

Gestalt Theory

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will discuss what gestalt theory is, why it's important, and what laws are associated with it. Specifically, you will learn about:

1. Introduction to Gestalt Theory

Gestalt theory is another theory that crosses over many disciplines. An important figure in the development of this theory was **Max Wertheimer**, a Czech psychologist and one of the founders of gestalt psychology.

This theory has a set of **gestalt principles** that were first proposed by German psychologists based on the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Gestalt theory is important in visual communications because it applies to the organization and perception of elements in groups. It also greatly impacts how a viewer perceives a design.



TERMS TO KNOW

Gestalt Principles

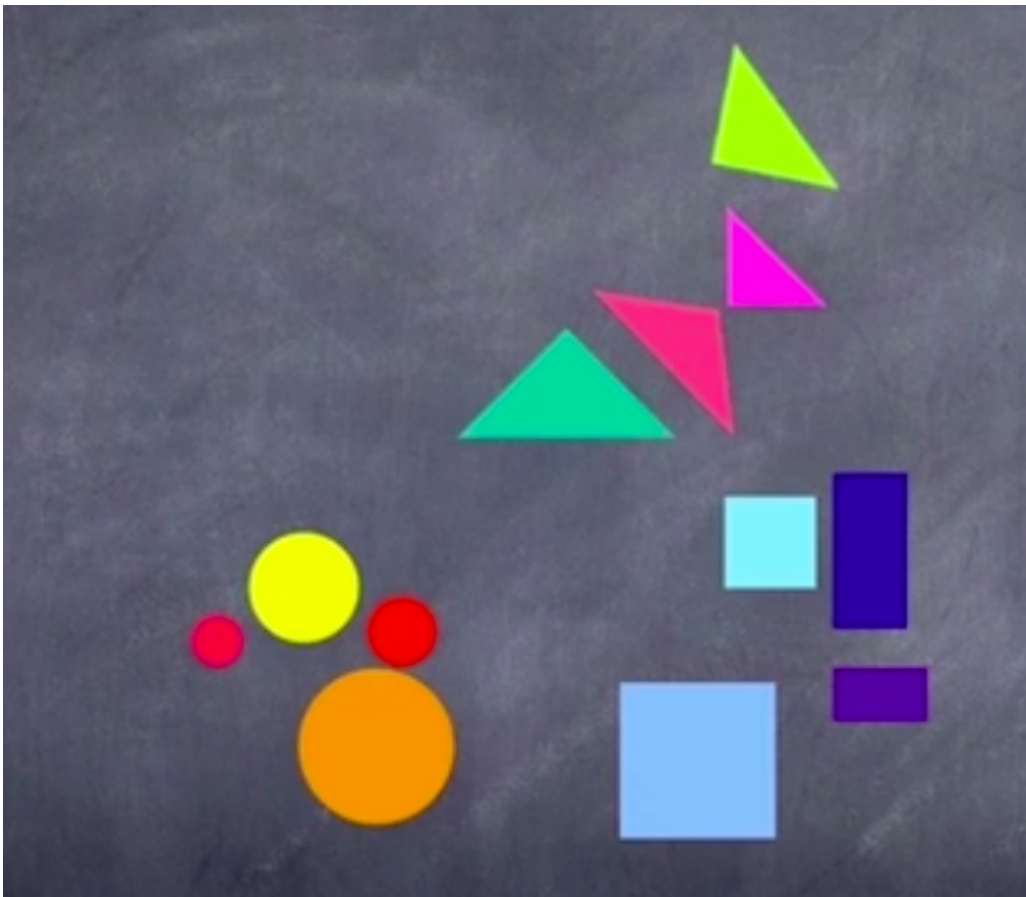
Principles that were first proposed by German psychologists, and are based on the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Max Wertheimer

Czech psychologist and one of the founders of gestalt psychology.

2. Law of Proximity

The **law of proximity** states that elements that are close to one another appear to form groups even if they have different characteristics.



In the example above, a lot of these elements, even those of varying shape and color, appear to form groups because they are in close proximity to each other.



