

Balance

It is quite straightforward to understand and apply the principle of balance in a layout.

Most layouts are based on a rectangular shape. If the advertised product is placed in the centre, there are two areas to fill—each either side of the graphic.

Layout [1] has been balanced **symmetrically**—if you divided it in half vertically, each side would be essentially the same.



This **symmetrical** layout is quite difficult to follow, and text items are spread over the page. This can make it difficult to read the text and there is little 'flow' to reading the layout.

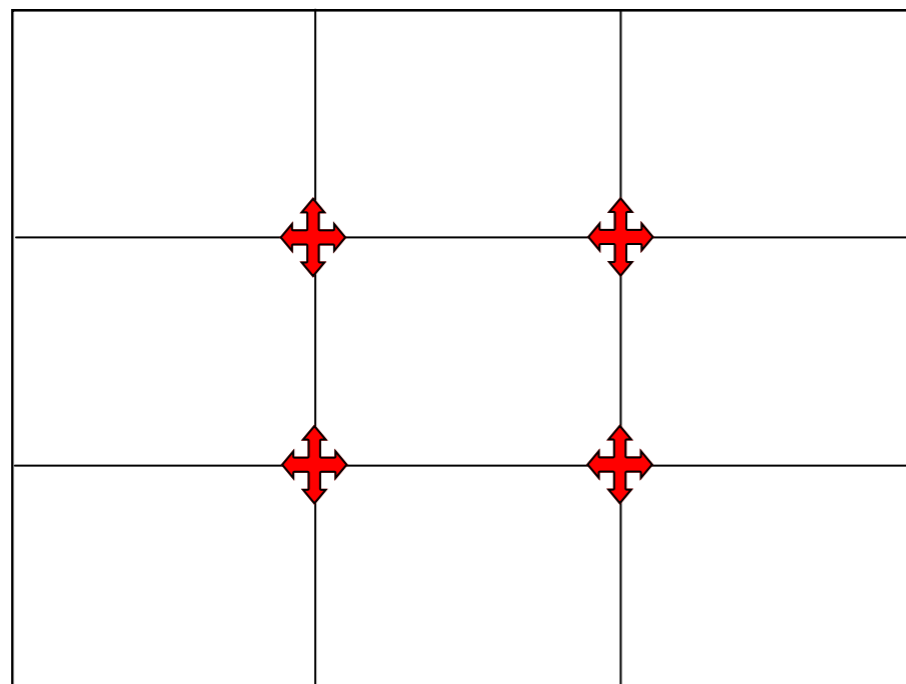


This **asymmetrical** layout is more eye-catching. As the text is positioned to the left and the graphic to the right, the layout 'flows' better.

The Rule of Thirds

If a space is divided into 9 equal rectangles, the four lines dividing the space provide **focal points**. If objects are and text are placed here or close to these lines, a more visually effective layout can be produced.

The points where the lines cross are called **impact points**, and these are key areas to place important features.



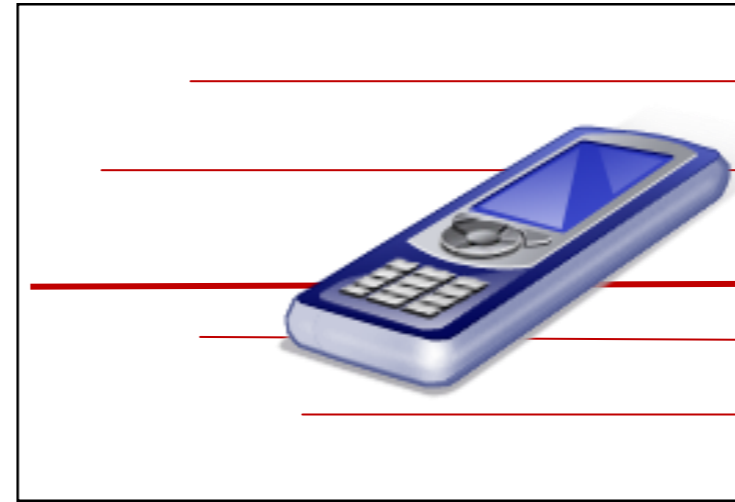
Some small alterations have been made here to further improve the layout. The text is grouped more together than before, the product has been enlarged and a shadow effect has been applied. The 'HeatWave' text has been reduced slightly in size and also moved to the left.

