THE MEMORABLE POSTER

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR VISUAL DESIGN

22nd of October 2026

Karlijn Kouwer

PsykSTIP day

TOPIC OVERVIEW

Setting up a document

- Size of your poster
- Margins and bleeds
- Rule of thirds

1

Gathering ideas and inspiration

- Knowing your audience
- Determine a main message
- Gather ideas and inspiration

2

Making a sketch

- Create sketch(es) for your lay-out and/or main visual items

3

Creating your design

- Visual hierarchy
- Movement
- Color use
- Fonts

4

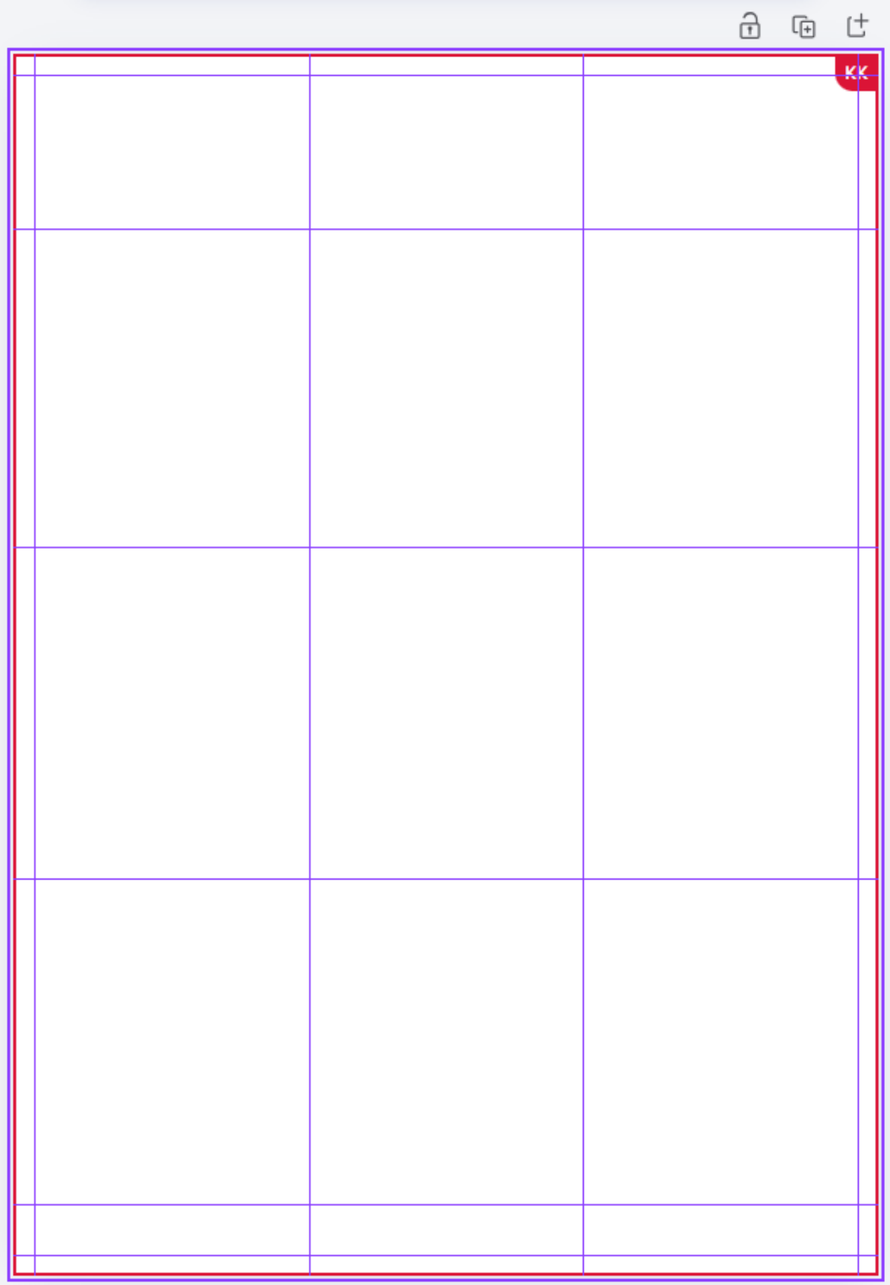
SETTING UP YOUR DOCUMENT

- Use margins and bleeds in your document

Margin	Bleed	Size
15-20 mm	3 - 5 mm	A0
10 - 15 mm	3 - 5 mm	A1

Rule of thirds

- Guidelines that break the design into a 3x3 grid
- Using the four intersection points for a dominant visual element can create a balanced and organized design
- Template for today's workshop is prepared for you



GATHERING IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

- **First:** What is the audience at your conference?
- **Second:** Which keywords describe the topic of your poster presentation?
- **Third:** If you would describe your project in one or two sentences, what would it be?

