Common Mistakes in Art & Design

(and how to use them to your advantage)

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In conjunction with InVision

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FOREWORD

Born out of helping critique student and peer work and consistently noticing similar issues, I started writing an ebook on tangents in art and design. Coincidentally, Invision approached me to write an ebook on Common Design Mistakes, which I felt was a much needed push to get my words on the page and out the door.

The PDF and ePub versions of this ebook are set in the Fertigo Pro and Source Sans Pro font families

What are we talking about?

How this book works

This book is about common mistakes in art and design. You got that much from the title. What I've tried to do is break some of the most pervasive anger-causing visual mishaps down into a few easily understood groups.

Each chapter is formed as follows:

- Explanation of a principle or group of issues
- Two common issues falling under that principle
- Examples
- Tips to solve it and/or use it

The hope is that by understanding many of these issues that you may be able to improve your work and no longer be haunted by the feeling of knowing something is wrong with your image but not being able to put your finger on what. Eventually, you may even be able to turn the tables and use some of them to your advantage.

If anything, you'll be able to engage in conversations at parties about tension points and alignment issues.

Terminology

One more thing before we get into this– Let's make sure we're on the same page here.

When I was attending art college we referred to many of the "mistakes" in this little ebook as "tangents," and I will primarily use that word throughout the book to refer to any one of these so called design mistakes. I was actually originally going to name this little book "Tangents in Art and Design," but I didn't think a lot of people would understand what a tangent was, or use that same terminology even if they understood what one was.

I've heard these tangents referred to as visual mistakes, design bugs or defects, visual blunders, or *that stupid thing that kept me up all night*. You may have heard of some of these items each individually called something else entirely, or have your own names for many of them. That's not important.

What is important? The underlying knowledge.

My main goal here is to educate on the problems themselves. If you're trying to help someone out by pointing out a tangent then my advice would be to do so by explaining to them the underlying reasons why they should or should not be using one.
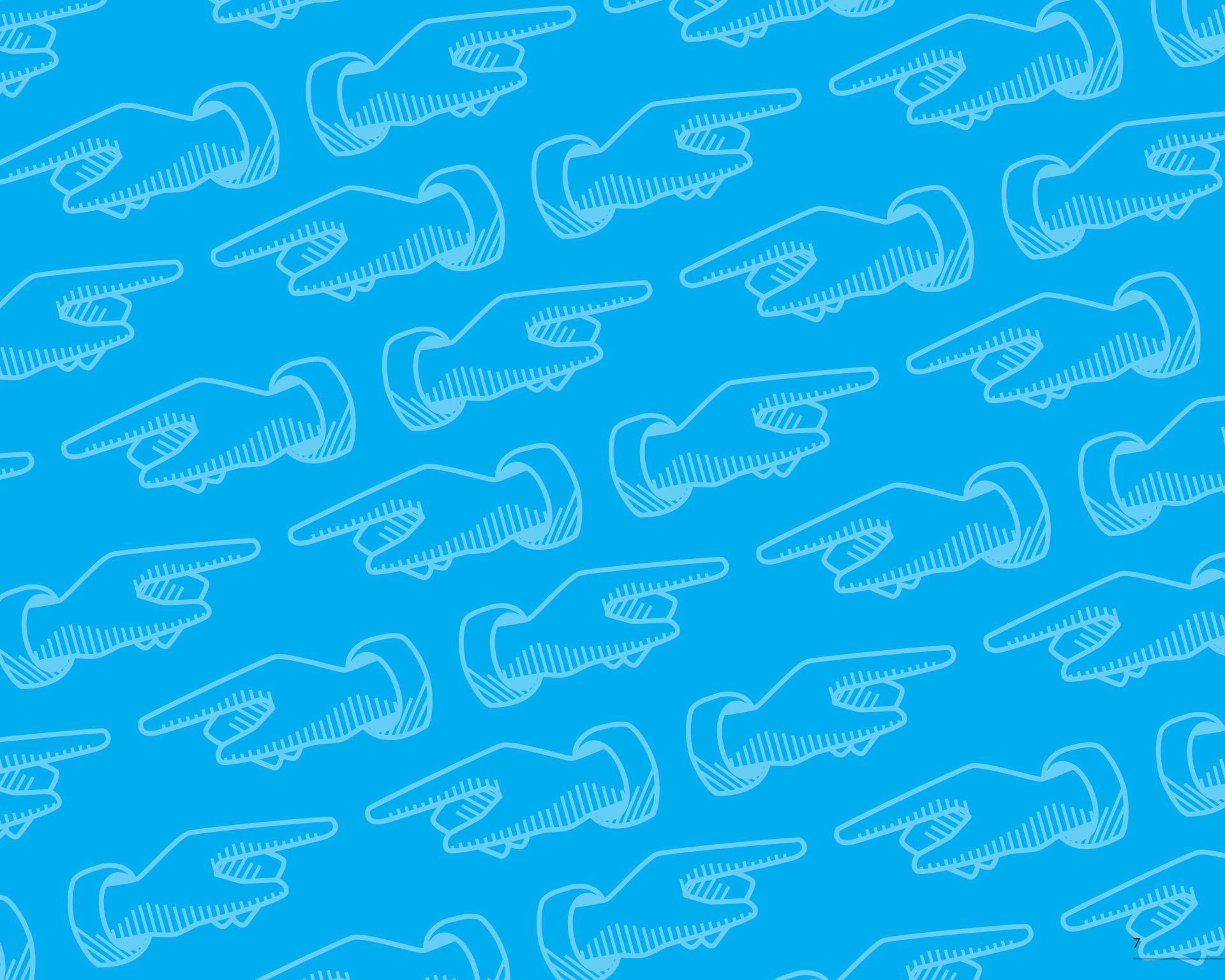
Tension

The overarching principle

Visual tension, put simply, is when things get too close together. The general reasons you don't want visual tension, like many tangents, is that it is usually either very distracting, or very uncomfortable to view. Most commonly referred to as simply a "tension point," it could refer to the lack of white space between items, or two items actually touching.

