Jake Smith | Gestalt Topic Page Discovery

The focus of this web page is to present the Gestalt principles in an organized, succinct, and engaging manner. Information will be revealed when the reader wishes to read more into what each principle is. It will be geared to those who have not yet encountered the Gestalt principles. The mechanisms behind how the principles work will also be included. A blurb about how it relates to design will be included as well.

We are bombarded by visual stimuli every day. In order to make sense out of what we see, the mind consolidates similar items into groups to simplify input. Gestalt is concerned with how these groups are formed and what effect they have on perception. For example, when you see a chassis, windows, doors, a hood, trunk, wheels, etc. driving down the road, you register those components as a car. Kurt Koffka, a proponent of the Gestalt Theory, famously stated that "The whole is other than the sum of its parts." Often the quote gets mistranslated to "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. All those parts that make the car are objects of their own that are built together to make a whole car, making it other than the sum of its parts. Gestalt explores the relationships that wholes and their parts have with each other, and how it affects perception.

The Gestalt Principles
These theories describe how people tend to organize visual elements into groups or unified wholes when certain principles are applied. These principles are:

Similiarity: Items that share visual characteristics such as size, shape, color, texture, or value will be seen as belonging together in the viewer's mind. The more commonality that individual elements have, the greater the sense of cohesion. An element can be emphasized if it's dissimilar, referred to as an anomaly.

Continuation: When the eye is drawn along a path, line, or curve. We prefer to see a continuous figure rather than separate lines. For example, the plus sign (+) is typically interpreted as two lines crossing rather than four lines meeting in the center. Continuation can take place going through an object, or be imparted by a line of sorts.

Closure: Imaginary lines called vectors or shapes called counter forms are generated by the mind to complete shapes that have missing information. Our perception fills in the visual gap, allowing for closure.

Proximity: When objects, even if they are different, are placed in a group, the objects in that group will be interpreted as belonging together. The collective presence of the set of elements becomes more meaningful than their presence as separate elements.

Figure/Ground: We separate whole figures from their backgrounds based on a number of variables, such as color, contrast, size, etc. Everything that is not figure is ground. Sometimes

the relationship is hard to distinguish, so one must clearly differentiate between the two to focus attention.

Symmetry and Order: Elements of objects tend to be perceptually grouped together if they form a pattern that is regular, simple, and orderly. As individuals see the world they eliminate complexity so reality can be observed in its most simple form.

Common Fate: Humans perceive visual elements that move in the same speed and/or direction as parts of a single stimulus. A common example of this is a flock of birds. If elements, even dissimilar, are moving in the same direction, they'll be perceived as being related.

Past Experience: People can generally relate to the same thing in the same region because of similar past experiences. We can see a black rectangle with red, yellow, and green circles and infer that it's a traffic light. Another example is how white is associated with innocence and black as death.

It helps to understand the workings of the Gestalt principles. The original Gestalt psychologists isolated these four properties that govern the greater workings of Gestalt.

Emergence: When identifying objects by sight our brains first match their outlines to more familiar ones we already know. Once the outline "emerges" we move on to finer details.

Reification: Because we often see things only partially, our brains have developed a mechanism to "fill in the blanks."

Invariance: Along the lines of reification but with varying perspectives instead of partiality. Our brains recognize objects' similarities despite differences in perspective, rotation, scale, or even slight deformations.

Multistability: If contrasting interpretations of an object exists, the mind will alternate between the two, but is incapable of seeing both at the same time. The longer one focuses on one interpretation, the more dominant it becomes.

Gestalt in Design
The Gestalt principles provide theories of perception, but they also assist designers in creating layouts and logos. Many of these principles are used in every project. For example, if there were different sets of bullet points in a brochure, it would be illogical to group them all together without some way of telling the lists apart. Use of proximity provides a way of distinguishing the lists from each other. They could be spaced out, or the heading can be in bold while the body copy is in regular weight. The design principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, and emphasis are derived from the Gestalt principles. They're meant to help organize information, visually enhancing a piece to impart a sense of identity, and guide the reader through a design. The strong visual qualities of some of the principles can be used to create thoughtful, interesting logos. For example, the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) panda has negative space that

the principle of closure completes, helping the brain to register the image as a panda. See how many Gestalt principles you can pinpoint when looking at an art piece, design, logo, photo, or website. If it's visually pleasing, there are likely Gestalt principles at work.

<h1>The Gestalt Principles</h1>

<p>(introductory paragraph)</p>

<h2>Similarity</h2>
<p>...</p>

<h2>Continuation</h2>
<p>...</p>

<h2>Closure</h2>
<p>...</p>

<h2>Proximity</h2>
<p>...</p>

<h2>Figure/Ground</h2>
<p>...</p>

<h2>Symmetry and Order</h2>
<p>...</p>

<h2>Common Fate</h2>
<p>...</p>

<h2>Past Experience</h2>
<p>...</p>

<h2>Workings of Gestalt Principles</h2>
<p>...</p>

<p>(Gestalt in Design)</p>

Headline: The Gestalt Principles
A modal gallery will be used to lay out the principles. Each <h2> will have a corresponding picture in the form of a card, and when clicked, the card will flip, revealing the information of the corresponding principles. A sidebar will also be included to display information about Gestalt as it related to design. I intend for the site to have a cool, crisp feel with complementary colors

used as accents. The color scheme will impart a sense of ease when learning about this deep, immersive subject. A modern sans serif will be used to write out the information.