Unity, repetition and harmony

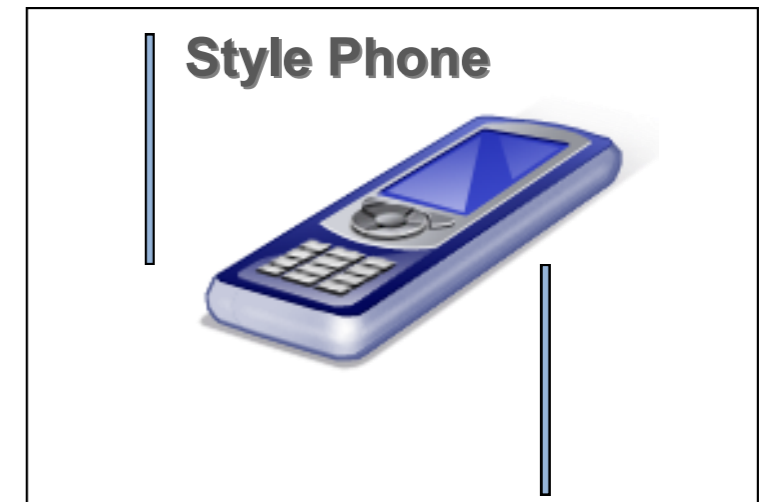
As layouts usually consist of different graphic items and text, it is important to connect these different elements together within the layout so that they appear linked and together.



Unity is achieved here by overlapping the image onto the text. This makes a physical connection between the image and the text.



The same effect is achieved here by positioning the image over the lines



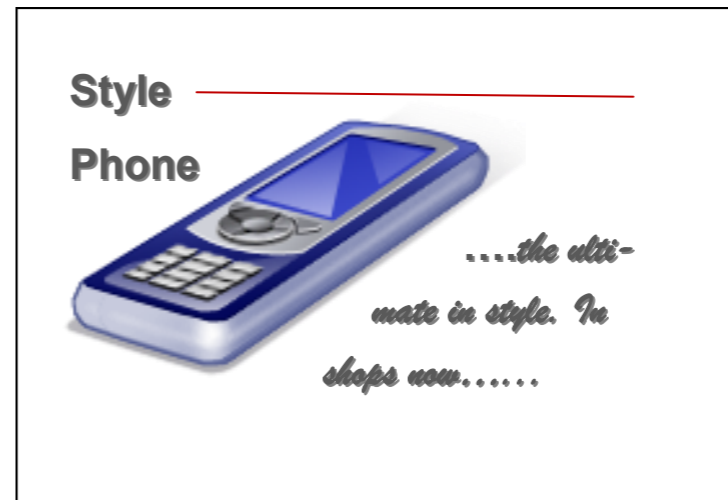
The repetition of the thicker blue lines with black outlines creates unity here. The use of a similar colour to the graphic is also a unifying feature.



By overlapping the image onto all three areas of the layout, unity is achieved. Again, a harmonious colour is effective in contributing to this effect and the flashbar connects the text to the image.



The three circles are filled with a similar colour to the graphic. The repetition of these circles creates a unifying effect to the layout.



By wrapping the text around the image, the layout is unified and connected.



Colour, repetition and positioning of graphic are used here to effect to create a unified layout.

Alignment

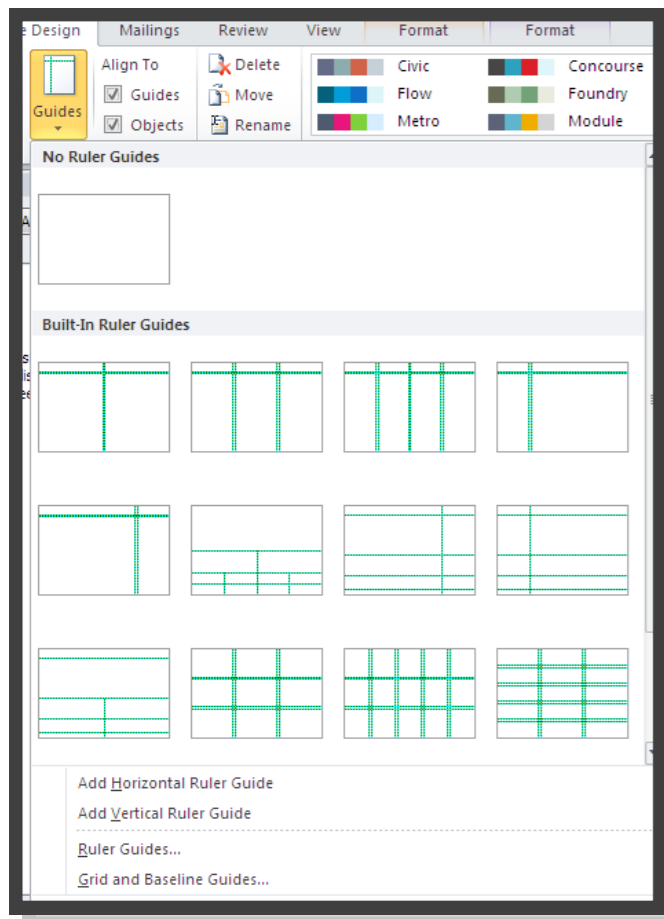
Alignment is an effective method to improve the structure of a layout. Good alignment makes a page easy to follow and organised and helps make it neat and sharp.



