

MC Art Framework™ Cheat Sheet - Visual Design Protocols

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Gestalt Principles:

1. **Gestalt Principle of Similarity:** Refers to objects in a frame being perceived as being associated with one another.
2. **Gestalt Principle of Symmetry:** Symmetrical arrangements are perceived as being ordered and easy to take in.
3. **Gestalt Principle of Continuity:** Refers to when the mind “fills in” or assumes a continuation of a sequence or pattern of repetitive elements when one or more elements are missing.
4. **Gestalt Principle of Closure:** This is similar to the Gestalt Principle of Continuity but refers to geometric shapes.
5. **Gestalt Principle of Proximity:** Elements that are closer together are considered to be associated with one another.
6. **Gestalt Principle of Figure-to-Ground:** The main purpose of composition is to identify the subject of an image to the viewer. This requires that there be clear separation between the subject (“figure”) and the background (“ground”) and is accomplished through the selective use of **Contrast** (in defining the design elements of **Shape** and **Form**) and contributes to **Parity**, **Unity** and **Structure**.

Elements and Techniques of Image Design:

7. **Movement:** Refers to the viewing experience and how the image was designed.
8. **Distraction:** When there are too many similar elements in the frame, the viewer’s attention is not focussed and aimlessly “floats” around. This introduces a level of visual discord that may not be desirable in most cases.
9. **Negative Space:** Refers to the space between objects.
10. **Repetition:** This refers to multiple instances of lines or shapes that share similar attributes and relative positions thus appearing to be related to each other, being used to guide the viewer’s attention along a desired path through an image.
11. **Interruption:** This refers to a “break” in a pattern or repetitive elements.

12. **Overlap:** Occurs when one element is partially obscured by another thereby being perceived as being behind the other. Used to create a sense of depth in two dimensions.
13. **Contact:** Occurs when the edges of two or more objects touch but do not overlap. This creates a strong distracting point of interest.
14. **Anomaly:** The introduction of a different element amongst a grouping of similar ones serves to attract and focus a viewer’s attention.
15. **Highlighting:** Intentionally making a particular area(s) have a higher value than surrounding areas to draw the viewer’s attention to desired areas of an image. This is related to the design protocol of **Contrast**.
16. **Contrast:** This is used to focus a viewer’s attention by adding variety and is related to the design protocols of **Anomaly** (light and dark, large and small, straight and curved...) and **Highlighting** and to the design elements of **Shape** and **Form**.
17. **Dominance:** The bigger an object is, the more it dominates the image. This refers to the size of one object relative to others in the frame. When composing an image and arranging shapes, it is best to begin with the largest then move on to the mid-sized ones and then the smallest at the end.
18. **Perspective:** Delineates distance and depth using direction. Perspective can be leveraged to add varying degrees of three dimensional feel in two dimensions and can be a powerful compositional tool with some subject matter. It can often be used effectively to emphasize **Dominance** of an object by providing a separation and transition between foreground and background.
19. **Encapsulation:** This both separates and isolates a group of elements from surrounding ones by enclosing them to create an immediate contextual sense of importance.

Image-Frame Relationships:

20. **Tension:** Incorporating elements of movement, energy and visual weighting when designing the viewing experience adds visual interest and engages the viewer. This is achieved through the strategic arrangement of objects within the frame. What we see visually (shapes, colours, objects, space) is different from what we “experience” visually...the interplay of all of these. More tension = more attention

