THE AWARD-WINNING, BEST-SELLING BOOK ABOUT DESIGN!

# THE NON-DESIGNER'S DESIGNER'S DESIGNER'S

DESIGN AND TYPOGRAPHIC PRINCIPLES FOR THE VISUAL NOVICE

ROBIN WILLIAMS



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# FOURTH EDITION

design
and
typographic
principles
for the
visual
novice

Robin Williams



Contrast is crucial to the organization of information—a reader should always be able to glance at a document and instantly understand what's going on.



typeface Times New Roman

The information is all there in this résumé and it's pretty clean. If someone really wants to read it, they will—but it certainly doesn't grab your attention.

And notice these problems:

Job titles are not clearly defined; they blend in with the body text.

The sections themselves are not clearly defined.

There are two alignments on the page: centered and flush left.

The amounts of space between the separate accomplishments are the same as the amount of space between sections.

The setup is inconsistent—sometimes the dates are at the beginning, sometimes at the end. Remember, consistency creates repetition.

Notice that not only is the page more attractive when contrast is used, but the purpose and organization of the document are much clearer. Your résumé is someone's initial impression of you, so make it strong.



typefaces
Warnock Pro Regular
and Italic
Halis Bold

The problems are easily corrected.

One alignment: Flush left. As you can see above, using only one alignment doesn't mean everything is aligned along the **same edge**—it simply means everything is using the **same alignment** (all flush left or all flush right or all centered). Both the flush left lines above are very strong and reinforce each other (alignment and repetition).

The heads are strong—you instantly know what this document is and what the key points are (contrast).

Segments are separated by more space than are the individual lines of text (**contrast** of spatial relationships; **proximity**).

Degree and job titles are in bold (a **repetition** of the headline font)—the strong **contrast** lets you skim the important points.

The easiest way to add interesting contrast is with typefaces (which is the focus of the second half of this book). But don't forget about rules (drawn lines), colors, spacing between elements, textures, and so on.

If you use a hairline rule between columns, use a strong 2- or 4-point rule when you need another—don't use a half-point rule and a one-point rule on the same page. If you use a second color for accent, make sure the colors contrast—dark brown or dark blue doesn't contrast effectively with black text.

## The Rules of Life

Your attitude is your life.

Maximize your options.

Don't let the seeds stop you from enjoyin' the watermelon.

Be nice.

There is a bit of contrast between the typefaces and between the rules, but the contrast is wimpy—are the rules supposed to be two different thicknesses?

Or is it a mistake?

# THE RULES OF LIFE

Your attitude is your life.

Maximize your options.

Don't let the seeds stop you from enjoyin' the watermelon.

Be nice.

Now the strong contrast between the typefaces makes the piece more dynamic and eye-catching.

With a stronger contrast between the thicknesses of the rules, there is no risk of someone thinking it's a mistake.

# The Rules of Life

Your attitude is your life.

Maximize your options.

Don't let the seeds stop you from enjoyin' the watermelon.

Be nice.

This is simply another option using rules (this thick rule is behind the white type).

With contrast, the entire table is stronger and more sophisticated; it communicates more clearly.

typefaces

Garamond Premier Pro Medium Italic and Bold
ANODYNE COMBINED

**Aachen Bold** 

If you use tall, narrow columns in your newsletter, perhaps use a strong headline to create a contrasting horizontal direction across the page.

Combine contrast with repetition, as in the page numbers or headlines or bullets or rules or spatial arrangements, to make a strong, unifying identity throughout an entire publication.

# IREADSHAKESPEARE

### You READ it?

Social reading groups spread Shakespeare across America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuriers. These were groups of adults (mostly women) who read and discussed the plays in community—without an expert to tell them what to think or an actor to tell them what to think or an actor to tell them how it should be interpreted. They had not been told it was too difficult or complex to read—they just did it.