Although it seems like a simple concept, visual tension is one of the most common issues found in art and design. I made a point of placing tension first in this book, as I feel it is one of the most important issues for anyone working in a visual medium to watch out for or use to their advantage.

Tension with the frame

What it is

Pretty self-explanatory, this is when anything comes too close to the frame of an image, or actually touches it ever so slightly.

This particular sub item of visual tension is most commonly seen in photographs. In fact, it's made a huge resurgence recently with group selfies. When people are trying to take a photo of themselves and are cramming too many people into the frame someone's face usually gets jammed against the edge.

Tips to solve it

- Move the item away from the edge of the frame
- Add more canvas
- If it's someone's head brushing the top of the canvas, choose to add canvas or make the decision to actually crop more of it off

Use it

- Advertising animating in along the frame catches people's attention

Notice in this Abandoned Dust Bowl Home (original, right) how awkward it would feel if the tip of the house were to come close to the edge of the frame. The original photographer, Dorothea Lange, understood that she could emphasize how lonely the house seems if she surrounded it with white space instead of trying to center it in view and fill the frame with it like many amateur photographers might have. That draw to try and fill the frame with the subject matter is what usually leads to tension with the frame.

Abandoned Dust Bowl Home
Dorothea Lange
about 1935 – 1940

Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

Tension between elements

What it is

When two or more elements in an image either touch or come too close is when tension is created. This tension is compounded further if one or more of those items is pointed, the pointed end being the one coming close to another element.

Breathability in an illustration or design is often not a consideration at front of mind. We try to rearrange content so it makes sense and flows well, or try and fit it all in one area, but all we end up doing here is making things uncomfortable to read.

This is the most common tangent I come across.

It's also the most common I see used on purpose.

Tips to solve it

- Add white space between them
- Change their shapes so they don't point at each other so much
- If they're people in an illustration, try a slightly different pose
- Readjust other elements to match the same amount of spacing between these elements

Use it

Tension is one of the easiest ways to grab people's attention and is often part of the focus in many images, like in the famous Sistine Chapel ceiling.
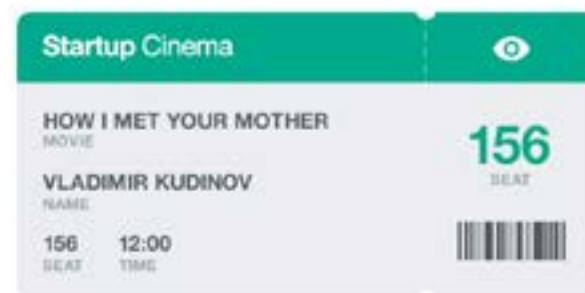
The tension point as the fingers are about to touch in Michelangelo's famous Creation of Man draws the viewer in on purpose.

Creation of Man
Michelangelo Buonarroti
1508-1512

What could have been a fairly nice and clean layout of content in this website is distracted by the copy coming very close to the element to its right, creating a tension point.

Alignment issues

The overarching principle

In practical art and design education, many of us are taught about grids and their importance in image layout, but self-taught creators may not know much about grids and how they work. From the golden ratio and rule of thirds, to advanced grid theory, grids are the invisible bones that guide the paint and building blocks when you're creating an image.

They deserve respect!

With proper understanding of grids, you can more easily create visual hierarchies and guide the eye through your images. Though, where the particular alignment issues we're talking about in this chapter come in are more for the people out there who *accidentally* align things in their images, creating the illusion of a grid or hierarchy where there in fact was not intended to be any.

Accidental alignment

What it is

When the edges, vertices (corners), or apexes (usually in symmetrical items), line up along a similar axis.

As an illustrator you might be composing a night scene of a house and you draw the door right under the point of the roof, and the moon directly above that, all distracting from that well drawn zombie lurking off to the side. As a designer, you may be creating a layout and not realize that a couple of your buckets are aligning to each other, then aligning with the image you chose above them, and then aligning to copy above that, all creating a straight line that distracts from the call to action actually on the side of the page and not along that axis you've created.

Tips to solve it

- Move the items away from the similar axis
- Redraw the items so they aren't symmetrical

Use it

A lot of talented illustrators and designers use these same alignment techniques to their benefit. What if the call to action for the page was along the same axis as all of the design elements? This may or may not enhance a user's drive to click that call to action, or at the very least to see it faster. In the night time scene for the illustrator, key points of interest could be aligned in a trail towards the zombie, instead of working against it.

In this simple vector illustration you can see how in the image on the left things are beginning to clutter around a central axis, creating accidental alignment. However, the image on the right has taken many efforts towards creating a more interesting and less awkward feeling composition.