This layout [1] is poorly aligned. The impression given is one of disorganisation, and it appears messy and ill-structured. The image and various items of text are almost scattered around the layout, and it becomes difficult to take in the information.



Once guidelines are added to the display [2], one can see how poorly aligned the graphic items and text are. The guidelines illustrate where alignment can be achieved with edges of items.



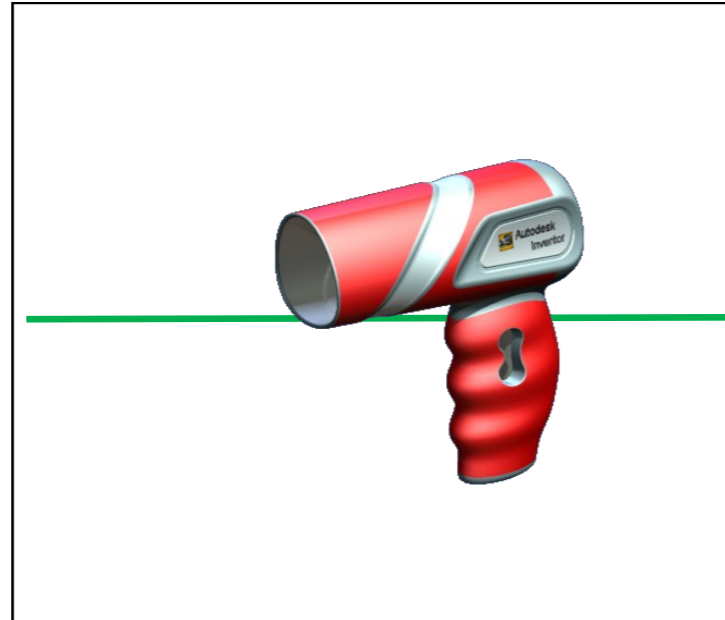
This screenshot from Publisher shows how using a layout guide and the 'Snap' tool can effectively and easily enable alignment to be achieved in the display. Such a guide has been applied to the layout in [3]. One can see how the edge of each item and text is aligned with another.



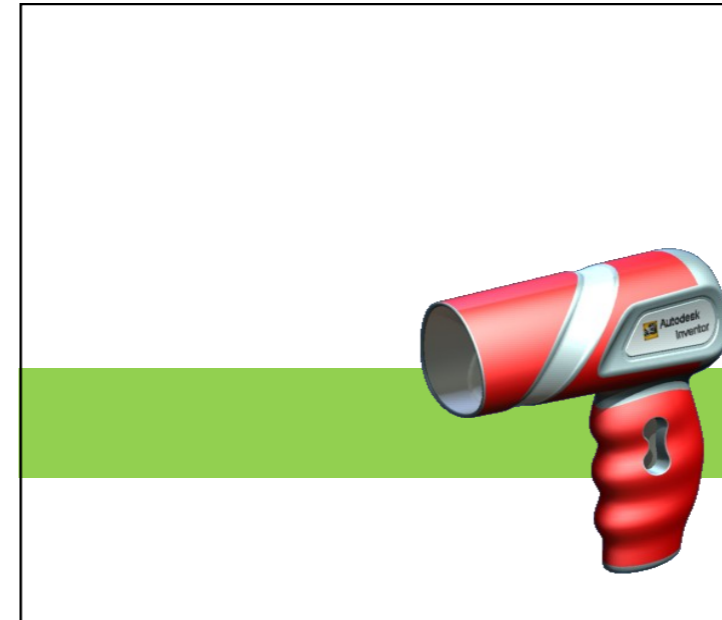
This layout [4] has the guidelines removed and demonstrates how effective good alignment is to a display. Compare it with the original layout [1] and note how it is more structured and organised.