Audience

- PhD conference (different backgrounds)
- Expert conference (on e.g. your topic, methods)

Key words

Anxiety

Arterial spin labelling

Aging

Activity tracker (Sleep and PA)

Magnetic resonance spectroscopy

Brief description project

- The project links sleep (and physical activity) profiles to brain metabolite levels, cerebral blood flow (and anxiety).
  - First poster: sleep and PA; YA
  - Second poster: sleep; YA & OA; anxiety

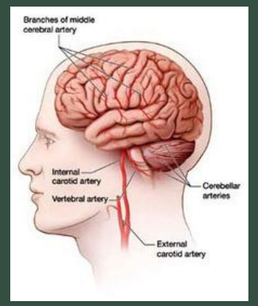
GATHERING IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

- **Fourth:** What types of visual elements do you need to present this visually?
- **Fifth:** What can you use as inspiration for your visual elements?
- **Sixth:** Where are you going to save your ideas and inspiration for future reference?

Types of elements

- Pictures
- Drawn / designed elements
- Tables
- Graphs
- Etc.

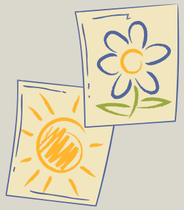
Inspiration



Saving your ideas

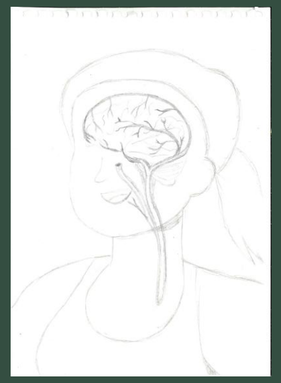
- Notebook
- Folder on your computer
- For other types of designs: Pinterest

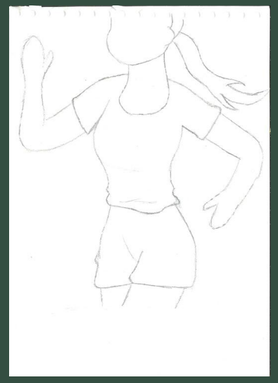
MAKING A SKETCH



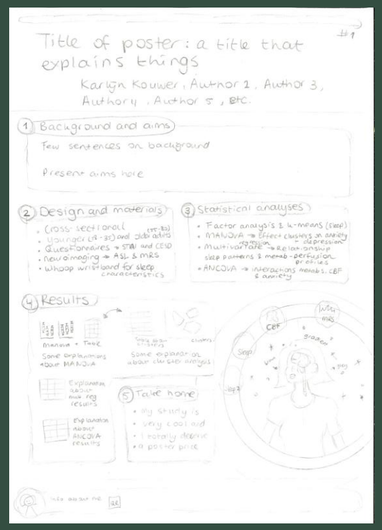
- A sketch can help to get an idea for different possible lay-outs for your poster
- You can make sketches for your main visual elements
  - You can use your inspiration images!
- A sketch is not the goal in itself; don't try to make it perfect