TERM TO KNOW

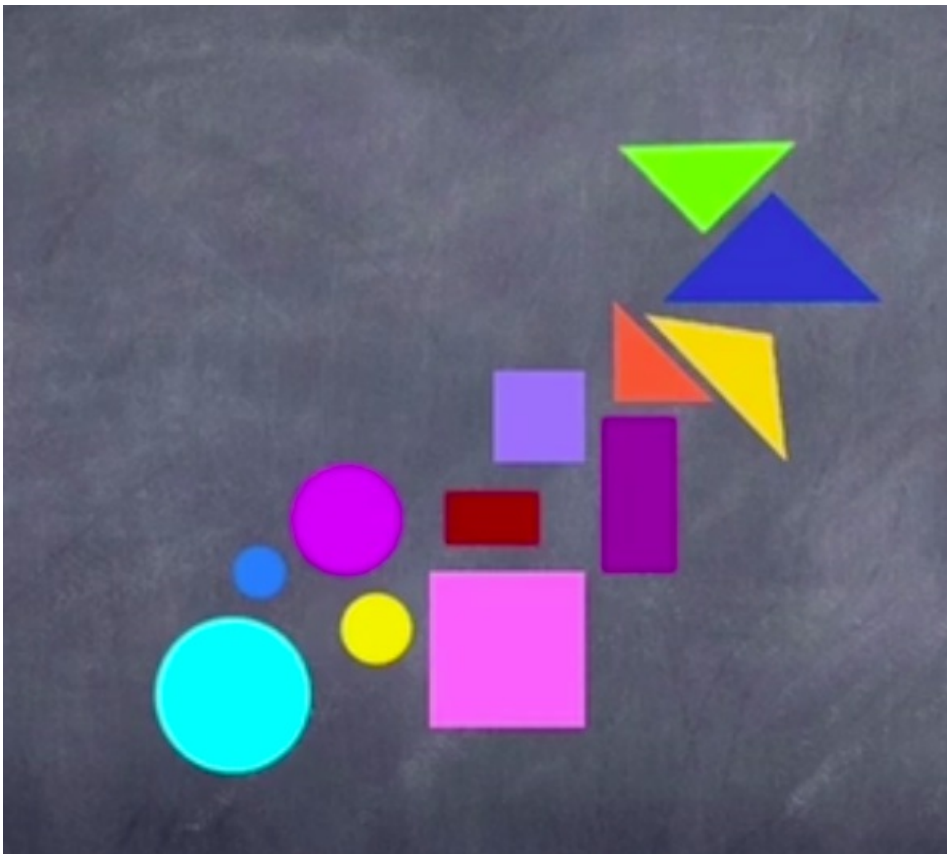
Law of Proximity

Elements that are close to one another appear to form groups, even if they have different characteristics.

3. Law of Similarity

The **law of similarity** states that elements that share characteristics tend to be perceived as a group.

So rather than proximity, this law is about about similar characteristics.



In the example above, everything is closer, but you're still able to separate the elements into groups because of similar characteristics, such as color, size, and shape.



TERM TO KNOW

Law of Similarity

Elements that share characteristics tend to be perceived as a group.

4. Law of Closure

The **law of closure** states that elements tend to be perceived as a completed whole if they are aligned, even if some information is missing.



If you look at the example above, you have elements that are nicely aligned and stacked. Even though you have removed some of the structure in the piece, you're still able to perceive the shapes as a whole despite the fact that there's a lot of visual information missing. That's because the elements in the piece are in alignment.