Depth

As layouts are produced in a 2D format—usually a page—it is important to create an illusion of **Depth**. This illusion stimulates the layout and makes it more eye-catching. There are several methods to achieve an impression of depth.



If a **pictorial** view of the product is chosen, it appears to have more depth than a simple 2D view. Another simple method of creating depth in this layout is the application of a single thin line behind the hairdryer, making it look as if it is closer than the line.



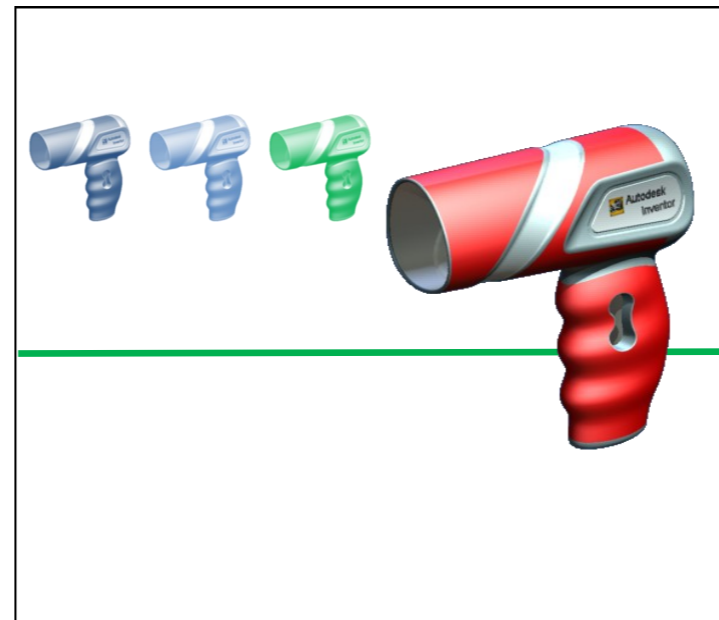
The same effect is achieved here by placing the product onto a coloured shape. As green is a **receding** colour, the effect is to push the hairdryer into the forefront of the layout—which makes it eye-catching.



Using the **Drop Shadow** tool in this instance creates depth in the layout by making it appear that the product is standing out from a background.



By applying an image as a background, depth is brought to this display. It is important to consider the style of the background to successfully achieve this, and in this one a blue washed out colour doesn't take away the emphasis on the hairdryer.



By placing the hairdryer in the forefront of the layout with smaller images of the same product next to it, an impression of depth is created.



By placing the product in front of the text, an impression of depth is created and the hairdryer is brought to the forefront of the layout.

Line

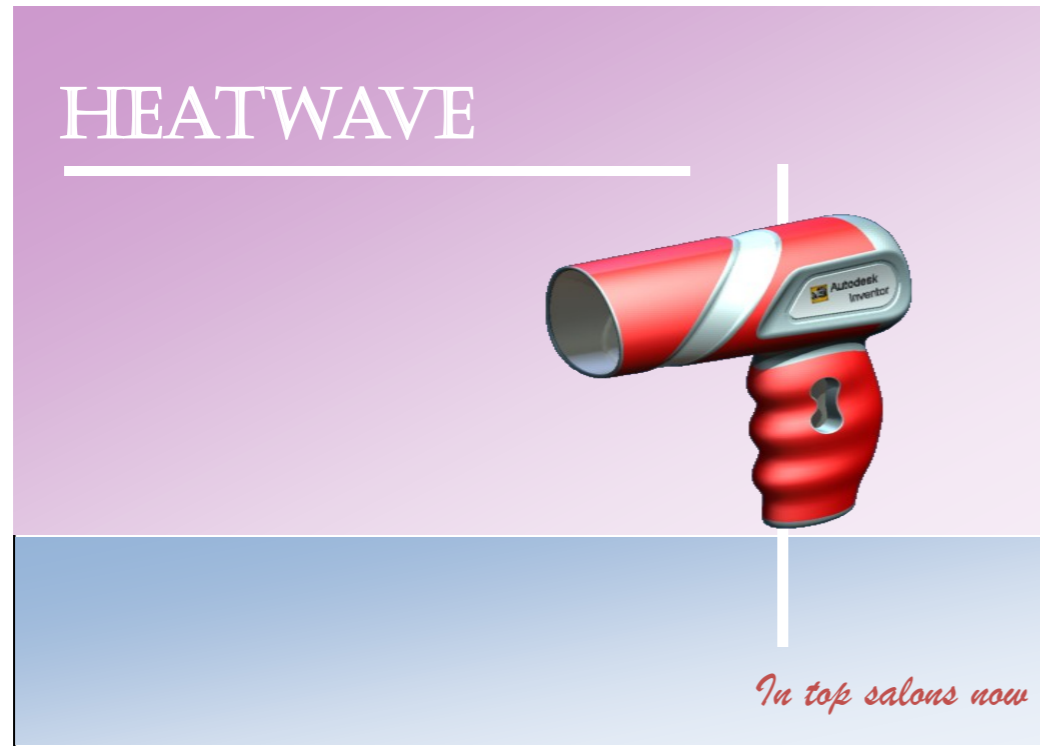
The use of **line** can be an important and effective technique to enhance a page. They can be used to **connect** parts of the layout, create **emphasis** on certain items and **separate** parts of the design from others.