Main visual elements





Lay-out ideas



CREATING YOUR DESIGN

Visual hierarchy

- Focal point
- Balancer
- Subordinate

1

Movement

- Helps to guide your poster

2

White space

- Negative space in a poster

3

Balance

- Symmetry
- Assymetry
- Radial

4

Fonts

- Fonts vs. typeface
- Emphasis with fonts
- Font sizes for your poster

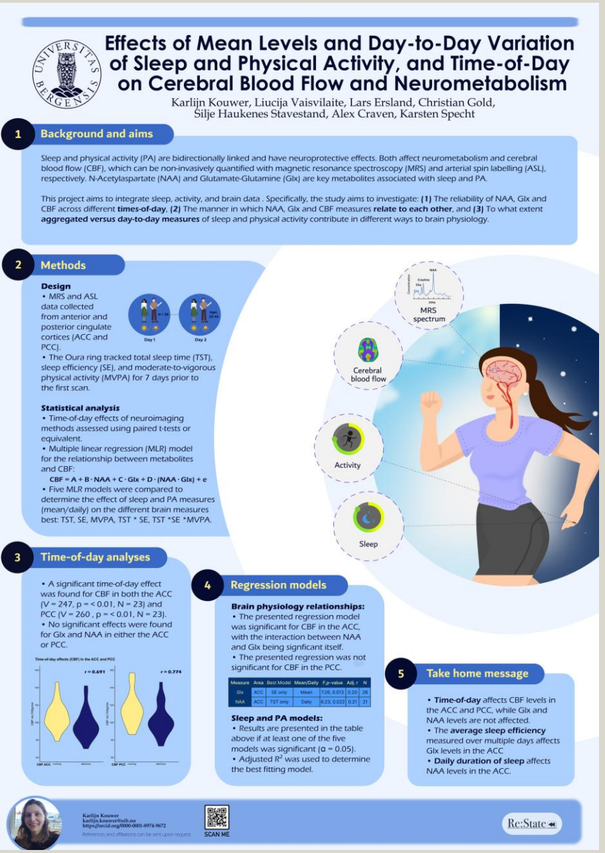
5

Color use

- Dimensions of colors
- Color combinations
- How to choose a color design

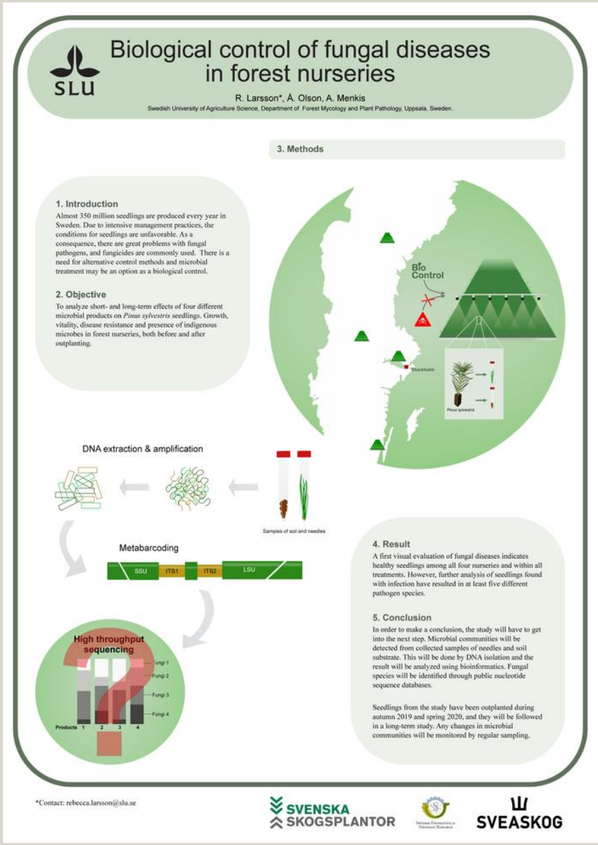
6

VISUAL HIERARCHY

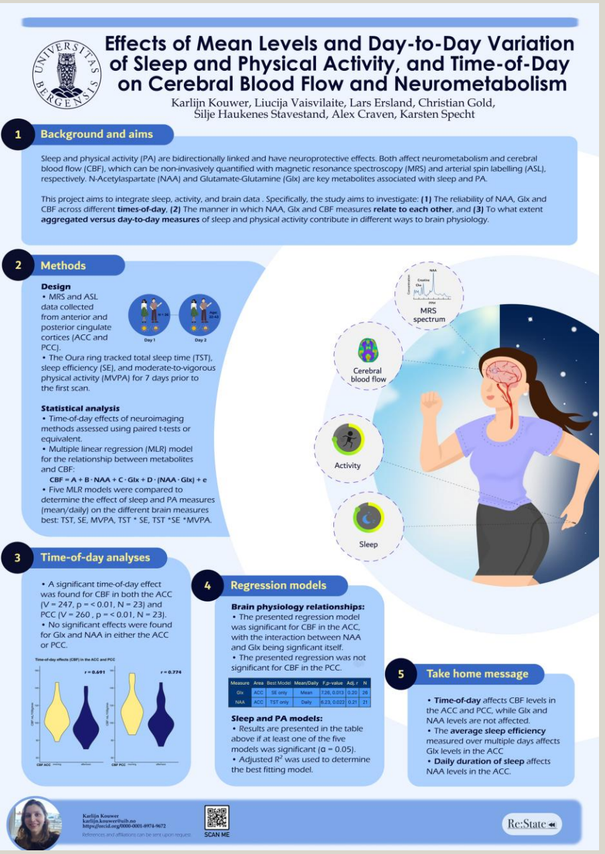


Levels of dominance

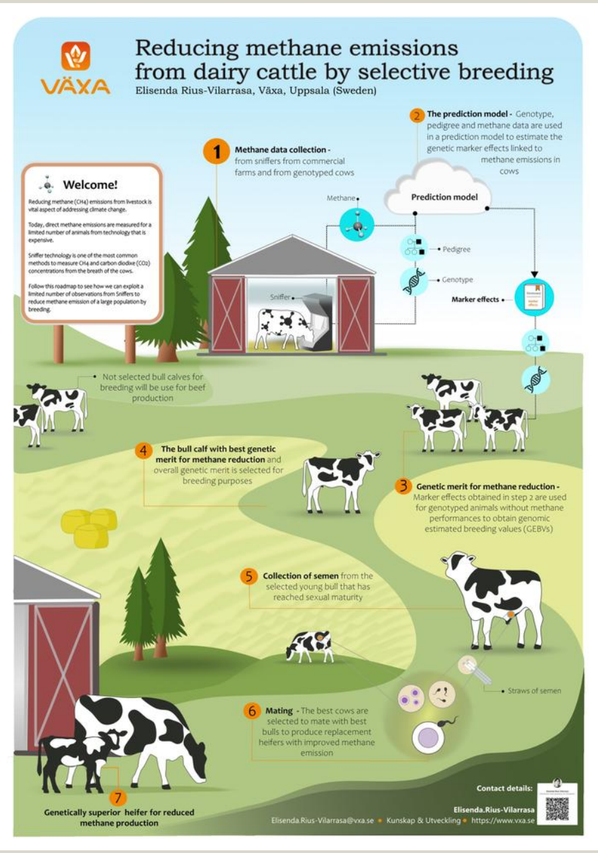
- Focal point or dominant
  - Point in a design that first draws your attention