# I thought I was only supposed to see Shakespeare on stage?

spread Shakespeare across America in changed over the centuries. For the first centuries. These were primary less a a literary dramatist and early twentieth centuries. These were groups of adults all backgrounds. For the past half century, though, academia and theater have been read and discussed the plays in community— where the primary custodians, taking Shakespeare have changed over the centuries. The summer was a literary dramatist and the past half century, though, academia and theater have been the primary custodians, taking Shakespeare have changed over the centuries. For the first the primary custodians, taking Shakespeare have changed over the centuries. For the first the primary literature, and the primary custodians the primary custodians taking Shakespeare have changed over the centuries. For the first the primary custodians and the past half control of the primary custodians taking Shakespeare have changed over the centuries. For the first the past half centuries, for the first changed over the centuries. For the first the past half century is primary custodians taking Shakespeare have changed over the centuries. For the first the past half century, though academia and theater have been the primary custodians taking the primary custodians taking the primary custodians taking the primary custodians taking the past half century.

without an expert to tell them what to think or an actor to tell think or an actor total think or an actor total them how it should be interpreted. They had not been told it was too difficult or complex to

# What do we do at a reading?

We just pick up a play and start reading. We stop regularly to make sure we understand what is going on, and we talk about it. Everyone has expertise in different things so we have a wide variety of thoughtful input for pondering and discussions. And if you bring cookies.

we'll eat cookies!

# Am I invited? When is it?

Yes! Anyone who can read or who on the first and third would like to listen to others read is month, from welcome. If you are shy about reading aloud, be assured Where is it?

# that no one will The Jemez Room at Santa Fe Community College.

a friend? Is there a fee?
Of course you can!
Bring your friends,
your mom and dad.

your neighbors, your

teenagers! You can

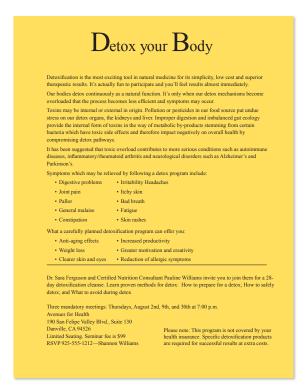
bring cookies, too!



In addition to the contrast in the typefaces in this postcard, there is also a contrast between the long, horizontal title and the tall, narrow, vertical columns. The narrow columns are a repetitive element, as well as an example of contrast.

The example below is a typical flyer. The biggest problem is that the lines of text are too long to read comfortably. Also, there is little to draw the reader's eye into the text.

Design the headline so it will catch someone's eye. Now that their eyes are on the page, create some contrast in the text so even if they don't plan to read the whole thing, their eyes will be pulled to certain parts of it as they skim through it. Enhance this with alignments and use of proximity.



typeface Times New Roman

Where do you begin to improve this flyer? At least it's not centered!

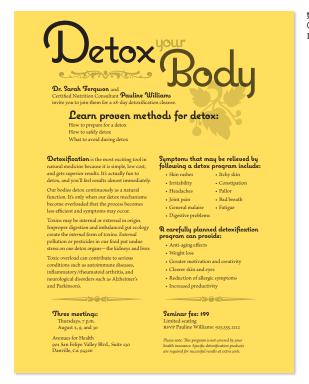
The lines are so long that a reader is automatically put off. When you have lots of text like this, experiment with using more than one column, as shown on the previous and opposite pages.

Pull out key phrases to set in bold so the visual contrasts attract the eye and lead the reader through the information.

Perhaps start off with the introductory bits of information so a reader begins with an understanding of the purpose of the flyer. It's less of a commitment to read the little pieces, so you can seduce the reader's eye into the piece by providing an introductory path.

Don't be afraid to make some items small to create a contrast with the larger items, and don't be afraid to allow blank space! Once you pull readers in with the focal point, they will read the smaller print if they are interested. If they're not interested, it won't matter *how* big you set it.

Notice all the other principles come into play: proximity, alignment, and repetition. They work together to create the total effect. Rarely will you use just one principle to design any page.



typefaces Coquette Regular Brioso Pro Regular and Italic

We added some ornaments for visual interest and to provide an earthy feeling and add some interest and softness to the title. Since this flyer is to be reproduced on a copy machine on colored paper, we used various shades of gray for those ornaments.

Listen to your eyes as they scan through this document—can you feel how they are drawn to the bold text so you are almost forced to read at least those parts? If you can get people that far into your piece, they are bound to read more.