This layout is quite **disconnected**—the text and the product are unrelated to each other and the different colours of the background appear separate from the hairdryer.



The use of the two sets of lines brings repetition to the display, and links the product on the right hand side with the text on the left. The lines also link both coloured parts of the layout together.



By simply applying two thin lines, the viewer's eye is led along the page from the product name to the slogan at the bottom right. The vertical line passes behind the product, so linking it to the slogan and the light blue element of the layout. This also brings depth to the display.



The wavy lines in this layout make it feel less formal and more vibrant than the other two layouts. An impression of movement is created here and again the reader's eye is taken to the slogan at the bottom.

Emphasis and dominance

As graphic layouts are often looked at hurriedly by a reader, it is important to attract their attention quickly. If a page has no focal point or is generally bland, the reader shall ignore it and move on.

As a layout may contain several items of text and graphics, a strong **focal point** must be provided to centre the display around. This is normally the graphic or photograph on the page.

Dominance is when one item of the layout stands out more than the others.

Emphasis occurs when one item is made more eye-catching.

These are the three rules of order to dominance in a layout:

1. The main graphic or image should dominate the layout.
2. The title, heading or product should be next.
3. Less important items should be grouped and positioned effectively to support this order.

This layout has no item achieving overall dominance; as it is advertising the 'Boost' drink then the bottle should be the main item the viewer notices.

In this case, the bottle is 'swamped' by the other features in the display—the slogan and the athlete are perhaps the most noticeable features. The font size of the 'Boost' is almost the same as that of the slogan.



Some simple changes have been applied here to make the product become the dominant feature and emphasise the product name:

- The bottle has been enlarged and put off-centre. This immediately attracts the reader's attention.
- The athlete has been reduced in size, and relocated to the top left corner. She still contributes to the layout, but does not take over.
- The crowd silhouette has been faded slightly and put more behind the bottle—this is acting as a flashbar so giving the layout more depth and pushing the product forward.
- 'Boost' has been underlined to emphasise the product name more effectively
- The line at the bottom gives further dominance to the bottle and leads the eye to the slogan—which has been reduced in size.
- A gradient fill has been applied to the background. This has the effect of making the items in the layout stand out more and not be overcome by the starkness of the original solid background.