Perceived grid

What it is

Very similar in principle to accidental alignment, a perceived grid is compounded by multiple unintentional alignment issues and usually then one or two items that do not follow the same alignment as everything else.
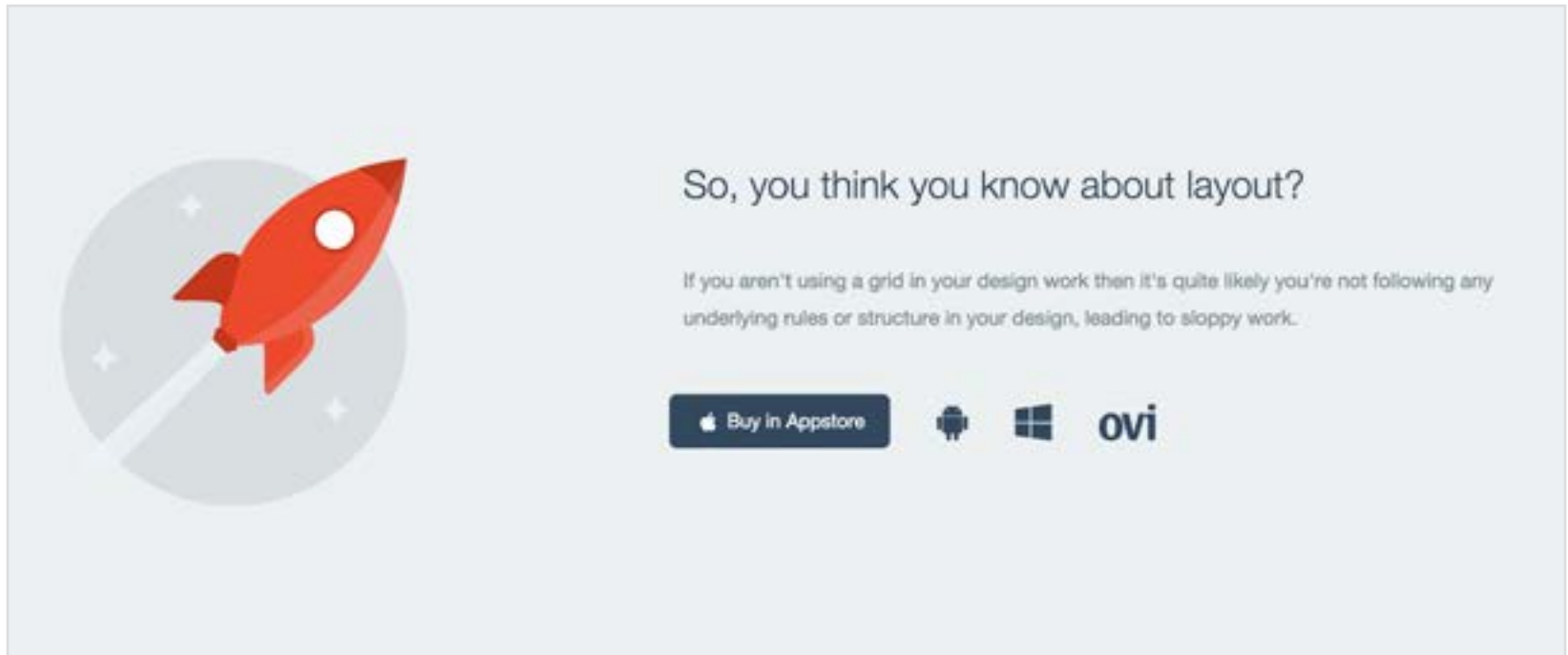
You see this a lot in quicker mock-ups or from designers who are less knowledgeable about grids in general. They know that something feels right when certain things align, but don't really know why, tending to have a few stray elements that don't seem to align to anything at all. It seems like you have a structure there, but you were possibly just moving things around on the page to try and get a good flow and then stopped when that flow felt right, not making sure it still made sense with an underlying grid or helped maintain other hierarchies and visual structures in your design.

Tips to solve it

- Start your work with a grid and keep that grid turned on throughout the process to help guide you (even the PDF version of this ebook was designed with a grid in place)
- Adjust the alignment of the stray items to cooperate with the items that appear to be adhering to a grid

Use it

Occasionally you'll see a really smart designer breaking the grid on purpose to draw attention to something. Everything else on the page is nicely aligned except for that one item. This is when breaking the grid or alignment of any object can be a good thing. If everything in an image is one way and you suddenly make an element another way, people will notice something is amiss.

So, you think you know about layout?

If you aren't using a grid in your design work then it's quite likely you're not following any underlying rules or structure in your design, leading to sloppy work.

 Buy in Appstore   ovi

Looking at this fake website content bucket, the CTA breaks the alignment of the perceived underlying grid ever so slightly, poking out a few pixels to the left. This could be because the designer didn't use a grid, or because they were intentionally breaking that grid to draw the eye's attention to their CTA. If it was on purpose, they could test grid breaking CTAs to see if they get more attention on their website or not.

Diversions and distractions

The overarching principle

This tangent is one of the most common. If you like your art history you'll start to notice these used intentionally in a lot of classical art.

The basic idea here is that people will generally look wherever something is pointing or where someone else is looking. Maybe it's society, or the way we're raised? It just seems ingrained in us to look wherever an arrow is pointing, even if it doesn't seem to have to do with the current task at hand.

Pointing elements

What it is

It might literally be an arrow, or it may just be a pointed object, but people tend to look wherever it's pointing. We all understand and see on a daily basis that one of the easiest ways to get someone to look at something is to point a giant flashing arrow at it.

You may see this used a little bit more accidentally, or cleverly, in illustrations. Some painters and illustrators may have the hand of someone in a scene subtly pointing to their signature on the piece, for example, as a gentle little easter egg for the viewer.

You also need to be careful though, as unintentionally pointed items in your image can not only distract people but also conjure imposing and threatening feelings as well. Think of the family standing in a cave trying to take a family photo, but all you see is little Timmy standing underneath a precarious and pointed stalactite protruding from above.

Tips to solve it

- If it's a character's hand or limb, redraw it in a different pose, or point it towards something else
- If it doesn't actually have to be a pointed object, choose something else, or redraw it differently
- If the pointing thing is integral, like in a family photo inside a cave where stalactites are present and part of the ambiance, reposition people so they aren't standing directly underneath one of the sharper and pointier ones

Use it

Just like in the example of an illustrator giving a little easter egg nod pointing to their signature, you can use pointed elements to direct people through your compositions. It doesn't have to be a flashing arrow, it can be more subtle and have the same effect.

The Crash
Sarah Gonzales
2014

In the first image above the different elements point directly to the object, leading us to it, while in the second image the objects are mostly obscuring the object. One makes us feel as though we're meant to find the flying saucer in a more invited kind of way, while the other feels slightly more mysterious.
Both are good images but have different things to read from them entirely.

Eyes

What it is

Similar to arrow like elements causing people to look where they are pointing, people will also get distracted and look where the eyes of people or animals are looking in an image. If you're lacking in experience drawing eyes, or someone in a photo you take is distracted and looking off elsewhere, people will look where the eyes seem to be looking.

If you're a designer that tends to use stock imagery without paying attention to the direction the model is staring off into space towards this can also distract certain people viewing your work, and even divert them off of the nice flow you've created with other elements on the page.

Tips to solve it

- Redraw them until they are facing they feel like they are looking in the right direction
- Get your photo subject to pay more attention
- Use images in your designs where the model's off-frame glance re-enforces your layout instead of distracting from it

Use it

Use the sight lines of people and animals in your imagery to lead the viewer where you want them to look. Many classical artists used to use this technique very subtly in their paintings. Large groups of people could be arranged and have seemingly no connection to anything except for their eyes looking around the composition, the viewer following them from point to point.