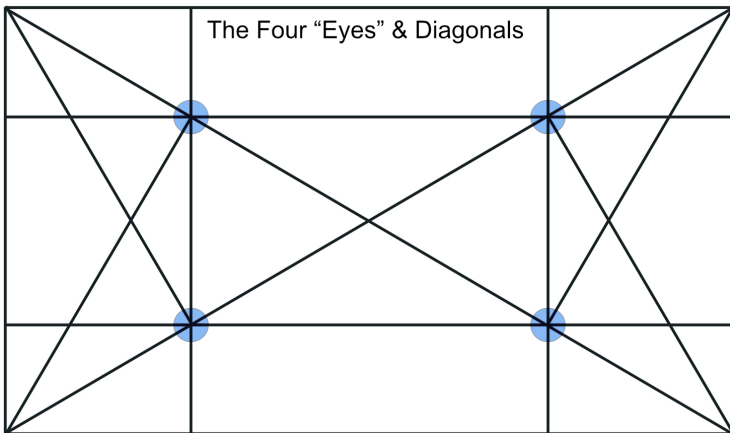
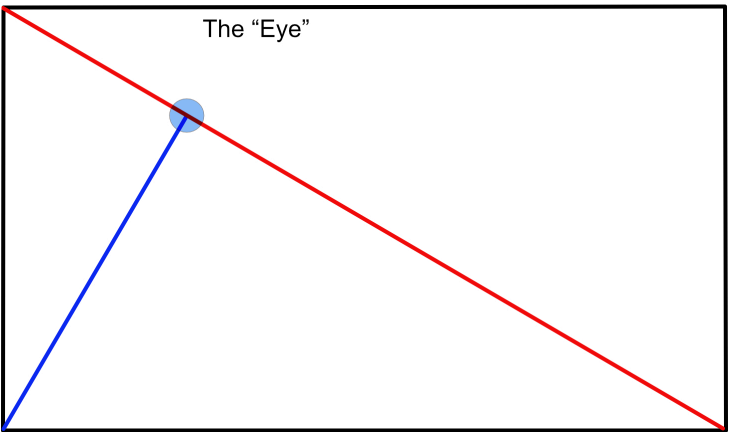
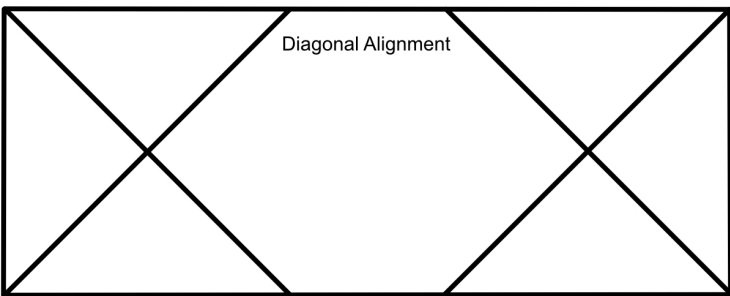
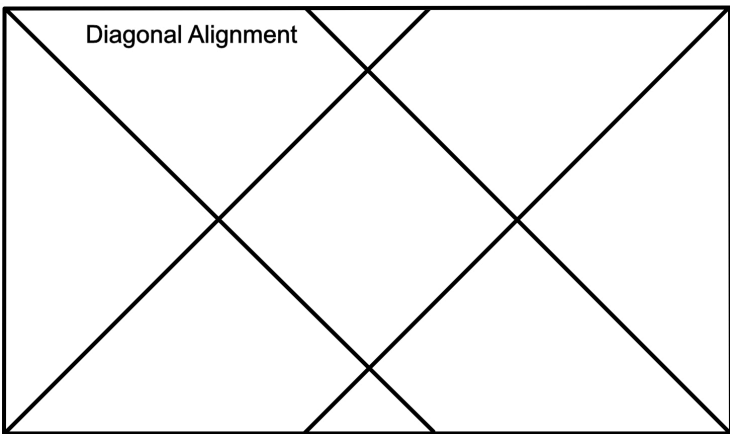
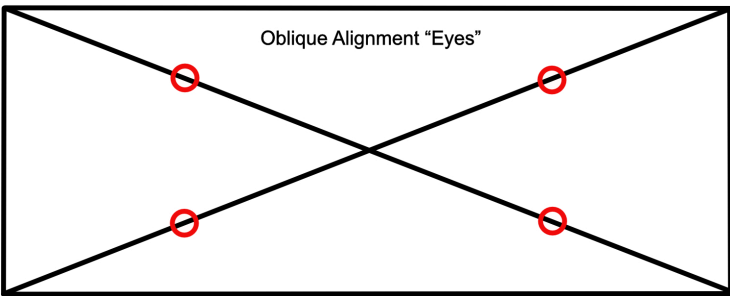
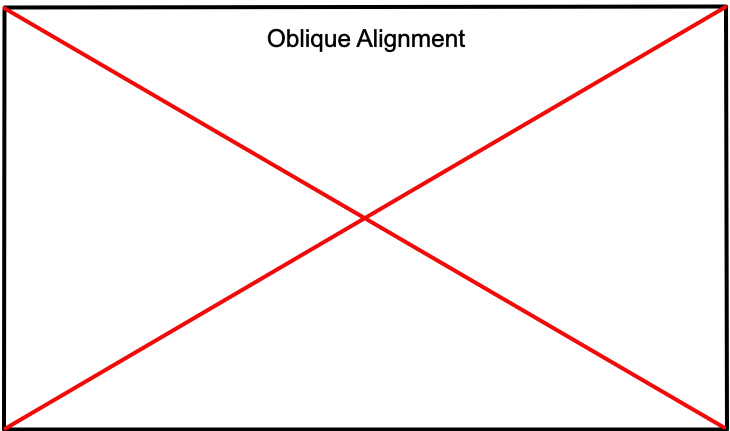
because our minds prefer a static state of rest. Too much can pull the eye in multiple directions and away from the focal point of interest.

