Unit 02: Layout and Composition

Content Area: **Fine Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **5 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

Successful design layout requires the thoughtful balance and organization of multiple visual elements within a composition. In this unit, students will develop an understanding of the six fundamental principles of design, balance, emphasis, proportion, contrast, rhythm, and unity, and apply them to create visually compelling and effective work. Students will also be introduced to professional layout techniques, including the use of grid and path-based compositions, to strengthen visual structure, guide viewer attention, and achieve dynamic, cohesive designs across a variety of creative projects.

Revised: August 2026

Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings

Essential Questions:

- What makes a composition visually successful and engaging to an audience?
- How do the elements and principles of design work together to create strong visual communication?
- Why is effective layout design important in graphic design and media?
- How does layout and design influence the way we experience everyday life?
- Why is developing a “designer’s eye” important for visual communication and creative problem-solving?
- How can the design of advertisements, posters, websites, and social media impact their effectiveness as communication tools?
- Why does simply following design principles not always guarantee successful graphic design?
- How do designers balance creativity, function, and audience appeal in their work?
- In what ways can strong design influence emotions, decisions, and consumer behavior?

Enduring Understandings:

- Design and composition shape the way we experience and understand the world around us every day.
- Creating effective layouts requires creativity, problem-solving, and the ability to communicate ideas clearly to a target audience.
- Strong design enhances communication by capturing attention, organizing information, and delivering

messages with impact.
- Successful graphic design combines visual appeal with purpose to influence how people think, feel, and respond.
- Designers use composition and layout to guide viewers' attention and create meaningful visual experiences.

Objectives

Students Will Know:

The six fundamental principles of design: balance, emphasis, proportion, contrast, rhythm, and unity

The terminology associated with composition, layout, typography, color theory, and visual communication

How professional layout techniques, including grid systems and path-based compositions, establish visual hierarchy and guide viewer attention

Students Will Be Skilled At:

- Utilize industry-standard digital resources and design software (such as Adobe Illustrator) to conduct visual research, gather inspiration, and execute original design concepts.
- Effective compositions are carefully planned to communicate a clear message and connect with a target audience. Students will develop the ability to organize visual elements in a purposeful way that captures attention, guides the viewer's eye, and conveys meaning successfully. By applying design principles and creative problem-solving strategies, students will learn how to create work that is both visually engaging and communicatively effective.
- Strong layout design requires balance, organization, and unity within a composition. Students will explore techniques for arranging text, images, and graphic elements to create visually cohesive designs that are aesthetically appealing and easy to understand. Through the use of grid systems, hierarchy, spacing, and alignment, students will build layouts that demonstrate both creativity and professional design structure.
- Understanding and using proper design vocabulary is essential for effective communication in the field of graphic design. Students will develop familiarity with terminology related to composition, layout, typography, color theory, and visual communication. Using this vocabulary will allow students to participate in critiques, analyze professional work, explain design decisions, and communicate ideas

with greater confidence and professionalism.
- The design process involves brainstorming, researching, planning, revising, and reflecting in order to create successful visual solutions. Students will strengthen their ability to evaluate and refine their work through critique, self-assessment, and collaboration, helping them develop both technical skills and creative confidence.
- Graphic design combines artistic creativity with technology and communication. Students will gain an understanding of how designers use visual elements and digital tools together to create work that informs, persuades, entertains, and inspires audiences in both print and digital media.

Learning Plan

- Introduce and review the unit's essential questions, encouraging students to make connections between these guiding concepts and their learning throughout the unit.
- Teacher-led presentation on the use of grid systems and path layouts in professional design composition. During the presentation, students will complete guided notes and handout activities while exploring how designers organize space to create balance, emphasis, and visual flow within a layout.
- Collaborative class activities and discussions focused on solving design challenges using both grid-based and path-based layout structures. Students will apply critical thinking and design principles to evaluate effective visual organization.
- Research and analysis activity in which students collect and examine examples of posters, magazine advertisements, and newspaper layouts. Students will identify and discuss the design strategies, composition techniques, and visual principles used to create balanced, unified, and visually engaging designs.
- Introduction of the unit design project: creating a promotional event poster. Students will review project expectations and utilize the design process to brainstorm concepts, conduct visual research, and develop thumbnail sketches. Students will conference with the instructor to evaluate ideas and select the strongest direction for development.
- Students will create an 11" x 17" poster layout incorporating the Rule of Thirds and principles of visual hierarchy. Instruction and discussion will emphasize how designers guide the viewer's eye through the composition to highlight important information and create effective communication.
- Ongoing teacher facilitation, individualized instruction, and design support will be provided throughout the creative process to address student needs and encourage artistic and technical growth.
- Student presentations and structured class critiques will provide opportunities for peer feedback, reflection, and discussion of design choices, composition, and communication effectiveness.
- Final project evaluation will include both teacher assessment and student self-assessment using a project rubric aligned to unit objectives and design standards.