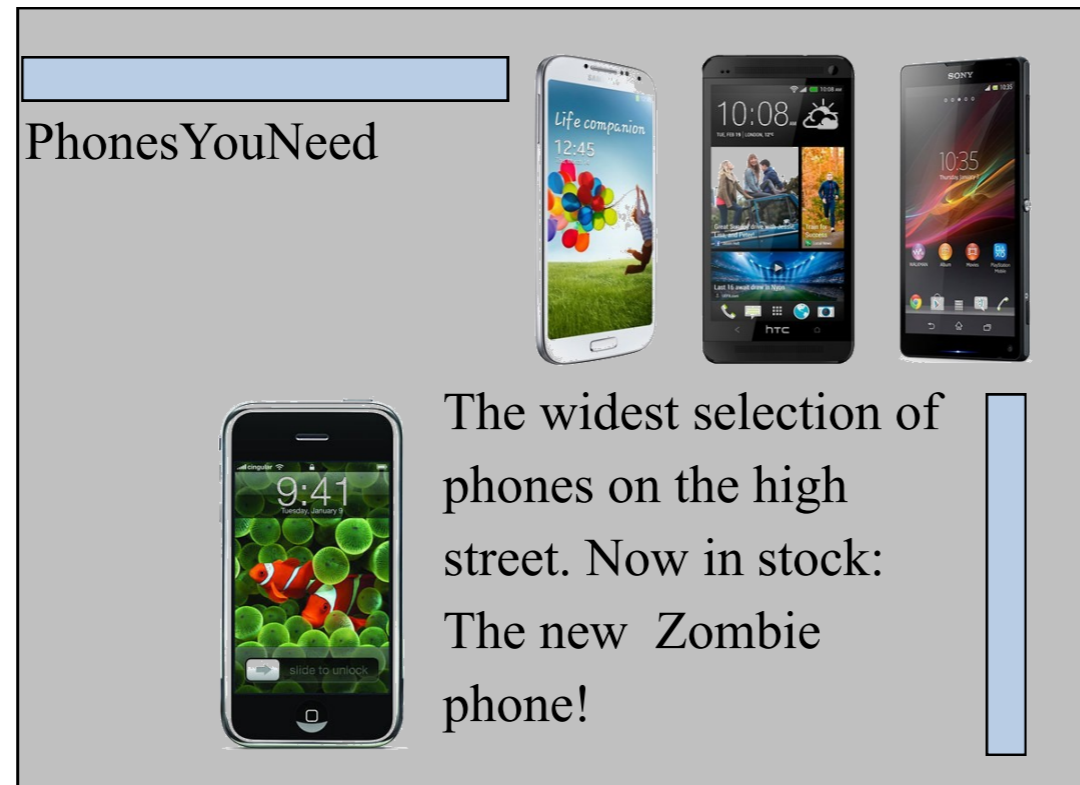
1.

Contrast

The purpose of a designed page is to grab the reader's attention—this is especially true in promotional graphics where the layout is competing against other adverts and products.

An effective way to achieve this is through the use of **contrast**—especially by comparing opposites.

Opposites can be between colours, horizontal and vertical lines and between shapes—such as circles and squares.



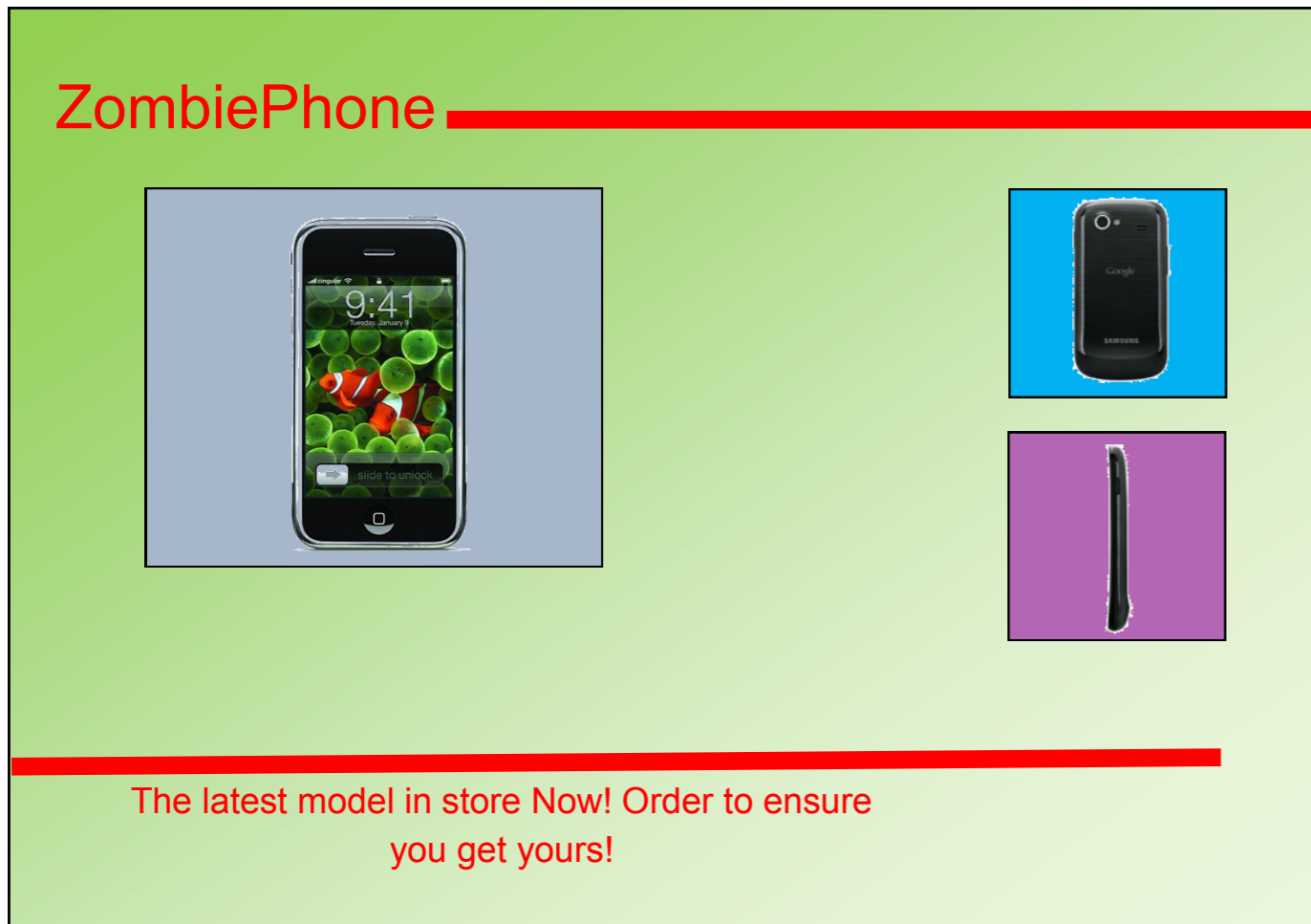
This promotional layout provides no occasions of contrast. The black text is almost lost against the grey background. The page is aligned well, but the straight shapes of the phones and the coloured shapes give the page a very grid-like feel and nothing in particular stands out.

