



Shape Theory

Shapes, like colours, have connotations and meanings that influence understanding and communication.

This is a quick and simplistic guide to the hidden meanings of shapes and how to use them to enhance our ability to communicate effectively.

Crosses

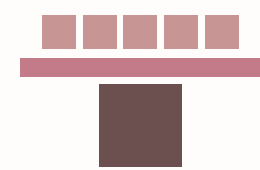


Crosses suggest:

Hope
Divinity
Focus

They represent the cross point of divine energy and can suggest healing, hope.

Squares and Rectangles

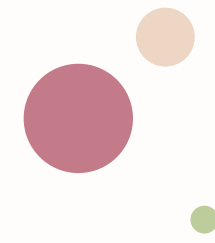


Squares and rectangles have connotations of:

Strength
Stability
Balance
Conformity

They are building blocks and help create a sense of order stability and control. Too many blues and greys in their composition can make a design cold and unfriendly.

Circles

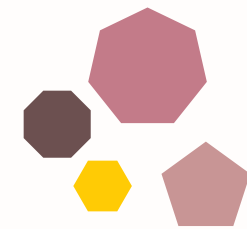


Circles are associated with:

Positivity
Friendship
Love
Community

They suggest the feeling of being well-rounded, eternity and completion. Researchers found that infants look at circles and ovals longer than other shapes.

Pentagons, Heptagons, Hexagons, Octagons... etc



These shapes take designs to a higher level of complexity; they suggest:

Intricacy
Functionality
Complexity
Order

Think of honeycombs and hive structures, molecular models, etc. Strong and functional.

Triangles

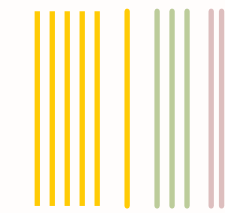


Triangles give a composition a sense of:

Power
Direction
Force
Movement

They have tremendous impact and direct attention. When they point up, they promote balance. If they point down, they convey danger and tell the reader to be cautious.

Vertical Lines

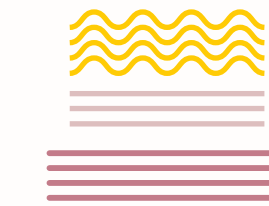


Vertical Lines denote:

Masculinity
Aggression
Strength

They suggest barriers and defence. Their spatial arrangement can soften or solidify the effect.

Horizontal Lines



Horizontal lines, straight or wavy, promote a sense of:

Community
Tranquility
Calmness

With a complementary colour palette, they convey the freshness of a calm sea and enjoyment of nature.

Spirals



Spirals suggest:

Creativity
Evolution
Growth

Spirals denote birth, death, journeys; things beyond control or explanation.

Shapes and colours have nuances and general understandings you can build on to create impact. A yellow circle is an obvious icon for the sun; but a red one can represent a tomato or apple. Shapes and colours need to complement each other to give a design congruency and focus of meaning.

We have to stylise many elements from nature as they tend to be less well-defined than geometric shapes. Elemental shapes are called 'biomorphic' and are characterised by their irregular, usually rounded, forms. Bio means life, and morphic means form, so biomorphic shapes describe the shapes of life.