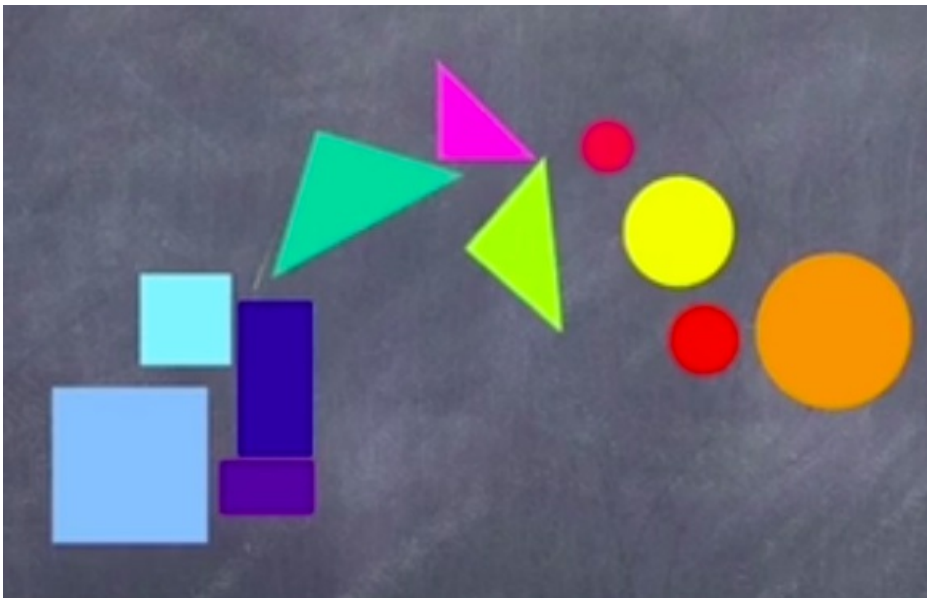
TERM TO KNOW

Law of Closure

Elements tend to be perceived as a complete whole if they are aligned, even if some information is missing.

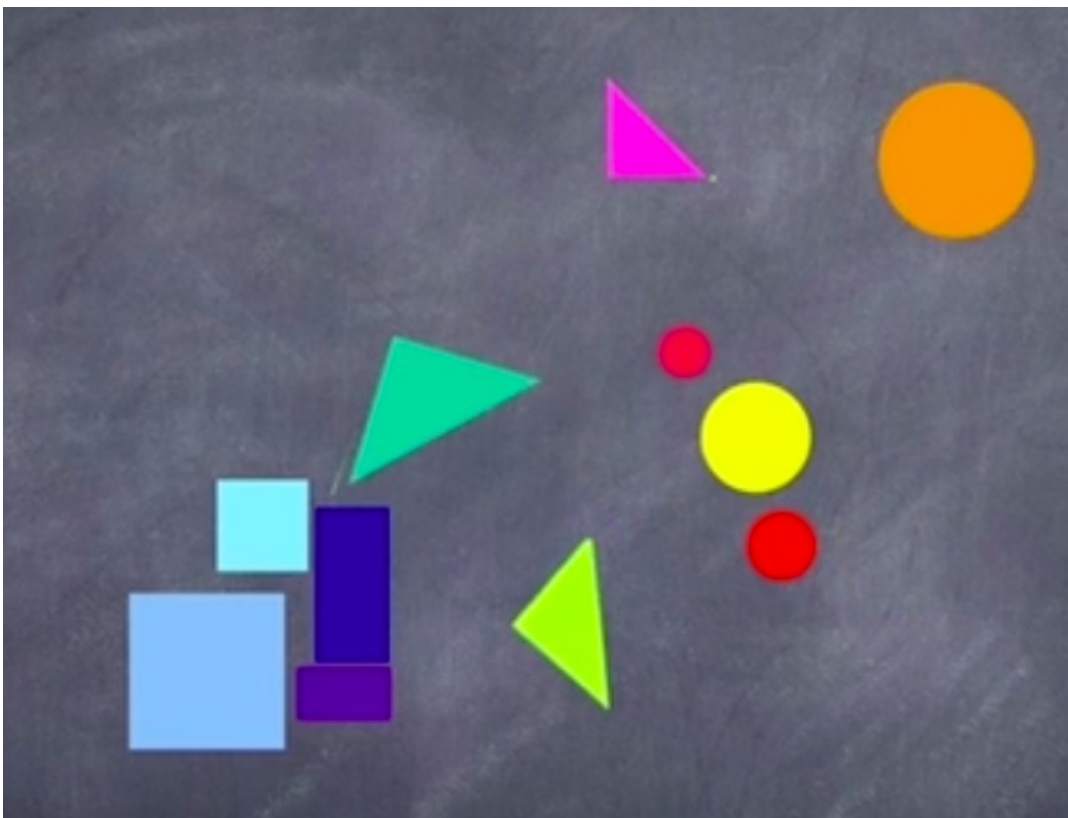
5. Law of Continuity

The **law of continuity** states that the eye will naturally follow the smoothest and most logical path.



In this example, similar elements are grouped together and arranged in a certain way that creates a steady flow of direction. Your eye is going to follow the line that's been created. Here, it looks like these blocks were nicely stacked at some point and then collapsed, so your eye draws those conclusions and follows the corresponding line.