This layout is different however. The display has a much more vibrant feel to it; the red wavy lines contrast strongly with the rectangular shapes of the phones, and by increasing the size of the main image and tilting it the phone grabs the reader's attention. By applying a gradient fill to the flashbar the red text of the company's name stands out more. The use of a circular background for the product information contrasts with the straight lines of the product and flashbar and grabs the reader's attention.



Shape

As most layouts take the form of squares and rectangles, it is effective to use different shapes within the design. The use of circles for example, are useful for bringing contrast to a layout and creating visual interest. This is especially true if the product being advertised has straight edges, in this case a mobile phone.



This layout is very straight and rectangular in structure. All the graphic items are in boxes, and the shapes of the product are also rectangular.

The red lines further add to this feel, and the display is not very eye-catching or exciting.

It lacks visual impact.



This layout has is more vibrant and eye-catching as circles have been applied to it. The circles contrast well with the rectangular outlines of the phones and make them stand out more.

The straight red lines have been replaced with wavy lines and this gives a feeling of movement and contrast to it.

A change of font for the slogan further adds to the contrast in shape—it is less 'straight' than before and harmonises well with the circular shapes now adopted.

Colour

The use of colour can have a dramatic effect on the impact of graphic layouts. Colour **combinations** should be considered, and not just colours in isolation. Colours working together are what makes a difference. If colour combinations are effectively applied, they can:

- Give visual impact to the layout
- Suggest a mood
- Unify a layout
- Make a product stand out
- Connect the product with a target market

You should be familiar with colour theory, which is covered elsewhere in your notes.

This colour scheme predominately uses **tones** of the same colour—blue.

This unifies the display and contrasts well with the red of the product—so creating visual impact.

The red of the product is used in the two items of text—this now becomes the **accent colour**. This unifies the display and also creates brand awareness as it is the same as that of the hairdryer.



The application of colour combinations does not work effectively here—too many colours are used. The colours are in conflict with each other, and make the layout confusing to read. It is also difficult to read the slogan at the bottom.



This colour scheme only uses the colours of the hairdryer product. This means no 'extra' colours are used and they work well together to create a harmonious feel.

The light grey of the flashbars is effective in giving depth to the layout and makes the product stand out.

It is easier to see the slogan at the bottom now a single colour gradient has been applied to it.

White space

White space does not need to be white; it refers to a blank area or empty space on a page.

There are three main reasons for including white space in a layout:

- It calms a layout and makes a busy layout less busy.
- It can make an item in or near the white space stand out more—it gives that item **emphasis**.

It can allow the reader's eyes to rest. This is advantageous if the layout is busy.