Assessment

Formative

Students will be evaluated through daily exit tickets, quizzes on design principles and Adobe Illustrator, and participation in guided discussions. Additionally, they will engage in peer critiques and instructor conferences to refine their logo concepts and demonstrate their overall understanding.

Summative

Design and create a promotional event poster incorporating the Rule of Thirds, visual hierarchy, and grid or path-based layout structures

Benchmark assessments: Midterm Exam/Final Exam

Alternative Assessment

Present the project to peers and/or the community.

Complete writing prompt: Write an artist statement analyzing your final layout. Explain how you utilized grid systems, typography, and the principles of design to effectively communicate your message to your target audience.

Materials

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    - Online design examples, tutorials, and step-by-step instructional guides demonstrating the use of Adobe Illustrator tools, design techniques, and professional graphic design practices.
    - Teacher-created demonstrations and instructional presentations modeling design concepts, software techniques, creative problem-solving, and project expectations.
    - Former student examples showcasing successful projects, logo designs, layouts, and applications of the elements and principles of design to provide students with reference points and inspiration.
    - Professional graphic design samples from advertisements, logos, branding materials, websites, posters, packaging, and digital media used for analysis and discussion.
    - Printed and digital handouts covering Adobe Illustrator tools, keyboard shortcuts, vocabulary, design terminology, project guidelines, and design process strategies.
    - Class notes and guided lecture materials related to the elements and principles of design, typography, color theory, composition, branding, and visual communication.
    - Instructional reference sheets and design process organizers to support brainstorming, sketching, concept development, and project planning.
    - Assessment rubrics outlining project expectations, grading criteria, technical skills, creativity, craftsmanship, and participation requirements.
    - Critique guides and peer review worksheets to support constructive feedback, reflection, and discussion during the design process.
    - Adobe Illustrator software for creating digital illustrations, logos, compositions, and design projects.

- Computers or laptops capable of running Adobe Illustrator and supporting digital design work.
- Digital projector or interactive display for teacher demonstrations, presentations, and group critiques.
- Sketchbooks, drawing paper, or brainstorming worksheets for thumbnail sketches, concept development, and planning activities.

Standards

Information Literacy

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

ELD standards:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wdmsiGOdCHlrjU-WPvAtENnEgi0EStZXo0uiFYv1Nu4/edit

1.5.12prof.Cr	Creating
	Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed. Artists and designers shape artistic investigations, following or breaking with traditions in pursuit of creative art-making goals.
1.5.12prof.Cr1a	Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.
1.5.12prof.Cr1b	Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using a contemporary practice of art and design.
1.5.12prof.Cr2a	Engage in making a work of art or design without having a preconceived plan.
1.5.12prof.Cr2c	Collaboratively develop a proposal for an installation, artwork, or space design that transforms the perception and experience of a particular place.
TECH.K-12.1.4	Innovative Designer
	Students use a variety of technologies within a design process to identify and solve problems by creating new, useful or imaginative solutions.
1.5.12prof.Pr4	Selecting, analyzing, and interpreting work.
TECH.K-12.1.4.a	know and use a deliberate design process for generating ideas, testing theories, creating innovative artifacts or solving authentic problems.
TECH.K-12.1.4.b	select and use digital tools to plan and manage a design process that considers design constraints and calculated risks.
TECH.K-12.1.4.c	develop, test and refine prototypes as part of a cyclical design process.
1.5.12prof.Pr4a	Analyze, select and curate artifacts and/or artworks for presentation and preservation.

1.5.12prof.Pr5a	Analyze and evaluate the reasons and ways an exhibition is presented.
1.5.12prof.Pr6a	Analyze and describe the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural or political beliefs and understandings.
1.5.12prof.Re7a	Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.
1.5.12prof.Re7b	Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual arts.
1.5.12prof.Re8	Interpreting intent and meaning.
1.5.12prof.Re8a	Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.
1.5.12prof.Re9a	Establish relevant criteria in order to evaluate a work of art or collection of works.
1.5.12prof.Cn	Connecting
1.5.12prof.Cn10a	Document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas.
1.5.12prof.Cn11a	Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions and history may influence personal responses to art.
1.5.12prof.Cn11b	Describe how knowledge of global issues, including climate change, may influence personal responses to art.
I	Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.
I.A.2	Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.
I.B.1	Using evidence to investigate questions.
I.B.2	Devising and implementing a plan to fill knowledge gaps.
V	Explore: Discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection.
IV.B	Learners gather information appropriate to the task by:
IV.C	Learners exchange information resources within and beyond their learning community by:
III	Collaborate: Work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals.