Jump Rope
Sarah Gonzales
2015

Notice how in these two examples by Sarah Gonzales the simple shift in what the eyes are doing can completely change how we interpret the image.

Frame interactions

The overarching principle

Whether you're dealing with a left-to-right, top-to-bottom reading person, or someone whose language and culture taught them to read in a different direction, people will often start digesting an image from a certain edge or corner of the frame. Recognizing what is around your frame is important. We already saw in

Chapter 2 how tension points can be made with the edge of the frame, but other awkward interactions and relationships can also occur due to how an image is cropped or arranged near the edge of the composition.

Closed corners

What it is

One of the simplest things that can happen as a result of items interacting with the frame of an image is a closed corner occurring. This is basically when a larger shape closes off an entire corner of the image either by trapping white space there, or by being the only thing in the corner itself and not much to guide a viewer on to the next thing. It feels awkward blocking off one chunk of white space entirely from the rest of an image, but it's also awkward because corners are one of the main points where people will start reading an image from and subconsciously looking for elements to guide them from one thing to the next.

Tips to solve it

- Open up the corner at least a tiny bit to allow the corner to breathe more
- Move the item even further into the corner so that there is no white space trapped there

Use it

Designers will often place banner ads and other attention getters in the corners of compositions knowing that people will often look there either first, or eventually. It's also, of course, common for artists to sign their work in one of the bottom corners of a composition. Put things you want people to eventually lead themselves to in the corners.

Notice how awkward this great photo of Abe lincoln looks if we close in that corner. Clearly uncomfortable comapred to the original. Letting the space around the head breathe and opening up that corner looks much better.

Abraham Lincoln and His Second Son Thomas (Tad)
Alexander Gardner
1865

Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

Mistaken relationship

What it is

When you're designing part of your composition and not paying attention to how it will be displayed you can encounter an issue where people don't notice that certain elements against the frame are part of the composition and not the program displaying it. For example, a light grey bar of icons against the top of a web design may be mistaken at first glance as part of the web browser.

As visual people, we need to be aware of how our work will be displayed. Is it going to be a poster in a bus stop? Do you know what those bus stops look like? Making art for a video game? How does it actually look in context with the other items of the interface? Will the user realize immediately that it's part of the thing they're attempting to focus on?

Tips to solve it

- Choose shapes or colours to put up against the edge of the composition that don't resemble the frame itself
- Always, always try to see what your work will look like in context. If it's a billboard, find a picture of a billboard and composite your image into it.

Use it

Smart illustrators may break out of the frame entirely, allowing their artwork to interact with the other items around it. Corporate web designers may be legally required to include items on a page that the company doesn't really want to highlight (like links to privacy policies, terms and conditions, etc), so they might intentionally try to camouflage them against the browser window.
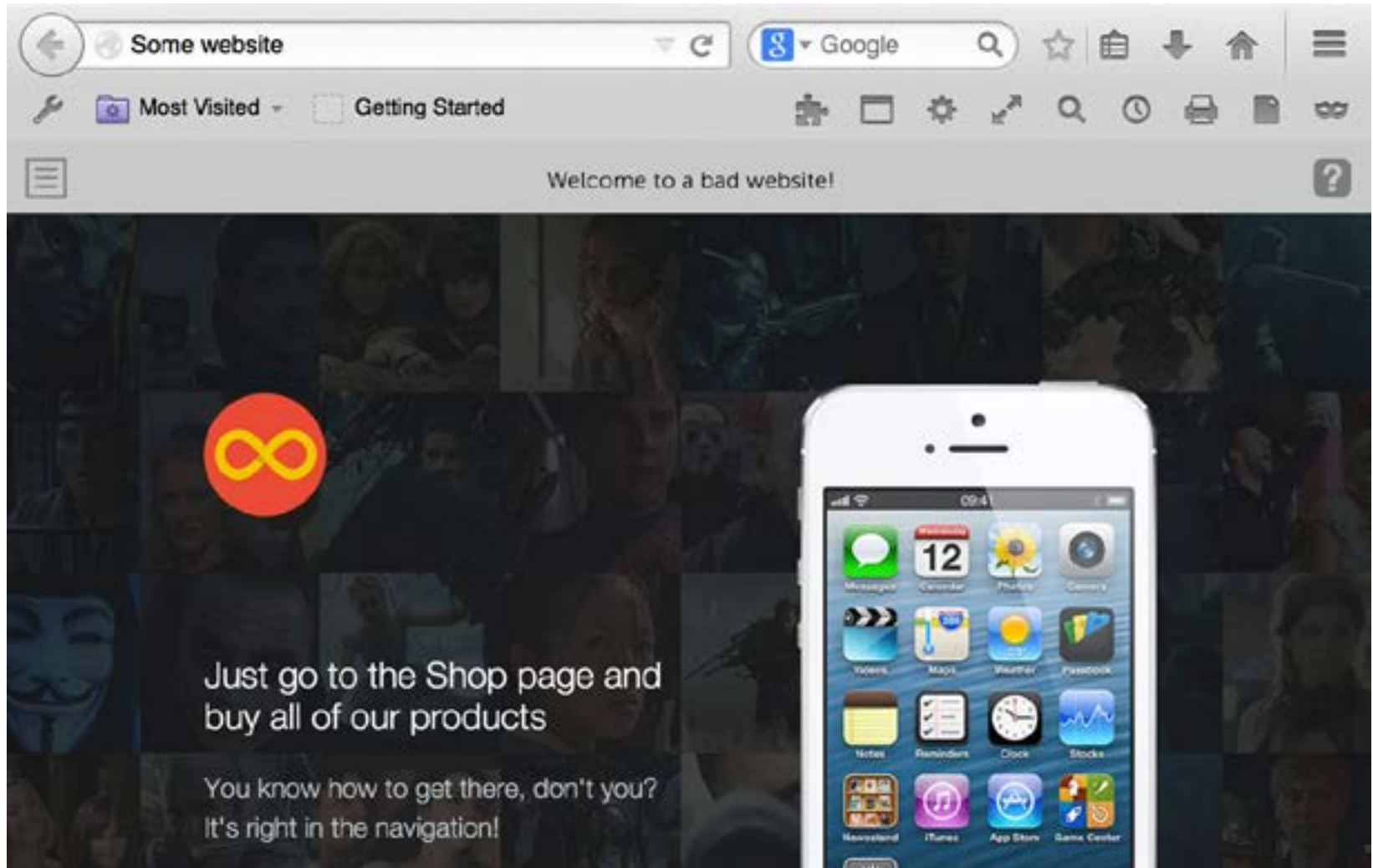
In this terrible fictional website, the designer has ignorantly made their main header and navigation area the same colour and similar style to a popular web browser. This could easily confuse some users.

