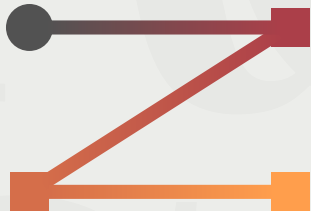


# 12 Principles of legibility for a digital world

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## Z Model – linear sequences



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## X Model – non-linear blocks



## Layout

### GRIDS AND GUIDES

- Consistency of page composition aids eye tracking.
- Asymmetrical layouts (Rule of Thirds) aid focus switching.
- Fix widths: reflowing text disorients the reader.

### DISTINCTION

- Use spacing, separators and enclosures to clearly distinguish and group blocks of content.

### CONTEXTUAL REFERENCES

- Use pull quotes and labels to minimise the use of cross references that disorient and require memorisation.

### LISTS AND TILES

- List views suit homogeneous items of content and alphabetical and numerical sequences.
- Tile views suit heterogeneous items of content and images.

## Typography

### HIERARCHY

- Avoid deeply-nested hierarchies.
- Focus on the four foundational levels: Main Headline, Section Title, Body and Caption.

### SIZE

- Body copy  $\geq 14\text{px}$
- Small text  $\geq 12\text{px}$
- Line height  $\geq 1.4 \times$  font size
- Line length  $\approx 8\text{--}12$  words
- Paragraph length  $\approx 3\text{--}5$  sentences

### FONT SELECTION

- Sans-serifs with distinct character forms and large lowercase x-heights maximise legibility.
- Use 1–2 fonts and weights per document.

### STYLE

- Range left: don't align right, centre or justify.
- Avoid all caps and excessive tracking changes in body copy.
- Use bold to emphasise words. Use italics to emphasise paragraphs.
- Underline links (in blue) but nothing else.

## Visual Design

### COLOUR

- Use one primary accent colour for emphasis and one primary shade for contrast.

### CONTRAST

- Ensure sufficient but not excessive text contrast: 35–90% black text on 0–10% black background.

### ICONS

- Always label icons.
- Use icons as buttons or headings but not both.
- Don't mix and match icon families.

### AFFORDANCE

- Make buttons look like buttons and form inputs look like form inputs.
- Avoid skeuomorphism: a calendar doesn't need a paper background texture.