Integrated Accommodation and Modifications, Special Education students, English Language Learners, At-Risk Students, Gifted and Talented students, Career Education, and those with 504s

Instructional Accommodations

- Provide step-by-step written and visual instructions for all design projects and software demonstrations.
- Break larger assignments into smaller, manageable tasks with interim deadlines and check-ins.
- Use modeling and teacher demonstrations before independent student work.
- Provide guided notes, vocabulary lists, and graphic organizers for lectures and presentations.
- Offer repeated directions and clarify expectations verbally and visually.
- Pre-teach key vocabulary related to graphic design, Adobe Illustrator tools, and design principles.
- Allow students to access recorded demonstrations or tutorial videos for review at their own pace.
- Provide exemplars and sample projects to reinforce expectations and concepts.
- Use frequent comprehension checks during instruction and demonstrations.
- Provide one-on-one or small-group instructional support when needed.

Assignment and Assessment Modifications

- Allow extended time for quizzes, projects, and class assignments.
- Reduce the number of required design variations or sketches without compromising learning objectives.
- Modify project complexity based on student ability levels while maintaining core standards.
- Allow oral explanations or presentations in place of written reflections when appropriate.
- Provide alternative assessments such as guided critiques, interviews, or portfolio conferences.
- Use simplified rubrics with clearly defined criteria and visual supports.
- Permit revisions and resubmissions after feedback and teacher conferencing.
- Grade based on individual growth, effort, and mastery of essential skills when appropriate.

Technology and Software Supports

- Provide access to assistive technology tools, including text-to-speech and speech-to-text software.
- Allow use of adaptive computer equipment, alternative mice, keyboards, or styluses if needed.
- Create keyboard shortcut reference sheets and simplified tool guides for Adobe Illustrator.
- Provide templates, partially completed files, or scaffolded starter documents.
- Allow students to zoom in on workspaces or use accessibility settings within software programs.
- Offer digital copies of handouts and notes for organization and accessibility.

Classroom Environment Accommodations

- Preferential seating near instruction or teacher demonstrations.
- Provide a distraction-reduced environment for assessments or focused project work.
- Allow movement breaks or flexible seating options as needed.
- Maintain consistent classroom routines and clearly posted daily objectives.
- Use visual schedules and checklists to support organization and task completion.
- Provide additional time for transitions between activities or software tasks.

Organizational and Executive Function Supports

- Assist students with project planning, time management, and organization of digital files.
- Provide project timelines with checkpoints and reminders.
- Use task checklists and progress-monitoring sheets during long-term projects.
- Help students organize digital folders and save work appropriately.
- Encourage use of planners, calendars, or digital reminders for assignment deadlines.

Social-Emotional and Communication Supports

- Encourage participation in peer critiques using structured sentence starters and guided feedback forms.
- Provide positive reinforcement and encouragement throughout the creative process.
- Allow students to demonstrate understanding in multiple ways.
- Support student self-advocacy by encouraging questions and clarification requests.
- Create opportunities for collaborative learning with supportive peer partners or groups.
- Foster a classroom culture that values creativity, effort, revision, and individual growth.

Fine Motor and Processing Accommodations

- Allow additional time for precise digital design work requiring fine motor control.
- Provide alternative methods for sketching or brainstorming, including digital sketch tools.
- Reduce repetitive drawing or tracing requirements if they create unnecessary barriers.
- Allow students to verbally explain concepts before translating ideas into digital formats.

English Language Learner and Reading Supports (when applicable)

- Pair visual examples with written directions.
- Simplify complex reading materials and provide audio or translated supports when available.
- Reinforce concepts through demonstrations and hands-on learning opportunities.
- Provide sentence frames for critiques, reflections, and project discussions.

Collaboration with Support Staff

- Coordinate with special education teachers, case managers, counselors, and related service providers to ensure accommodations are consistently implemented.
- Maintain ongoing communication regarding student progress, challenges, and successful strategies.
- Adjust instructional pacing and supports based on individual student needs and documented accommodations.