Creating a **functional layout** for *print* and *screen* can be a daunting task if you're new to the subject. This short guide will you give you a brief overview of five common problems and how to deal with them.

# Layout
# 101

# ▌ Preparation

You cannot build a functional lay-out without knowing about the content. This is why you should spend a lot of your time preparing, before you start with your first sketch. You need to gather as much information as possible. Make sure you have all the text and images. If there's no content available, find a suitable placeholder. Review the material and discuss it with others. There are some questions that need to be answered:

**Why do you need a design?**

**What's the purpose?**

**Who should see it? Who will see it?**

Where, how, and for how long will it be seen?

# ❚❚ Hierarchy

Once you know about the situation and you know about the content, it will be easy to establish a clear hierarchy: Make a list with all graphical objects (Lines of text, boxes with text and images) and order them according to their importance.

Your design should always reflect that hierarchy. You can increase the **size** and the **contrast** of an element to increase its significance. Also, the **position** of an element has an influence on its significance within the layout (elements at the top / center appear more prominent) but this can be overlooked as long as the other parameters are distinct enough.

regular
information
**additional
information**
*most important information*

**most important
information**
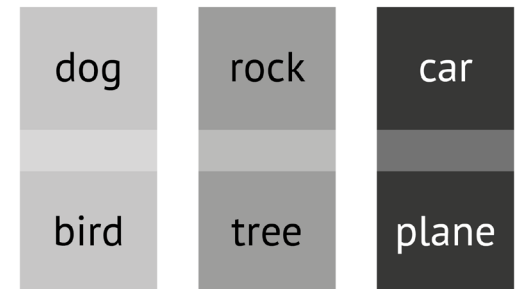regular
information

*additional information*

*additional information*
regular information

**most
important
information**

# III Structure

If you have a group of equally significant elements in one place, you need a clear **visual structure**. Combine similiar elements into visual blocks so the reader can easily comprehend the content in a short time.

Needless to say, there are different ways to consolidate a group of elements. The second example uses three categories: *„animals"*, *„nature"* and *„manmade"*, the third example uses only two: *„dead"* and *„living"*. Part of the job is to find the most suitable way to group your elements.

| car | tree | dog |
| rock | plane | bird |

| dog | rock | car |
| bird | tree | plane |

| car | plane | rock |
| tree | dog | bird |

# **IV**        Space

Leave enough room for *„empty"* space (often called **white space**). Think of your graphical elements as tiny creatures that live on your canvas. You'll have to put them into cages to provide a comprehensible structure, but they need enough room to *„breathe"*. Sometimes you don't have a choice because you're working in real-

ly small dimensions, but as long as there's plenty of room on your canvas, do not clutter it up.

If you're not sure how much space your elements need: *too much* is usually better than *too little*.

| CLUTTERED | COMPACT | RELAXED | LOOSE |

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# Ⅴ  Alignment

If your layout looks messy and confusing, it's probably due to bad alignment. Keep it clean and simple by using **as few lines as possible to seperate the canvas** until you've reached the structure of your sketch. If you don't have a reason to break the lines, don't break them.

Once the major areas (*head, content, …*) of your layout are lined up, it's time to align the contained elements as well. A quick way to do this is to define a universal margin for all elements (*image #3*) in order to create an internal grid (*image #4*). This will result in an organized overall appearance.