  - Gets the most emphasis in a design
  - Emphasis can be created through size, color, shape, white space etc.
- Balancer or sub-dominant
  - One or more elements that get secondary emphasis
- Subordinate
  - Has the least visual weight in your design



MOVEMENT

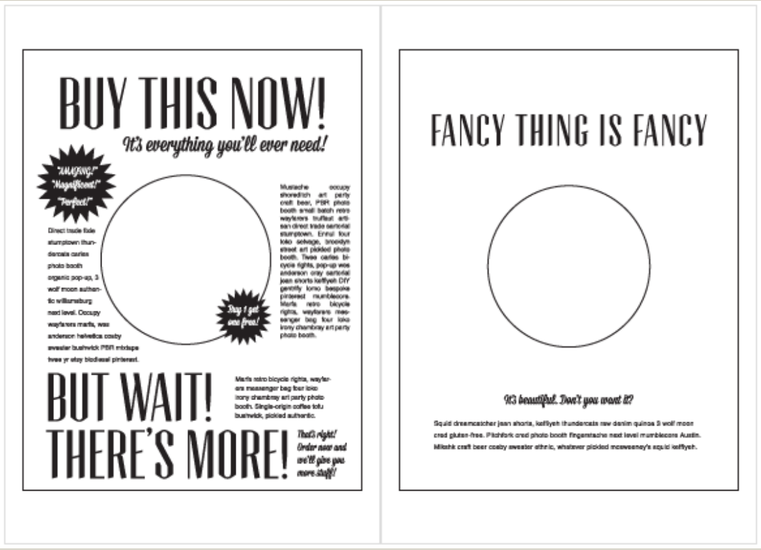


- Lines or shapes can create a sense of motion in your design
  - E.g. arrows, “rivers”
- These elements that create motion help to visually guide someone through your poster



WHITE SPACE

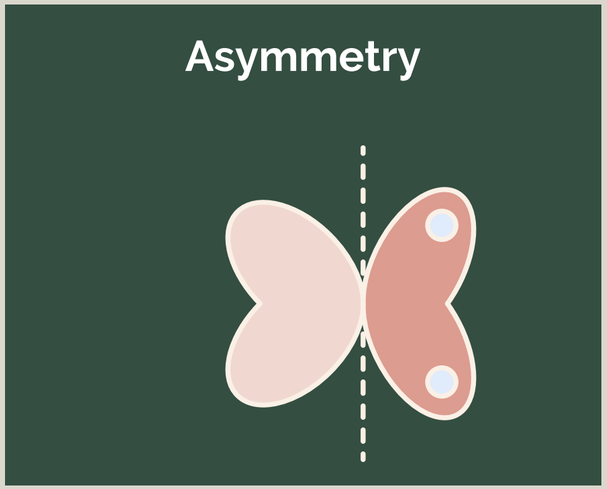
- Also called negative space
- Gives “breathing room” to your elements
  - Allows them to stand out more
  - Avoids a cluttered look

