Grid Systems: Principles of Organizing Type

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Typographic Hierarchy

All visual messages have a hierachal order to the information presented, that is, an order of reading the information according to importance. It is essential for the designer to determine a logical hierarchal order for all elements within a message before beginning design. Knowledge and understanding of the content of the message is essential for this process. Once the content has been organized, the designer can rationally make visual decisions that support that order.

In this series of projects, students select a historic date and develop a title and paragraph of descriptive copy. Each selection must have a title, day, year, and description paragraph. Using only one type face, size, weight, slope, and color, the student explores the variability of text element position in relationship to hierarchy by consciously ordering the content of the message.

Visual Message Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Identification of the AIDS Virus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>April 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Identification of a virus thought to cause Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was announced by federal researchers on April 23, 1984. The disease destroys the body’s natural immune system and is considered to be ultimately fatal. By the date of discovery, AIDS was estimated to have killed 4,000 Americans.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Laura Bartello, 1996
As the variables of the history project are investigated, the essential elements of managing text blocks are discovered. Initially, an auto lead at 20 percent of the type size, the default leading mode on the computer, is the only variation in leading employed. Through repetition and experimentation, the visual variety of texture and the subsequent changes in meaning and readability through texture change is apparent.

Sans serif faces such as Helvetica and Univers 65, which is used in the examples below, require leading for readability due to their very large x-height. The large x-height diminishes the space between lines making the text more tightly leaded and more difficult to read. The same is true of very widely leaded sans serif faces—the space becomes so generous that the eye needs to focus on the text more carefully.

Identification of a virus thought to cause Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was announced by federal researchers on April 23, 1984. The disease destroys the body's natural immune system and is considered to be ultimately fatal. By the date of discovery, AIDS was estimated to have killed 4,000 Americans.

Negative leading yields a very dense texture and readability is diminished.

Wide leading yields a very airy texture.
The designer can choose the standard paragraph alignments such as flush left, flush right, centered, or justified that are a part of every text processing software. The designer can also combine alignments or choose a variation within an alignment.

Flush left, rag right alignment is often thought to be the most readable form of alignment. This alignment provides the reader with proportional spacing throughout the text lines and avoids the changes of spacing that can occur in justified text. The reader also has a vertical left edge to return to on the next line of type, which enhances the rhythm of reading.

Justified text makes for a firm rectangular texture of type that is texturally pleasing to the eye. The computer attempts to justify each line and when a word cannot be broken by hyphenation the result is uneven word spacing (below right).

**Identification of a virus thought to cause Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)** was announced by federal researchers on April 23, 1984. The disease destroys the body’s natural immune system and is considered to be ultimately fatal. By the date of discovery, AIDS was estimated to have killed 4,000 Americans.

**Flush Left Alignment**

**Identification of a virus thought to cause Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)** was announced by federal researchers on April 23, 1984. The disease destroys the body’s natural immune system and is considered to be ultimately fatal. By the date of discovery, AIDS was estimated to have killed 4,000 Americans.

**Flush Right Alignment**

**Identification of a virus thought to cause Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)** was announced by federal researchers on April 23, 1984. The disease destroys the body’s natural immune system and is considered to be ultimately fatal. By the date of discovery, AIDS was estimated to have killed 4,000 Americans.

**Centered Alignment**

**Identification of a virus thought to cause Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)** was announced by federal researchers on April 23, 1984. The disease destroys the body’s natural immune system and is considered to be ultimately fatal. By the date of discovery, AIDS was estimated to have killed 4,000 Americans.

**Justified Alignment**

The light red rectangles are the width of normal word spacing and show the uneven and excessive word spacing caused by justification.
Identification of the AIDS Virus

Identification of a virus thought to cause Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was announced by federal researchers on April 23, 1984. The disease destroys the body's natural immune system and is considered to be ultimately fatal. By the date of discovery, AIDS was estimated to have killed 4,000 Americans.

April 23, 1984
Identification of a virus thought to cause Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was announced by federal researchers on April 23, 1984. The disease destroys the body’s natural immune system and is considered to be ultimately fatal. By the date of discovery, AIDS was estimated to have killed 4,000 Americans.

Identification of the AIDS Virus

April 23, 1984

Identification of the AIDS Virus

April 23, 1984
After the hierarchy exercises, an acute awareness of the order of importance of each element in the composition develops. The next phase of learning looks at the development of contrast within the composition. At this point there are many more options than constraints. The complexity of composition increases but so, too, does the dynamic vitality of the work.

The final phase of the project involves the combination of words and images. Found images are used to enhance and emphasize meaning with the focus, again, on maintaining a hierarchy within the composition.
Identification of a virus thought to cause Acquired Immuno deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was announced by federal researchers on April 23, 1984. The disease destroys the body's natural immune system and is considered to be ultimately fatal. By the date of discovery, AIDS was estimated to have killed 4,000 Americans.

April 23, 1984
Identification of the AIDS Virus

Identification of a virus thought to cause Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was announced on April 23, 1984. The disease destroys the body's natural immune system and is considered to be ultimately fatal. By the date of discovery, AIDS was estimated to have killed 40,000 Americans.