- 21. **Frame-Edge Tension:** Created by placing or aligning objects close to the frame edges. This can serve to “box in” an image and draw the viewer’s attention back away from the frame edge or to create tension by bringing attention to what may reside outside the frame.
- 22. **Alignment:** Elements that share a common axis appear more related to each other. Aligning two or more elements in a frame can quickly bring a sense of order and “stability” to an image.
- 23. **Split Section Spatial Weighting:** Refers to relative ratios of vertically or horizontally disparate areas of a composition and their placement within the frame, the concept being, to help achieve **Parity**.
- 24. **Axes Alignment:** Picture a frame divided vertically and horizontally forming a cross. Elements placed along these axes will appear more visually balanced and “stable” because they carry less tension. The degree of tension increases as you move an object towards a corner or a frame edge or off-axis somewhere. Tension should be used sparingly because it attracts the viewer’s attention and too much will pull the eye in all directions.
- 25. **Oblique Alignment:** A very powerful compositional technique that refers to alignment of objects along the “X” axes of the frame but not directly on an axis or very near the corners of the frame. The midpoint between each corner and the centre of the X represents locations where our eyes naturally focus. These locations are referred to as “eyes”.
- 26. **Diagonal Alignment:** This refers to aligning shapes based on the letter X where the lines of the X intersect at right angles. The concept is to have two Xs at either side of the frame where the axes of each X run from the corners of the frame and intersect at right angles. This is not dependent on frame dimensions–the X shapes may overlap in the centre of the frame or be separated by any amount of space. Objects or implied lines align to the diagonal axes of the Xs and should not be placed on the axes near the corners of the frame. Note that this is not the same as **Oblique Alignment** where the axes run from corner to corner of the frame.

- 27. **Golden Section:** This is based on the Golden Ratio found in nature. Picture a line running diagonally from frame corner to frame corner that is perpendicularly bisected (90 degree angle) by a line originating from one of the other corners. The intersection point of these lines is referred to as the “eye” because this is the place where our eyes tend to focus on naturally. This is only one of four “eyes”. Others are formed when these lines are laterally reversed and vertically inverted. Aligning elements along these axes or at the points of intersection contributes to achieving **Parity**.
- 28. **Parity:** This refers to achieving an overall visual balance between the arrangement of the objects within the frame relative to the frame boundaries themselves and the overall viewing experience. **Parity has an inverse relationship with Tension**– there must be an equilibrium (equalized balance) achieved between the two in any successful design.
- 29. **Unity:** The idea behind the concept of Unity is that elements must support each other and work together towards a common goal. Unity is the measure of how well design elements belong together. Design elements should not be arbitrarily placed within the frame. Unity adds order to a design but if overdone a design can become static and dull.
- 30. **Structure:** This refers to the level of minimalism and organization achieved in a design and contributes to achieving **Unity** and **Parity**.

Most Visually Powerful Protocols to Use	Design Elements
- Negative Space	1. Shape: Areas defined by edges within the piece
- Repetition	2. Form: 3-D length, width or depth
- Gestalt Principle of Continuity	3. Value: Shading used to emphasize shape and form
- Anomaly	4. Line: The visual path that enables the eye to move within the piece
- Contrast	5. Texture: Surface qualities which translate into tactile illusions
- Highlighting	6. Pattern: Repetitive areas of an image
- Frame-Edge Tension	7. Color: Hues with their various values and intensities
- Axes, Oblique and Diagonal Alignments	
- Golden Section	
- Structure	
- Movement	

**MC Art Design Protocols - Image-Frame
Relationship Diagrams**



The four eyes determine the layout of the grid and diagonals.

Compositional elements are placed on and in alignment with any of these points or lines. Care must be taken to draw the viewer's attention "around" the corners through the use of design protocols and elements.

Images designed in this manner embody a "constrained" **Tension** that achieves a balance between a dynamic image and **Parity**.

This is the **most effective method of aligning compositional elements for dramatic impact**.

You can align compositional elements within a frame according to the following eight letter shapes to add visual interest, movement and impact:

1. T	5. Z
2. O	6. X
3. S	7. C
4. L	8. V