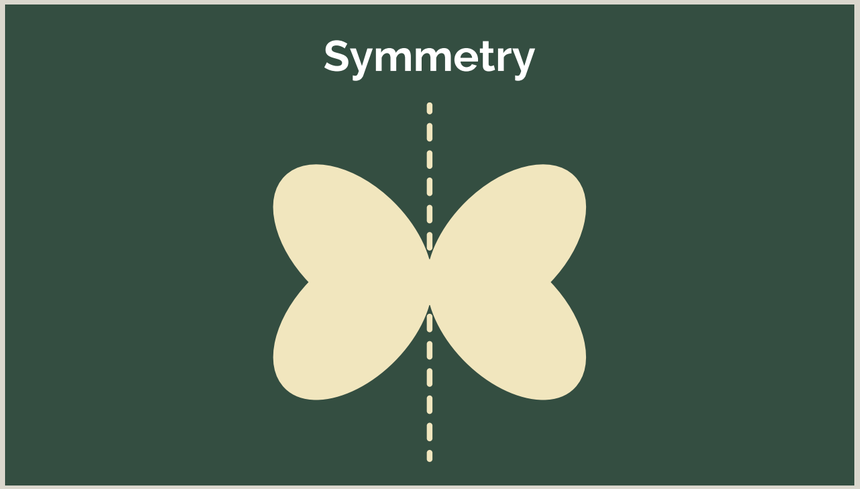


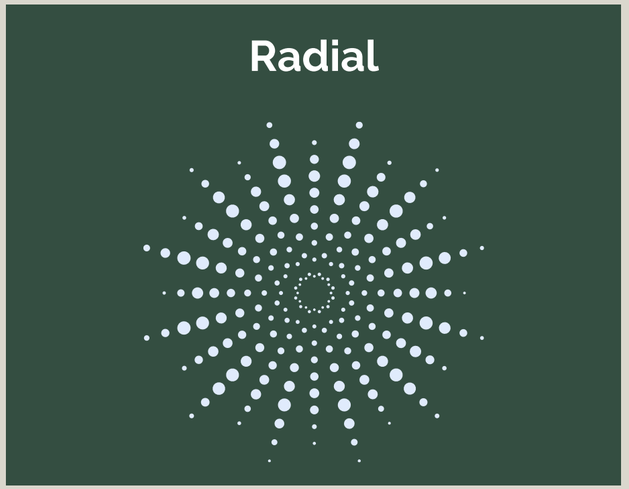
Both images from https://www.nikkiarnell.net/white-space.html

BALANCE

- **Symmetry:** Elements have a similar visual weight across a central line
  - More formal
- **Asymmetry:** Elements have a similar visual weight across a central line
  - More playful
- **Radial:** Elements radiate out from a central point







FONT VS. TYPEFACE

Typeface

- Arial
- Times New Roman

- Times New Roman regular
- **Times New Roman Bold**
- *Times New Roman Italic*
- Times New Roman MT Condensed Regular
- Etc

Font

Times New Roman, Italic, 30 pt.

TYPES OF TYPEFACES

Serif	Sans Serif	Slab Serif	Script	Display
With “feet”	Without “feet”	Thick, block-like “feet”	Mimics handwriting	Unique, meant to stand out
Trustworthy	Modern	Confident	Elegant	Expressive
Block text, headlines	Headlines, block text	Headlines	Drop caps, decorative	Headlines, decorative
Palatino	Helvetica	Rockwell	*Allura*	WESTON

CREATING EMPHASIS WITH FONTS

There are several ways to create emphasis in your poster with a poster. Below are examples:

