

# Contrast > Issaquah Schools Foundation

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 [isfdn.org/contrast-reference-page](https://isfdn.org/contrast-reference-page)



**Contrast** is a principle of design that refers to the arrangement of opposite elements or using opposing qualities next to each other so as to create visual interest, excitement, and drama. For example, large vs. small shapes, black and white (contrasting values), organic/curvy and geometric/angular (contrasting lines/shapes/forms), and rough and smooth (contrasting textures).

Contrast intensifies and keeps the viewer alert. The greater the contrast, the more something will stand out and call attention to itself. Contrast can also be used to set the mood or tone of the work. High contrast makes a work more vibrant, vigorous, brash and lively - it "pops" more. Low-contrast work is more quiet, calm, subtle, reflective, soothing.

Contrast can be used to strengthen, enhance or enlarge upon a particular point of interest, drawing the viewer's attention to a focal point within the piece.

The colors white and black provide the greatest degree of contrast, easily demonstrated by a discussion around positive and negative space.

Complementary colors also highly contrast with one another.

## References

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Esaak, Shelley. "What is the Definition of Contrast in Art?" ThoughtCo, Jun. 22, 2018.  
Flyeschool, Elements of Art and Principles of Design, Contrast.

## Sample Projects

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Using a wide brush, on plain paper create the following examples of contrast:

- Thick line next to thin
- Warm color next to cool color
- Rough texture next to smooth

- Large shape next to small
- Triangular shape next to circular
- Vertical direction next to horizontal

Make a list of descriptive words with their context and opposite such as:

- hot            temperature    cold
- up            direction            down

Spend 10 minutes studying the sky and where it meets the earth. Discover and record the contrasts that occur.