1. [introductory slide]

2. Take a moment to look at this table. What first catches your eye?

3. If you’re like nine out of 10 people, it will be that the P in Purchasing in the “Department” Column is indented one space from the other elements in that column. The rest of the chart is nice, but that one difference catches the eye first.

4. How about here?

5. Did the italicized line catch your eye?

6. What about in a photo? Does the center, red bud catch the eye?

7. Our eyes and brain are hard-wired to notice difference. Much of learning is about recognizing difference and then learning how to build new understandings and contexts to make sense of those differences. Working online much of what your students take in is guided by what they see visually on the computer screen.

8. From the course menu which students use to navigate through the course

9. To, the layout of a course syllabus which guides students through tasks, responsibilities and due dates.

10. To narrated content presentations discussed in Teaching with Audio and Visual Part II.

11. ....visual design elements are everywhere online and include images, text and empty, or white, spaces.

12. So, to help your students make the most of this highly visual learning environment, you want to make sure that difference works for you, and not against you as a distraction. To do this, you will need to be acquainted with the design principles of proximity, alignment, and contrast .. which we’ll call the PAC.
13. Proximity can be defined as objects or events that are near to one another in space or time and are, thus, perceived as belonging together as a unit. It is related to the German word “Gestalt” which means pattern. The arrangement of the orange circles on this page demonstrates how rapidly our eyes and brain process the difference between the single grouping of circles on the left side of the screen and the divided groups of circles on the right side.

14. Remembering eye-brain processing, it makes sense that proximity overpowers other signals of distinction in showing relations among and between elements. Here the eye is first drawn to the groupings and then to the color variations between the orange and black.

15. Alignment is our second PAC element. It is the “Setting of text flow or image placement relative to a page, column, table cell, or tab.”

16. We’re so used to the alignment of text in what we read, that it’s easy to forget what our gestalt principles might look like without any alignment of text and space.

17. We looked at this example at the beginning of the presentation.

18. Now consider this alternative alignment of the same information and note any differences that you see.

19. Using the principle of proximity, the two versions are now side by side. Hopefully, you can compare and contrast the two versions more easily this way, since you don’t have to remember the layout from page to page. Pause the presentation if you’d like more time.…For most people, the alignment in the new version, on the right side of the page, works better than in the original version in communicating which departments belong to each division. In the new version, the components of G & A (Financing, Purchasing, and Info Systems) are now aligned clearly under G & A.

20. Notice also that we have aligned the captions consistently along one side of their
corresponding visuals, as marked by the red arrows. Not only does this make for a more attractive page, fewer stray lines and margins helps keep the focus on the example.

21. See if your focus changes when we move the captions out of alignment with their corresponding figure.

22. Contrast is our final PAC element and takes many forms. Common ones are color, bolding, and italics. In the next four slides, you will see how a number displays differently depending on the background and foreground colors.

23. Black text on white background is the easiest color combination for reading. It is thus best for long text sequences.

24. For shorter passages, a white 1 on black background, done in what is called reverse type, is often a good option.

25. A yellow 3 on the purple background stands out, but it is tiring to read sentences of text prepared this way. Note also that, color combinations using, purple, red, and green are also difficult for people with color blindness to distinguish.

26. Finally, an orange 2 on the blue background is hardest to read. There is just not enough contrast between the two colors; so the 2 starts to blend with the background. In general, it’s a good idea to stick with pre-set template designs in programs like PowerPoint because they are professionally designed with color combinations in mind.

27. Let’s experiment a bit more with the power of color and contrast. As the title of this slide suggests a little bit of emphasis can go a long way in creating focus and meaning. As you go through the next five slides, consider which option you think is the best.

28. .

29. .
30.

31.

32.

33. There isn’t one right answer to this, but I hope it emphasizes how a little change in formatting impacts the meaning of the sentence. Your best choice will stem from what is most important to communicate, in this case is it writing in red or printing? Also, a few things to point out. In line 2, the word red is underlined. In an online environment, today’s convention is that an underlined word is a hyperlink. So, if you just want to create emphasis it’s best to bold or italicize the word or words rather than underline. In line 5, there are three forms of emphasis, in the italics, the bold and the red. Imagine how this approach over paragraphs of text could actually water down the impact of the contrasts. You have probably seen pages like this, where too many areas of emphasis essentially cancel each other out and the page just becomes confusing and unattractive.

34. Same slide

35. Now let’s look at a slide that depicts the three steps in memory creation, also from Show Me the Numbers. The steps, iconic memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory, are put on one page, again for proximity. This might resemble slides you have prepared for an in class presentation or as lecture notes. Notice that having the content be ready for reading also makes the slide text-heavy.

36. As we have been discussing, for an online presentation we can give notes to be read in a separate document uploaded alongside the presentation. Text within the presentation can thus be shortened and alignment applied to emphasize the relationships between elements under each of the memory types. Programs like PowerPoint are great for alignment
because they automatically use different bullets to indicate how information relates to main and sub-topics.

37. Contrast then strengthens the grouping of content. .. and we have a slide that is much easier to absorb. > The next presentation in this sequence talks more about how slide design changes when you narrate a presentation.

38. For now, remember to think about your online students as learning in a highly visual environment, where they will navigate and absorb much from the visual cues you give them. In this context, use our PAC principles of proximity, alignment and contrast to make difference work for you in emphasizing rather than distracting from the content and concepts at hand.

39. [images supplied by Microsoft images]