Bold text

Italicized text

Underlined text

A bigger size

Text in a different color

Text in a different font

Using multiple at once is not necessary and visually quite chaotic

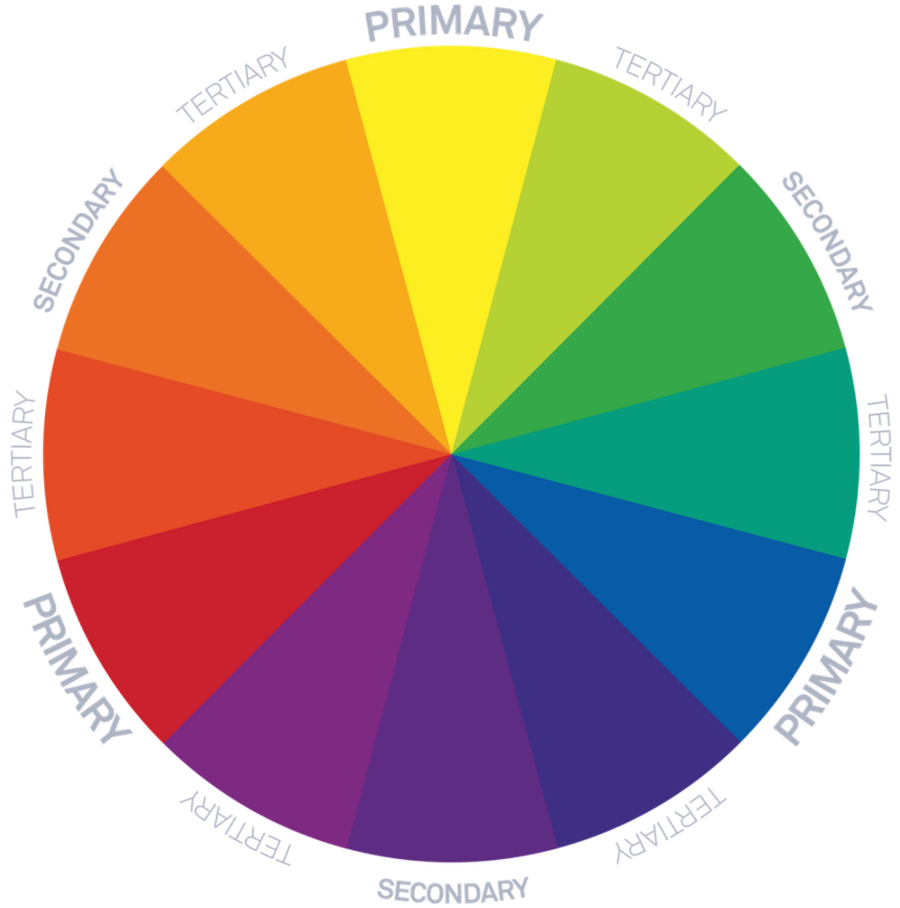
RECOMMENDED FONT SIZES

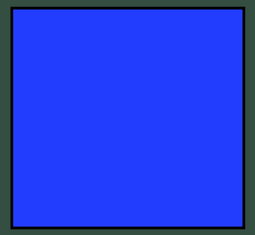
Element	A0	A1
Title	80 -100	60 - 80
Headings	40 - 56	36 - 44
Body text	28 - 36	24 - 32

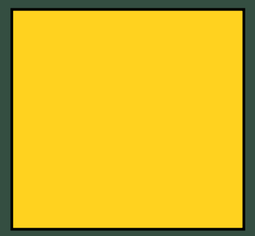
COLOR USE

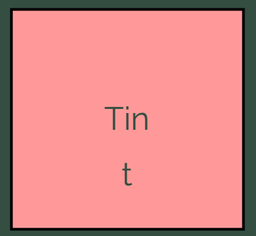
TYPES OF COLORS

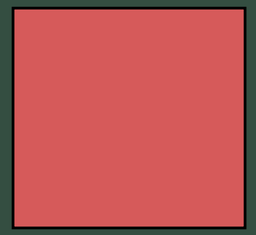
- Primary colors
- Secondary colors
- Tertiary colors









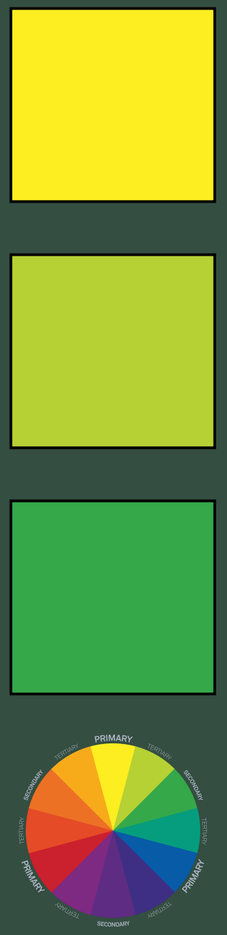


Hue
Which color?

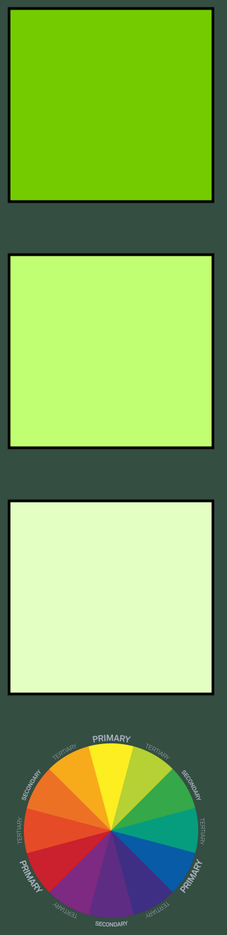
Value
Darkness / Lightness

Saturation
Brightness of a color

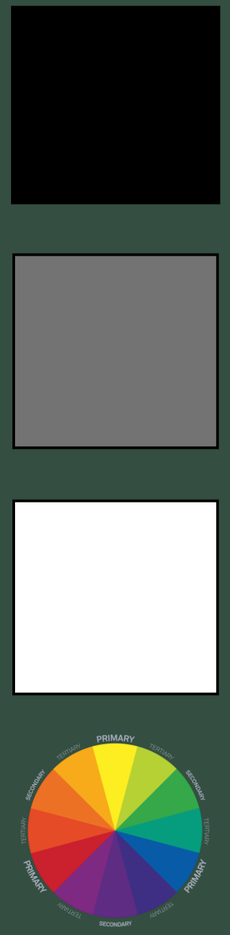
Color dimensions



Analogous

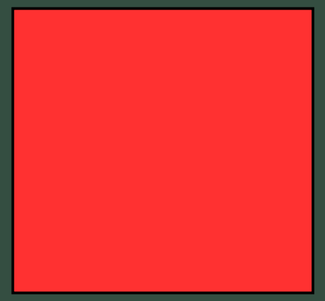


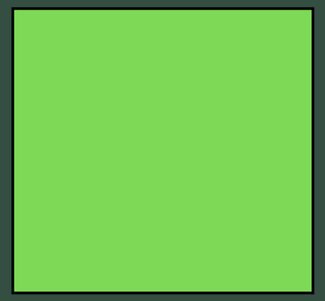
Monochromatic

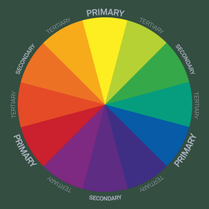


Achromatic

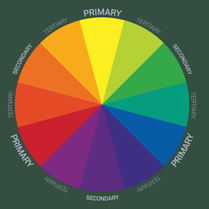
Combining colors: High level of color harmony