Paragraph introducing subject

Modal: Pictures of principle with heading displaying principle above
Modal flip: Alternate color with explanation of principle on other side

Modal Two: Mechanisms of principles with information on other side

Slide out menu: Displaying information as it relates to design

<h1>The Gestalt Principles</h1>

<p>introductory paragraph</p>

<h2>similarity</h2>

<p>...</p>

<h2>continuation</h2>

<p>...</p>

<h2>closure</h2>

<p>...</p>

<h2>proximity</h2>

<p>...</p>

<h2>figure/ground</h2>

<p>...</p>

<h2>symmetry & order</h2>

<p>...</p>

<h2>common fate</h2>

<p>...</p>

<h2>past experience</h2>

<p>...</p>

<h2>workings of Gestalt principles</h2>

<p>Gestalt in Design</p>

Element	Layout	Container
Gestalt in Design	Headline	Half page panel
principles	Grid of 8 squares	2 column 4 row grid
explanation	Other side of 8 squares	2 column 4 row grid
workings of principles	Off screen panel	Other panel

off canvas sidebar

Gestalt Principles

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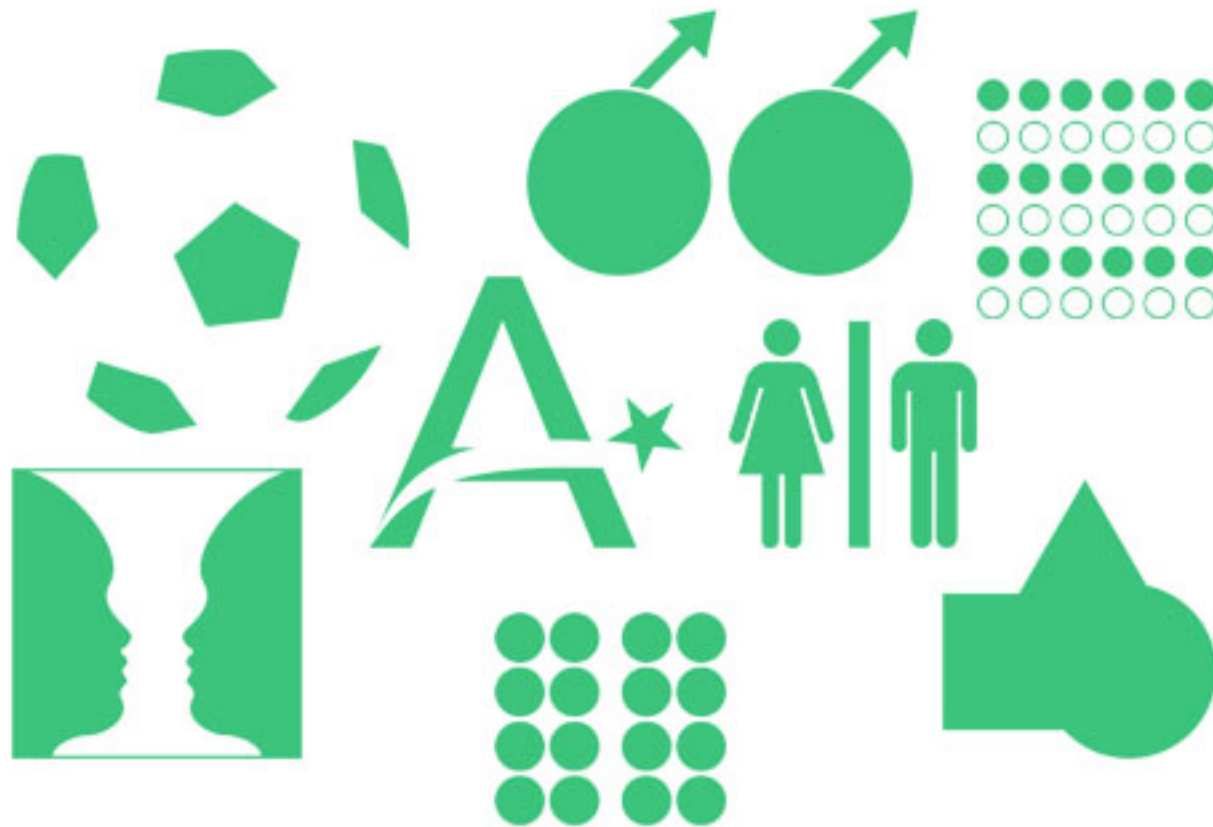
Gestalt Principles

#ff383f   #9bebf9   #e6e7e8   #3cc47c   #59deff

Style Tile
version:1

Possible Colors

This is a Heading
Font: Lato Black

This is an Example of a Sub Head
Font: Lato Bold

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis autem vel feugait nulla facilisi.
Font: Lato Regular

Adjectives

Clean   Casual   Crispy

Minimalistic   Organized   Slick

This is an example of a Button

Submit Button Example Here