

# DESIGN ELEMENTS AND ART PRINCIPLES FOR 4-H EXHIBITS



## The Language of Art

Art is created through experimentation using a variety of tools and organizational strategies. The tools of art are not just brushes, paints and palettes, but rather elements of design. How the tools or elements are used or organized creates the principles of art and design. Elements of design and principles of art are the core vocabulary to art. Think of them like a recipe to create your work. The elements are like the ingredients and the principles are the instructions. By using elements, you create principles, such as "By repeating lines I created rhythm."

Most works use the majority of the elements or principles in some way in the exhibit, but they don't have to use all of them. When discussing what you did and learned, go beyond listing which ones were used and explain how they were used. For example, explain "I used a bright intensity of the color red and sharp diagonal line to express anger in my painting." Focus on using the most relevant terms for your specific exhibit.

### Design Elements

- Line can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, or curved. Lines can vary in thickness or help create a mood.
- Shapes are made from connected lines. How they are arranged determines the design. They can be geometric or organic.
- Color is described with the words hue, value, and intensity. Hues are names of colors. Value is lightness or darkness of a hue. Intensity refers to the brightness or dullness of a hue. Light, intermediate, and dark values define parts of objects and set off one area of a design from another. Has a color scheme been followed?
- Texture is a surface characteristic that can be touched or seen. Contrasting textures add interest.
- Space is divided into negative and positive areas.

### Art Principles

- Rhythm is organized movement. Repeating an element (i.e. lines) will produce rhythm.
- Proportion compares the amount, size, or number.
- Emphasis captures your attention by unusual use of line, shape, texture, space, or value.
- Balance gives a design stability.
  - Radial balance -- same around a center point;
  - Asymmetrical balance -- dissimilar;
  - Bisymmetrical balance -- same on both sides.
  - Unity is the union of the elements in a design.

**4-H**  
GROWING TOGETHER



## Resources

- [Color Wheel](#) (4H 633)
- [Design: Exploring the Elements and Principles](#) (4H 634)
- [Celebrate Art Level 1](#) (4H 635A)
- [Art in Your Future Level 2](#) (4H 635B)
- [Visual Art Leader Guide](#) (4H 635 LDR)
- [Sketchbook Crossroads; Drawing, Fiber and Sculpture](#) (4H 638A)
- [Portfolio Pathways: Painting, Printing and Graphic Design](#) (4H 638B)
- [National 4-H Visual Arts](#) online resources