Contours

The overarching principle

When interpreting visual information our brain naturally tries to separate things. Through all of the different kinds of input, like an item' contour, its colour, contrast, shape and others, we can interpret where one object starts and the other ends. However, if we start to get too many visually similar items butting up against each other in our field of view, it can confuse

our brain' ability to distinguish what is going on. Focusing on contours of adjacent items in particular, when the edges of objects start to interact with each other it can cause unintentional visual relationships. Another type of tangent appears.

Skimming, sharing or stealing

What it is

When two objects that are adjacent to each other in the field of view appear to share the same contour we say that their edges or contours are skimming each other or that one item is stealing the contour of the other. These relationships can occur between items in the foreground and background as well.

A common example is a photo of a house with a mountain the background. The way the photographer has taken the photo, the edge of the house's roof appears to align perfectly with the edge of the mountainside. We tend to notice this right away when items with straight edges are involved, like the side of the house in the example. When more organic shapes are involved, like the contour of an animal matching the contour of the landscape behind it, we may not notice and understand what is wrong right away but we can just feel that something is off.

Tips to solve it

- Move the items away from each other so their contours aren't touching or too close together
- Try taking your photo from a slightly different angle
- If it's an illustration, does the contour of one item need to be similar to the one next to it?

Use it

Designers and illustrators use this technique to hide dual images in logos, icons, and illustrations. Allowing the white space from one form to create or outline another opens up opportunities for interesting commentaries with dual meanings or optical illusions.
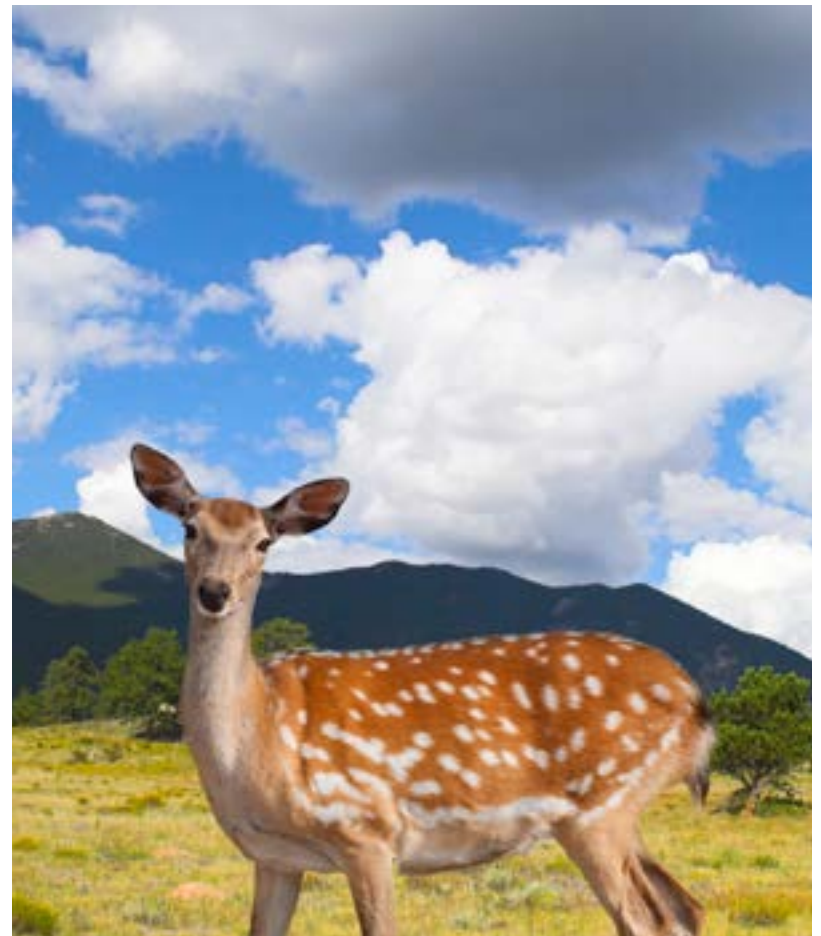
In the first image here, it's hard to tell what shape the mountain takes, and it almost seems like the deer starts where the mountain ends near the deer's back end. Meanwhile, simply nudging the deer down a bit we can lose this awkward tangent.

Hidden edge

What it is

A hidden edge is when the contour of an element gets hidden when it may be important for the viewer to understand what that shape is, or otherwise confuse them not to see the rest of the contour. This problem becomes compounded when the remaining contour of the element makes it seems as though it is symmetrical when it actually may not be.

Often when working with an image for a long time, as the artist or designer we become a little too familiar with it. We may understand the subject matter, but the viewer may not. This is one of the reasons a hidden edge may problematically work its way into our imagery. This is why we need to try and remove ourselves from our work or get an objective third party to review it.