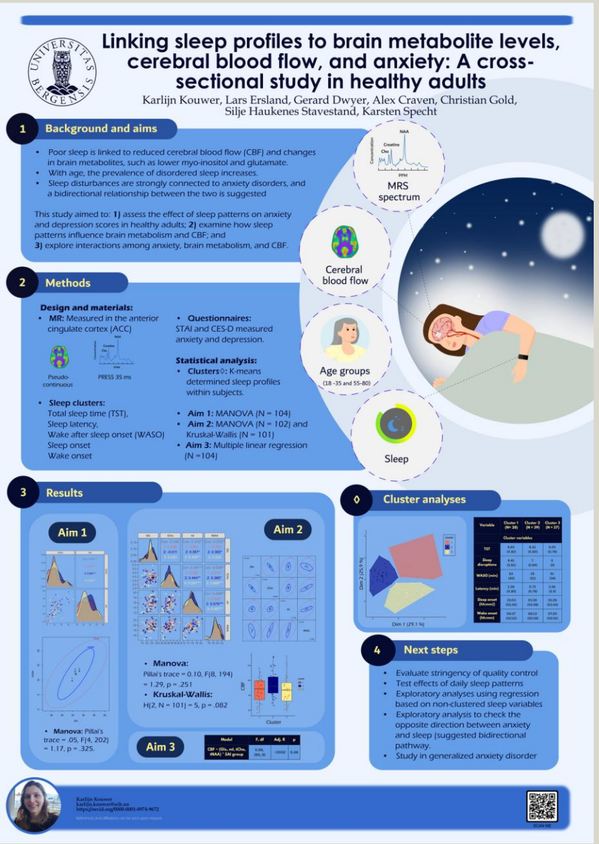
Complementary



Split complementary

Tetradic
Double complementary

HOW TO CHOOSE A COLOR DESIGN?

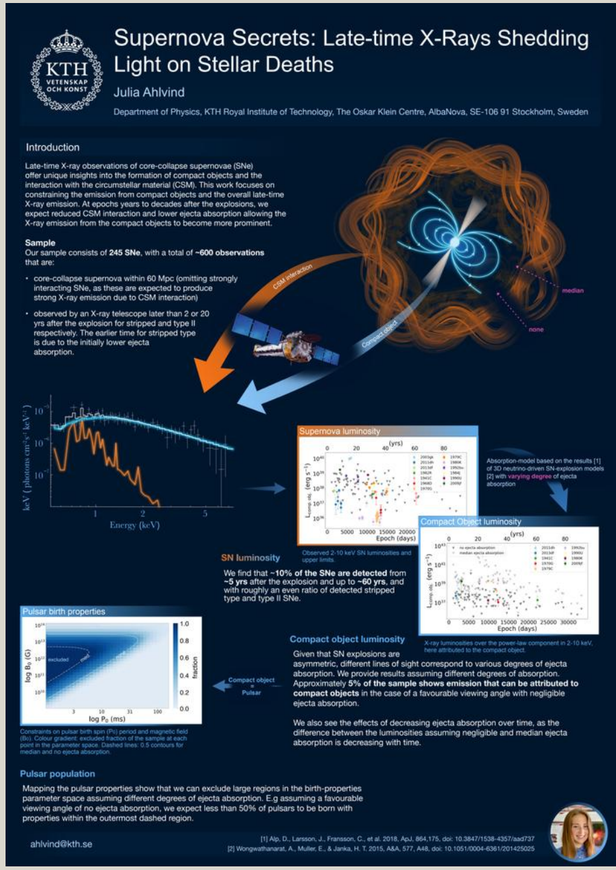


What to consider:

- Main color(s) for a design
  - Driven by e.g. main visual element, or institute template
- Proportions of colors
  - Contrasting colors in smaller doses can create emphasis
  - Dominant color(s) used 60% or more

