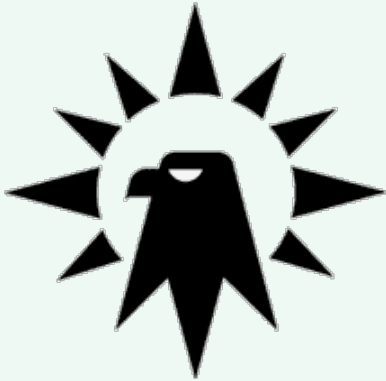


### Introduction

Gestalt is a psychology term which means "unified whole". It refers to theories of visual perception developed by German psychologists in the 1920s. These theories attempt to describe how people tend to organize visual elements into groups or unified wholes when certain principles are applied. These principles are:

### Similarity



Similarity occurs when objects look similar to one another. People often perceive them as a group or pattern. The example above (containing 11 distinct objects) appears as a single unit because all of the shapes have similarity.

Unity occurs because the triangular shapes at the bottom of the eagle symbol look similar to the shapes that form the sunburst.

### Anomaly



When similarity occurs, an object can be emphasized if it is dissimilar to the others. This is called **Anomaly**. The figure on the far right becomes a focal point because it is dissimilar to the other shapes.

### Continuation



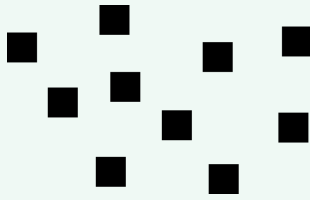
Continuation occurs when the eye is compelled to move through one object and continue to another object. Continuation occurs in the example above, because the viewer's eye will naturally follow a line or curve. The smooth flowing crossbar of the "H" leads the eye directly to the maple leaf.

### Closure



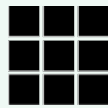
Closure occurs when an object is incomplete or a space is not completely enclosed. If enough of the shape is indicated, people perceive the whole by filling in the missing information. Although the panda above is not complete, enough is present for the eye to complete the shape. When the viewer's perception completes a shape, closure occurs.

### Proximity



Proximity occurs when elements are placed close together. They tend to be perceived as a group. The nine squares above are placed without proximity. They are perceived as separate shapes.

### Close Proximity



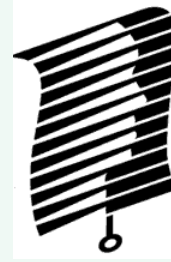
When the squares are given close proximity, unity occurs. While they continue to be separate shapes, they are now perceived as one group.

### Unified Whole



The fifteen figures above form a unified whole (the shape of a tree) because of their proximity.

### Figure and Ground



The eye differentiates an object from its surrounding area. a form, silhouette, or shape is naturally perceived as figure (object), while the surrounding area is perceived as ground (background).

Balancing figure and ground can make the perceived image more clear. Using unusual figure/ground relationships can add interest and subety to an image.

In this image, the figure and ground relationships change as the eye perceives the the form of a shade or the silhouette of a face.

### Complex fFigure/Ground Relationships



This image uses complex figure/ground relationships which change upon perceiving leaves, water and tree trunk.