Tips to solve it

- Reveal at least a little bit more of the contour to suggest more of the shape
- Add other visual cues so the contour isn't the main visual cue for the viewer to understand what the element is.
- If the work is sequential, like a graphic novel, make sure you've properly set up the form of the element in previous panels before having the courage to crop it in such a way

Use it

Sequential artists can expertly manage the viewer's expectations for an element to be symmetrical because of their ability to use a big reveal in the next panel. We see this in Batman when they tease Two-Face's good side in the light, the bad side covered in shadow, until he steps further into the light.
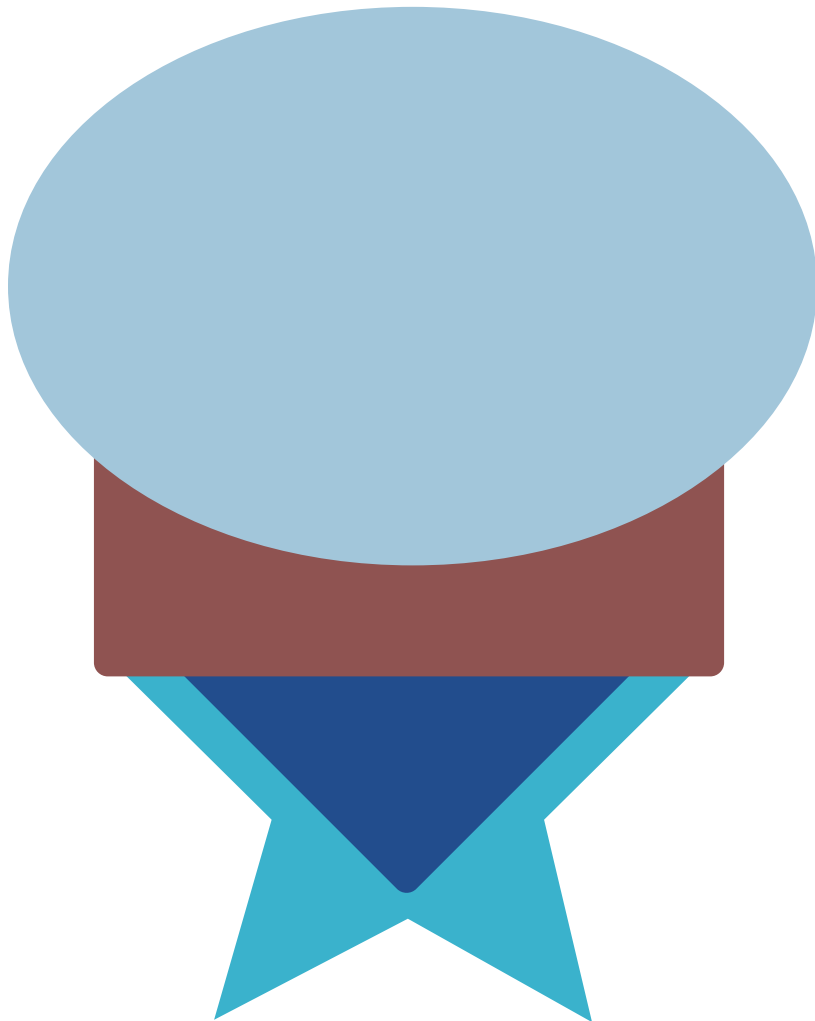
1

2

3

4

Is number 2 a square?
Is number 3 a triangle?
Is number 4 a star?

Hint: you'll never know.

Morphing Elements

The overarching principle

Sometimes when one object comes too close to or overlaps another we associate them as one object. The association becomes easier to make when the combined objects resemble something familiar, though that familiarity is not necessary. Sometimes the eye and the brain just work together to play tricks on us. The viewer's perception and feeling towards the overall image might be changed by this relationship, which is where we need to be careful or use this to our advantage.

The way our perception is altered by two images coming together to form an unexpected relationship is a tool often used for comedy or to point out metaphors and make social commentary.

Antlers and growths

What it is

Have you ever posed for a photograph with a group of friends only to see in the photo afterwards that someone has held two fingers up behind your head to give you rabbit ears or antlers? This is a great example of antlers and growths, though when your friends do it to you it's intentional and we want to watch out for instances where it isn't.

A person posing for a photo in front of a street pole without realizing and having it seem like that pole is sprouting from their head is another great example of a growth. Illustrators will often accidentally create growths too by drawing things too close together or overlapping.

The antler and growth phenomenon is most commonly noticed with people or animals and when objects come close to their head or intimate part areas in comedic or suggestive ways, though it can happen with other elements and combinations.

Tips to solve it

- Move the items further apart so the visual suggestion is harder to make
- Check if changing the angle at which the elements intersect at makes a difference
- When composing an image be conscious of how items in the foreground, mid-ground and background all interact
- Tell your friends to be nice to each other

Use it

If you want to add comedy to an image, this is one of the many comedic tools out there. Simply bring the right combination of items next to someone's head or face and voila, people's imaginations will run wild.
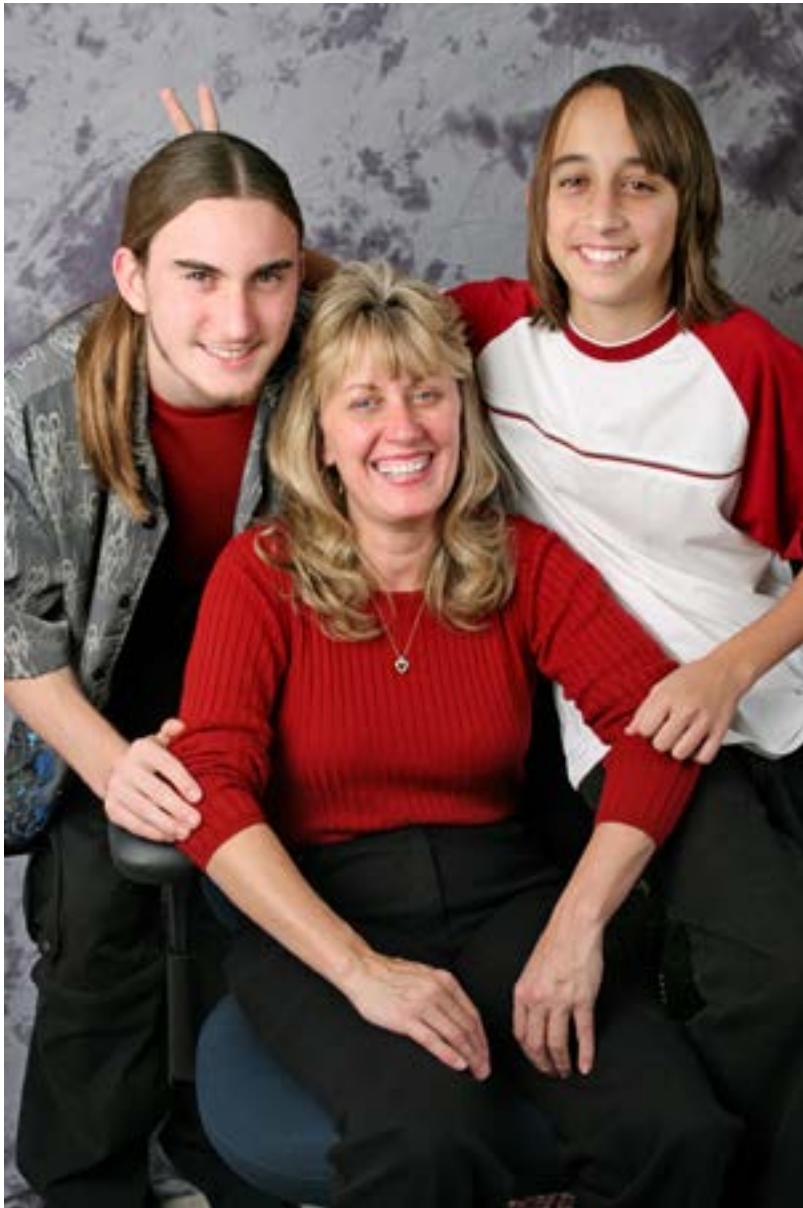
The ever common bunny ear photo prank that friends do to each other is a great example of antlers and growths.