Tools for choosing a color design

- Coolors link
- Paletton link



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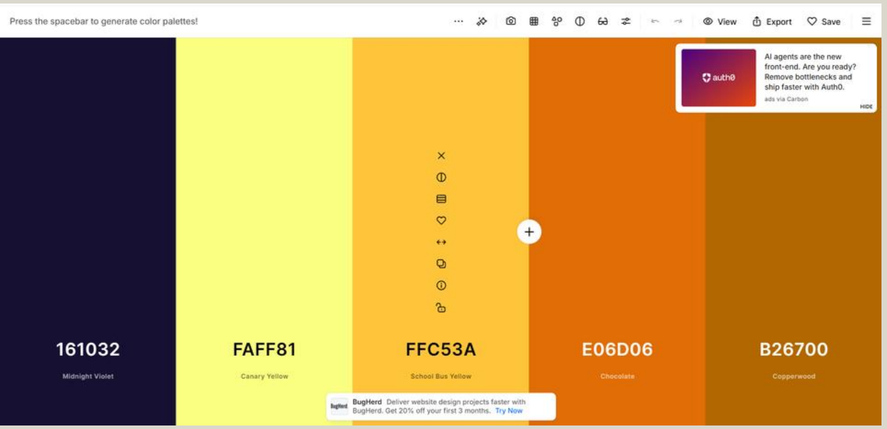

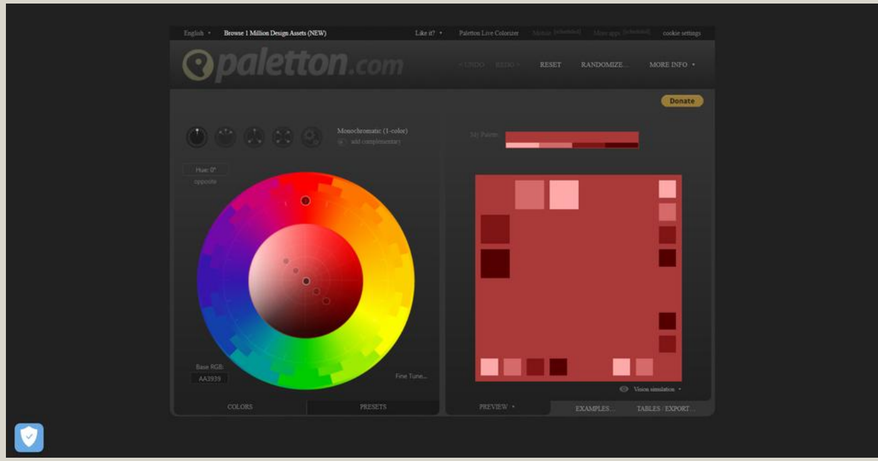

Tools for choosing a color design

- Coolors link
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TIPS FOR DESIGNING ELEMENTS

Designing your own visual elements:

- Use your inspiration images and sketches
- Start with simple shapes. You can add more details as you go along.
- Do not be afraid to try things out. It is a process of trial and error

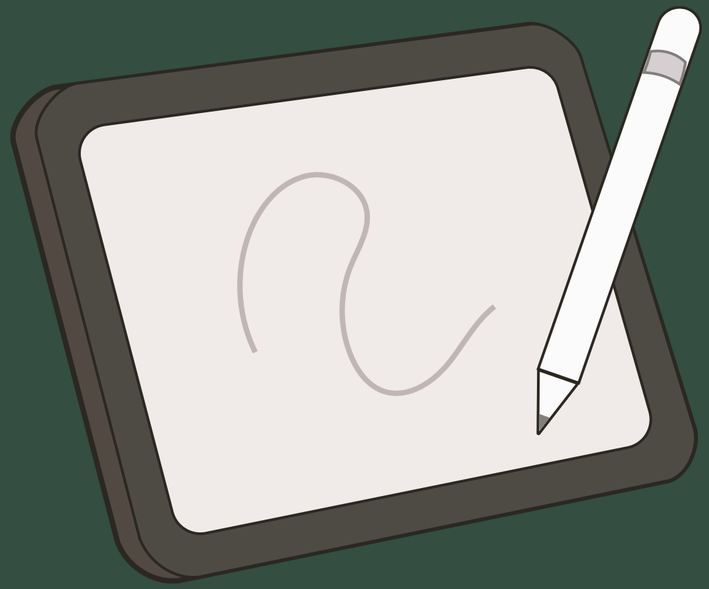
Programs for designing (posters):

- Canva
  - Free to use, paid version has more options
  - Very beginner friendly; some limitations in more complex design tasks
- Inkscape
  - Free to use
  - More difficult to learn at first
- Adobe InDesign
  - You need to pay for this program
  - Very helpful for textbased designs (posters, flyers, brochures)

2D
Flat colors
Basic shapes

"2.5D"

Karlijn Kouwer



POSTER WORKSHOP

With the tools that you have learned about today, use the time of the workshop to work on your own poster. Focus on what helps you most:

- Brainstorming for ideas and inspiration
- Making a sketch
- Getting started with making your design

We will be helping you with any questions!

THE END

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING