearance of having different layers. The background is in the back of the picture, the middle ground is in the middle, and the foreground is in the front.

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### **Unity**

Unity gives a picture a sort of pattern instead of random designs.

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When all the principles used in an artwork work well together and make the artwork pleasing to look at. Example: Unity is created by successfully combining the principles of art such as movement, balance, emphasis, repetition and rhythm.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Unity makes a design pleasing to the eye offering balance with color and shape and leads the eye around a piece of work.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

It is the feeling that everything in the work of art works together and looks like it fits.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

When talking about art, unity is the word we use to describe the artwork as a whole. Artists use all elements of art to make their work look as one,

combined piece of art. Instead of artwork being visually confusing, you can form a relationship of elements (line, shape, color, texture, space, form) to give the visual image unity. Unity can be achieved in many different ways.

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### **Movement**

Movement in an art work can make the drawing, painting, or sculpture look like there is a sense of motion or action. An example of movement in a painting can be seen by a repetition of short and long, thick and thin lines.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

When an artist uses the elements of art to make the artwork look and feel like its moving. Movement is exciting because it often shows an action.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

In a work of art, color, lines and shapes can make an object look like it is moving. Diagonal, curved, or scribble lines create energy and action. A horizontal line is at rest, with no movement. A vertical line creates a sense of height, or an upward movement. Repetition of colors and shapes can also create movement, like a railroad track.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

When something looks like it is moving instead of staying still. Movement can be seen in drawing and stuff if it looks like the objects are being thrown, flying or something else.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Movement refers to the change from place to place or the actions or activities of a person's body.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

### **Balance**

**Symmetrical Balance** – When something is equal or even on both sides. Something is symmetrical if you can fold it down the center and its sides match up.

**Radial Balance** – This type of balance is when an image can be folded in many different ways and it will still match up. Some examples of objects that can be folded like this are circles.

**Asymmetrical Balance** – A balance is asymmetrical when one side appears heavier, darker, crazier, or anything different than the other side.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

The way the elements of art are placed to create a feeling of weight in an artwork. Balance can be *symmetrical*; balanced on both sides and top and bottom. *Asymmetrical*; unbalanced, with more elements on one side. *Radial*; balanced all around.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Balance is the equilibrium of all the elements into composition and work as in asymmetrical and symmetrical balance.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Equality, or inequality created in an artwork using different elements.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

If you think that a piece of artwork is even on both sides, or up and down, it is symmetrical. If it is not even, it is asymmetrical. If you look around and around and everything appears to be even, it is radial.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

### **Emphasis**

The part of the picture which catches your attention; the part you want to look at first.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

An artist can place emphasis on a certain element or elements in their art work by making certain things, for example, brighter, bigger, or bolder than others.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

When elements of design are arranged to draw attention to specific areas in an art work.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

When an artist wants you to pay particular attention to a particular part of the art work.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Emphasis refers to something that is given great stress or importance. It can refer to the intensity or expression or action.

1            2            3            4            5

**Repetition/Rhythm**

Doing the same thing over and over again. Can be a shape, color, movement, etc.

1            2            3            4            5

Repetition is when something happens more than once, like drawing 3 ducks in a row, or lots of pots on a page.

1            2            3            4            5

When there is a pattern that can be found in your work. It will repeat certain things throughout your work and make it appear like it is moving.

1            2            3            4            5

When some element or principle is used more than once in art. Pattern is an example of repetition using color, line or shape.

1            2            3            4            5

It is just like a pattern, shows a 'flow' or 'beat'.

1            2            3            4            5