Combined inherent value

What it is

This tangent has less to do with how elements combine visually, rather it's when two items with strong inherent value are in proximity to one another unintentionally. For example, a scene of a mother and child in a kitchen– everything is totally fine until you place the child next to the sharp knives, a dangerous appliance, and so on.

One of the hardest to control examples of this happening occurs with web advertisements. Have you ever read an article about a bad accident only to see a web banner advertising insurance or something else right next to it? Cringe worthy.

We accidentally place things next to each other that will have a connection for someone all the time. We can't make everyone happy, so the best we can do is be aware of cultural and societal norms and watch out for how we're setting up our scenes and canvases.

Tips to solve it

- Find a way to discharge the value– could the mother be closely watching the baby? Are there clear child-safe locks on the appliances?
- As with most tangents, sometimes just moving the elements away from each other could be the best solution.

Use it

Using an element's inherent value is an easy tool to use to reinforce your message. Are you telling a story where you want to encourage parents to consider the usually unconsidered dangers in the home? Place a young child next to those dangerous things, the child oblivious to what a good parent would normally perceive as a threat. Reaching for cookies on the counter next to a sharp knife or hot stove perhaps.

Just taking a cute picture of this baby.

Still just taking a cute picture of this baby, except I wasn't paying attention to what else was in the photo. What's wrong?

Chapter 8

Common type mistakes

The overarching principle

Novice or self-taught designers often miss these. We might think "here's the approved content, I'll just paste it in here," but the type is just as much a visual element that can interact with things in a design as anything else.

This is why the overarching principle to understand with mistakes in type is basically just that they exist The way letters and words interact with each other,

the way their negative space creates shapes on a page, and any number of other interactions are all things that designers, and even self-publishing writers need to watch out for. In writing this ebook I will be going back to check for numerous type issues– something that's usually best saved for last since any change to previous pages, whether in layout or content, can send cascading changes to the other pages of a document.

Orphans and widows

What it is

Put simply, a widow is a very short line of copy. This is when one word ends up on a line of its own at the end of a paragraph or column of copy. This can cause awkward amounts of white space between paragraphs or the end of the page, or the word may just look lonely and awkward on its own.

An orphan is like a widow, but the word ends up on the next page or column by itself. This could be exceptionally awkward if the page were the last in a chapter.

Tips to solve it

- Add manual line breaks to move words to the same line
- Manually adjust column widths
- Find a different way to say your message

Use it

Poets use many common type issues to their advantage to increase their meaning. Putting that one last word of a poem on a line by itself could be exceptionally poignant.

Nunc vel turpis vehicula, tristique orci ac, vehicula nibh. Aenean sollicitudin interdum laoreet. Duis sit amet orci ultricies, mattis dui vitae, lacinia ex. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Phasellus vehicula ante at diam interdum vestibulum. Vestibulum malesuada in neque ac sollicitudin. Fusce consectetur egestas laoreet. Nunc malesuada.

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See that last "lorem"? It looks so lonely, sad, and awkward.

Rags

What it is

A rag refers to the uneven edge of a vertical margin of copy. In a typical document it will be the right rag that's off since most copy is left aligned. Justified copy, that forces copy to create perfectly straight vertical columns, would of course not have a rag.

Rags are nasty because of the awkward white space they create. This white space can create very distracting shapes or hinder the readability of copy for the user when they'd normally consume lines of copy of similar length. A proper rag tries to balance the amount of white space by minimizing the contrast between line lengths.

Tips to solve it

- Add manual line breaks to move words and adjust line lengths
- Manually adjust your column widths to re-flow content and see if the rag is any better
- Rewrite portions of your message

Use it

Again, one of the more common ways to use an oddly shaped rag is in poetry. Concrete or shape poetry is poetry that allows the copy to create shapes which reinforces the meaning of the poem.

A smart designer might also use this technique to reinforce their objective. What if the rag made a subtle path towards the main call to action on the page? A rag doesn't have to be evil.

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ut massa ornare eleifend vitae non libero. Aenean
vestibulum diam non volutpat ultricies. Vivamus quis
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convallis, at i

Look at those mountains. Those should be saved
for your illustration work, not your copy.

Rivers

What it is

A river is created when the spaces between words coincidentally lines up across lines, creating a vertical river through portions of copy or entire pages. This can happen in any block of copy, though it is compounded by use of justified copy blocks. Justified copy forces the space between letters or words to increase in order to get rid of any rags, which also increases the probability that white space between words will align across rows.

Tips to solve it

- Does your copy need to be justified?
- Alter the space between words or letters
- Manually kern
- Add manual line breaks to move words
- Manually adjust your column widths
- Rewrite portions of your message

Use it

Rivers are most commonly used on purpose, again, in poetic devices like concrete or shape poetry. A designer could, in theory, use a river to point to a call to action, though they are generally considered to be distracting.

