Gestalt Principles

CS 194H | April 8, 2022

Key Concepts

- **Closure:** perceiving a set of individual objects as a single entity
- **Good continuation:** elements arranged in a line or curve are perceived as a related group
- **Proximity:** Elements that are close to each other are perceived as more related than those farther apart
- **Similarity:** Similar elements (same color, same shape, etc.) are perceived as more related than dissimilar elements
- **Uniform connectedness:** Elements that are visually connected (outlined, connecting lines, etc.) are perceived as more related than unconnected elements

Principle → Effect, Generally ordered by power

- Uniform connectedness → Relation through deliberate grouping
- Proximity → Relation through whitespace
- Similarity → Relation through attributes (color → size → shape)
- Good continuation → Relation through alignment
- Closure → Reduces complexity

Takeaways from Class Discussion

- These principles are very helpful for improving visual communication of information-dense interfaces (explains why NYT exemplifies so many of these principles on a single page of theirs)
- Not all principles are created equal; some are more impactful than others (ex. Proximity is more powerful than color similarity in communicating hierarchy)
- Too many Gestalt principles communicating the same thing can be overkill and lead to further confusion (looking for more complex information when it isn't there)