

Learning Activity: Visual Grammar

Learning Activity Goal: Learn design vocabulary by creating visual definitions.

Instructions:




Letters and words are visuals just as pictures are. As we consider the definition of visual literacy and begin working with the vocabulary of design, we will also work at displaying these terms visually. Consider the following video. How do the words put into use the design terms you have been reading about? [The Girl Effect](#)

Visual design experts call the elements of design “visual grammar,” which is a very helpful way of thinking about these terms. Similar to The Girl Effect, we will use the meanings of words to help others visualize them. We'll start with design elements and other terms gleaned from your reading. At the end of this document is a list of possible terms to help. The following pictures, created in PowerPoint, are some samples; we are looking for simple and clear.

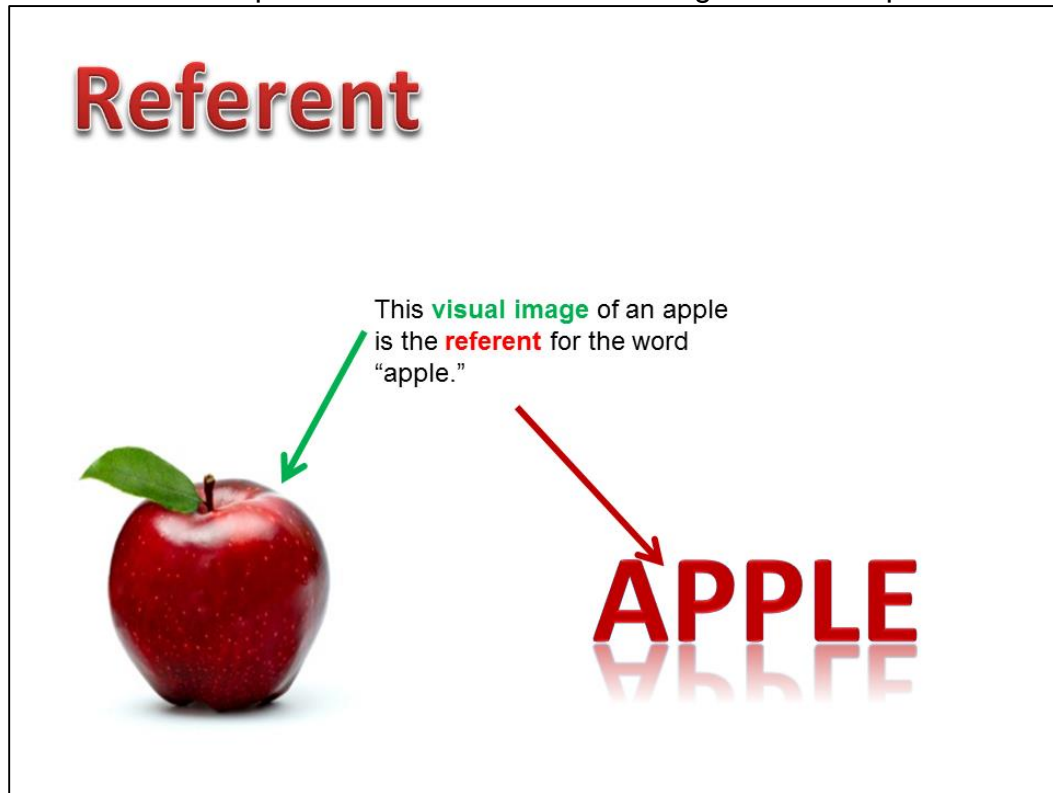
This visual includes multiple ways the definition can be applied:

Arrangement...

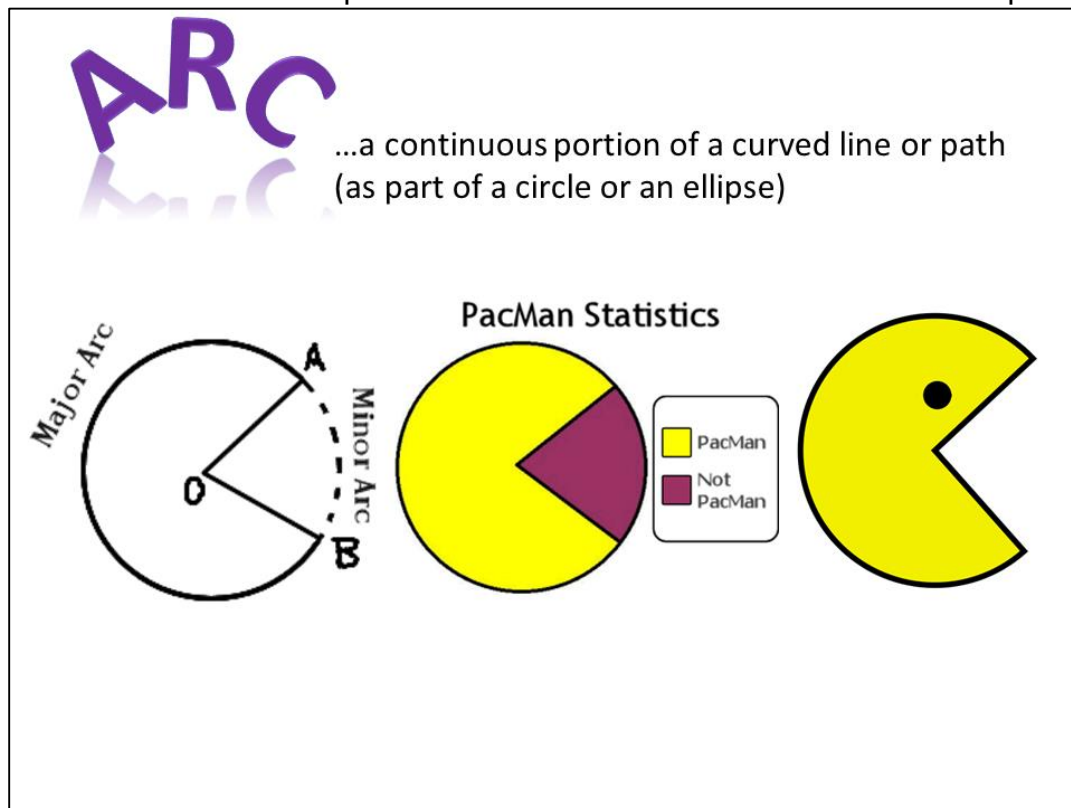
...a structure or combination of things arranged in a particular way or for a specific purpose



This definition helps the reader understand through a literal depiction:



This definition uses a repeated theme to draw attention to the visual aspect of the term:



To create your own visual grammar examples:

1. Select at least 5 visual grammar terms that you believe are important for your learners, for your field, or for 21st century learners.
2. Create slides for each of these definitions. Include citations if the definition is not common knowledge. Recommended tools:
 - PowerPoint or Google Docs
 - Prezi
 - Powtoon
 - Prezentit
 - SlideRocket
3. The slides need to emphasize visual explanations of the vocabulary. The pictures should explain the definition. We are not concerned about music, transitions, or animations. The emphasis for this activity is on pictures.
4. Each slide should clearly show the term and definition (remember to cite if the term is not common knowledge).
5. Provide a visual definition for the term.
6. Include a footer with your name and slide number (modify this per the tool you choose).
7. Requirements for visuals:
 - Visuals need to be copyright-free or used with permission.
 - Visuals should be creatively arranged and selected. Do not use visuals that have been specifically designed to demonstrate visual design grammar terms, and do not use visuals that someone else has published to demonstrate these terms. Push your creativity! For example, the image below is much too obvious (the term is perspective).



8. You may select any terms you wish, but justify your choices and explain your visuals in a 2 to 3 paragraph reflection that you submit with your slides. Use the “Add Comments” section of the assignment link to post your reflection. Please use common sense when submitting the slides; since we are allowing you to choose the tool, there is no one right way. For example, if you created your definitions in PowerPoint, you would upload the slides. If you use a web-based tool to create your definitions, you would include the URL with your reflection in the comments box.

Learning Activity Grading Criteria: Most Learning Activities have the same grading criteria with levels at proficient, competent, and novice. The rubrics are embedded in the Blackboard grading system, so make sure to click on “rubric” when reviewing your grades.

Proficient

- The project is a stellar example of the related course concepts, clearly demonstrating the concepts through thoughtful arrangement and planning. The project could serve as an exemplar for the learning objective.
- The reflection is at least 300 words, elegantly styled, and adds insight to the issues provided in the activity description and related topics.
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Competent

- The project demonstrates critical thinking, thoughtful display of related course concepts, and achieves the learning objective.
- The reflection is at least 300 words, well-written, and explores the issues provided in the activity description.
- The project is free of punctuation, grammar, spelling, and usage errors. The project is correctly uploaded/submitted.

Novice

- The project demonstrates some understanding of the related course concepts, although one or more ideas might not be clearly demonstrated. The project achieves the learning objective.
- The reflection is at least 300 words, written in a style appropriate for a graduate-level course, and begins exploring the issues provided in the activity description.
- Although a few errors in punctuation, grammar, spelling, usage, or submission appear, they do not detract from clarity of the project or the reflection.

List of Terms:

In addition to the Williams’ text, another one of our readings has some useful terms for learning visual grammar. Anne Bamford’s (2005) article talks about syntax and semantics of visual literacy. Here is her list of visual syntax terms:

- scale
- dimension

- motion
- boldness
- arrangement
- framing
- depth
- dimension
- color
- light
- shadow
- flow of movement
- juxtaposition of images
- perspective
- relative size of items within images
- line
- shape
- direction
- tone
- scale
- balance
- harmony
- contrast
- emphasis
- manipulation
- rhythm
- parody
- editing
- cropping
- labeling
- simplification
- symbolism
- metaphor
- layering
- motion
- location
- seriation
- space
- manipulation
- illumination
- resemblance
- visual/text relationship
- foreground
- background