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Do you see the line running through this entire block of copy?

Chapter 9

Conclusions

How to look for a tangent

The following are a few tips to help.

Make time for it

A good rule of thumb is every time you stop for a break or think you're done, go through your composition and do a quick check for tangents. If you're constantly looking for them while you're creating you'll drive yourself nuts.

Detach yourself

Look at your work in a mirror, or flip your canvas digitally, invert the colours, turn it upside down, squint so all you see is shapes. All of these things help detach you from your work and look at it more objectively for composition issues. You could also just ask a friend. Sometimes we grow best from constructive criticism.

Break the composition into smaller pieces

Sometimes following the lines and contours in a composition one by one, looking at each element of a piece on its own, or completely blocking out the rest of a composition, can help you to focus and be less distracted by other items.
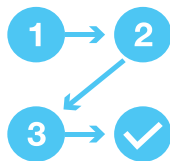
Do it in a sequence

Making a list and looking for tangents or other issues one by one can help you make a habit out of looking for them rather than approaching things without a plan. It's easier to give yourself objectives.

How to tell someone they have tangents

So, now you know about some tangents, and you're going to go out into the world with your new found knowledge and make sure the world is filled with glorious art and design! Stupendous! If you're looking out for them in your own work, that's great, but if you're pointing them out for others please keep a few things in mind.

They won't know what you're talking about
If you're going to help someone else out by pointing tangents out, make sure they know what you're talking about. Explain what it is you're talking about and why it's important so they can understand it too, otherwise they'll just keep doing it.

Be polite
I always say that the best advice I could give any artist or designer, or anyone doing business period really, is to not be a jerk. The world is much smaller than we think, and people remember. It won't do you any good to be a jerk, nor will it probably have lasting positive effects with the other person to receive feedback in a nasty way.

Record it
No matter how hard we try not to get emotional about feedback, sometimes we can't help it. When people get emotional, it may be hard to focus on what is being said or remember it, so if the feedback is important sometimes it's best that someone write it down or record it in some way. I'll often chat with someone but follow up with an email recapping what was said.

Make it not about you

There's nothing helpful about receiving direction that you don't understand, either because it's over your head or because the person isn't speaking your language. If you're the client, stakeholder, art director, or just someone senior to the creative person making the work, you need to be able to relate things to them in a way that will make it matter and mean something to them, not you. Stating over and over why it matters to you or the business may not be the best way to get it to matter to the creative person. Find common ground.

Add something good

We're all used to reviews of our work where the purpose is just to point out the things that aren't working. It didn't take me long to realize when giving feedback that if I didn't also point out the things that were working really well then the other person may accidentally remove or change those good things when trying to fix the things I gave them feedback about. Plus, remembering back when you've gotten feedback, wasn't it reassuring that you were doing at least something right? When giving feedback compliment sandwiches (compliment, negative thing, compliment) feel forced. Instead, try to give the things the person could work on first, and follow up with all of the compliments and good stuff (areas of improvement followed by areas of awesome).

Think about the feedback you're giving. Is it just to improve the product? Or is it also to improve the person creating it? Pretty important if you'll ever work with them again. So, what's the best way to get what you want and help the other person grow too?

Make friends

We've looked at some of the main art and design *mistakes* out there, but now that you understand them, and know how to look for them, you can also use them.

Why keep wondering why your im ages aren't working and not understanding the cause? Instead, why not employ all of those things that were just working against you to make your work that much better?

In that case, *tangent* is actually a nicer term than *mistake*, isn't it? Mistake just sounds so negative. Tangent is just a term for all of these commonly missed items from the art and design world, and tangents don't need to be scary or things to hate.

The artist should control the flow of the composition, which means sometimes breaking the rules.

J. M. Brodrick

Glossary

Were there some other terms used in this book that confused you?
Allow me to go through some of the jargon for you.

Call to action (CTA)
Most designs have an intended goal for the viewer, it might be to call a number, click a button or something else. That's your call to action. Hopefully you only have one or two main CTAs so as not to confuse your viewers/users.

Canvas
Canvas doesn't just refer to a painter's canvas. This generally means the entire surface or usable area of any piece of art or design, whether physical or digital.

Contour
The contour is the entire outer edge of something. Imagine what you were looking at were entirely blacked out and all you could see was a clear silhouette. The outer edge of that is the contour.

Copy
Copy often refers to any portion of text. "Has the designer put the approved copy in the design yet?"

Flow
When we talk about the flow of a piece in art and design we're generally talking about the ease at which a viewer moves from one focal point of a composition to another.

Frame

The frame refers to the outer edge or border of any composition. If this is referring to a literal, physical frame like a frame around a painting, then it will most often be clear based on the context in which the term was used.

Kern or kerning

Kerning is basically the space between letters. Poor kerning can result in something being misread or hard to read. Great helps ease the reading process.

Tangent

A term to refer to any number of design issues, as outlined in this ebook.

Typography

Typography is the art and design practice of arranging type in a beautiful but readable way.

White space

White space refers to any unused space in a composition. White space can become a design element all on its own. Artists and designers need to be conscious of the shapes created by white space and the amount of white space in a composition. Too much can make something feel empty, too little can increase tension or make things feel cluttered.

If you spot another word or term that you don't understand and would like an explanation for its meaning in the context of this book or your art and design practice, please give me a shout at www.monkeyslunch.com/contact/

ABOUT SPENCER

Professionally, Spencer has had a hand in the creative development of a wide range of effective web, print, and mobile based properties for numerous businesses big and small worldwide. He has a strong passion to always improve, tackle new challenges, and enjoys doing so. The bottom line is that he's creative. He loves making things, and making other people happy by doing so.

At the time of this writing, Spencer is the Senior Designer for Post+Beam, one of the most human and caring creative and communications agencies in the world.
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ABOUT INVISION

Invision is the world's leading design collaboration platform.

They help companies of all sizes unlock the power of design-driven product development. That's why teams at Evernote, Adobe, Airbnb, Salesforce, and many more fire up InVision every day.

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