If you had everything spread out with no real path for the eye to follow, then your eye would naturally attempt to follow the smoothest path available.



In this case, the blocks are creating a circular motion, so that's where the eyes tend to travel.



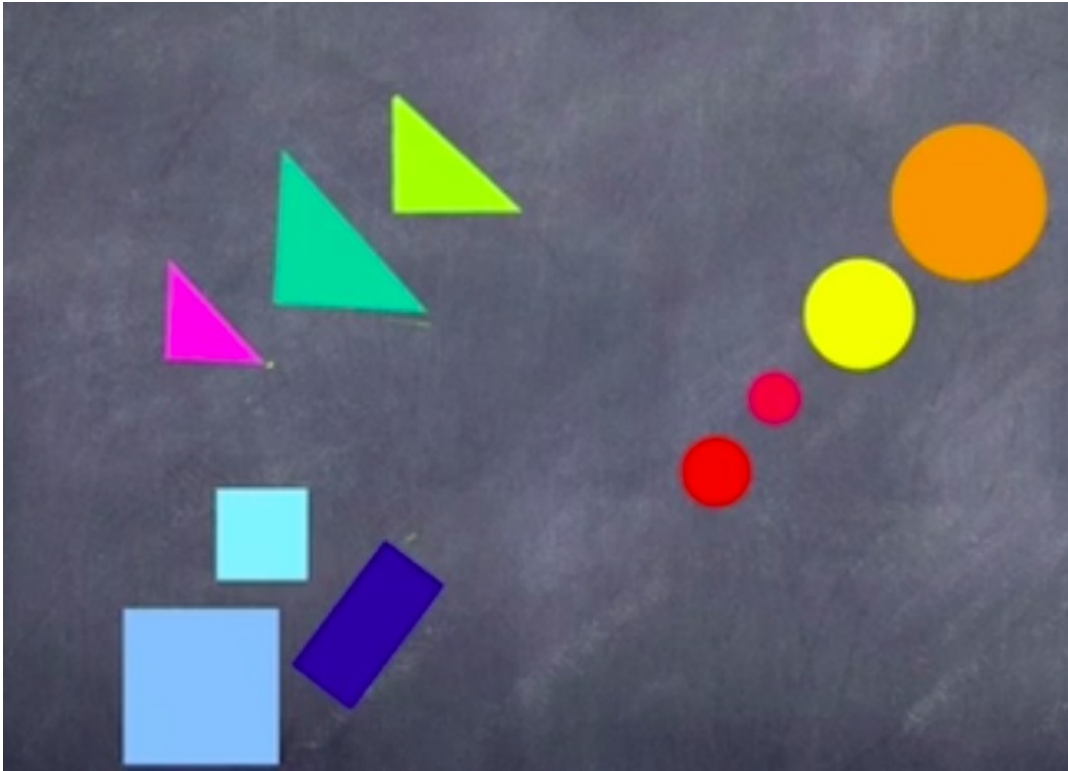
TERM TO KNOW

Law of Continuity

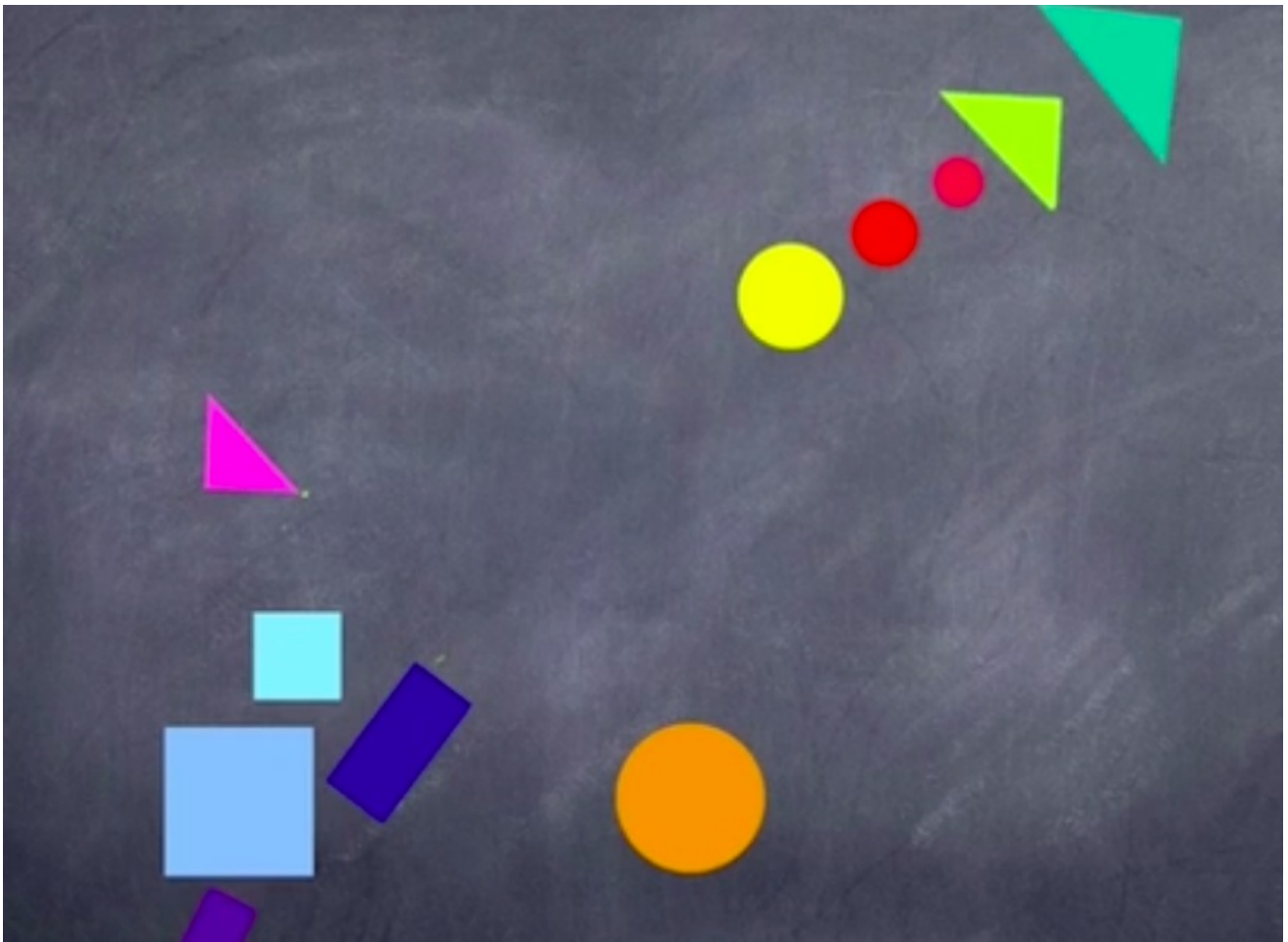
The eye will naturally follow the smoothest path.

6. Law of Common Fate

The **law of common fate** states that elements that move in the same direction will tend to be perceived as a group.



In this example, you'll notice that all the objects moving in the same direction are visually grouped. Your eye notices direction and will group elements accordingly. Even if the elements in a design are not the same shape or color, your eye will group them together if they are moving in the same direction.



Here, the squares would be considered a group on one side of the image, and the circles and triangles would be considered another part of the group in the top right corner.



TERM TO KNOW

Law of Common Fate

Elements that move in the same direction will tend to be perceived as a group.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **gestalt theory** is a theory stating that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. You also learned about the five laws connected to this theory in the field of visual communications: the **law of proximity**, the **law of similarity**, the **law of closure**, the **law of continuity**, and the **law of common fate**.

Keep up the learning and have a great day!

Source: THIS WORK IS ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA AUTHOR MARIO E. HERNANDEZ



TERMS TO KNOW

Gestalt Principles

Principles that were first proposed by German psychologists, and are based on the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Law of Closure

Elements tend to be perceived as a complete whole if they are aligned, even if some information is missing.

Law of Common Fate

Elements that move in the same direction will tend to be perceived as a group.

Law of Continuity

The eye will naturally follow the smoothest path.

Law of Proximity

Elements that are close to one another appear to form groups, even if they have different characteristics.

Law of Similarity

Elements that share characteristics tend to be perceived as a group.

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