eLearningDesign.org

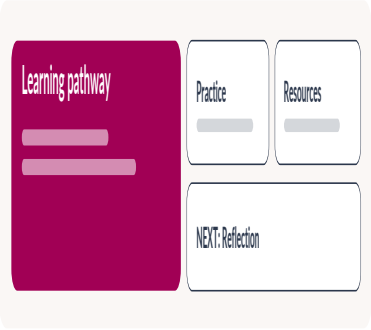
THE ILLUSTRATED FIELD GUIDE

25 Design Terms for Better AI Prompts

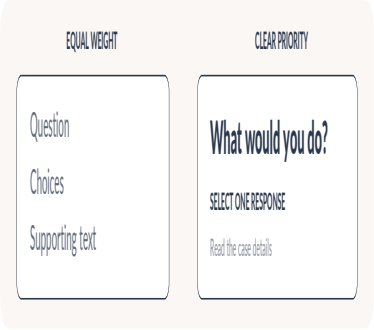
What it means. What it looks like. What to ask AI.

Built for instructional designers, eLearning developers, and creators.

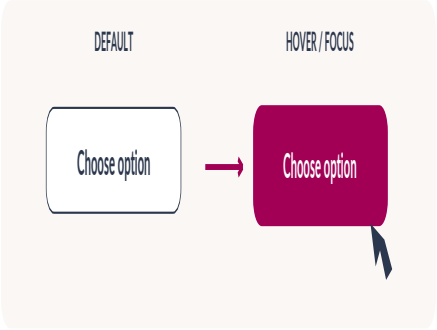
BENTO GRID



HIERARCHY



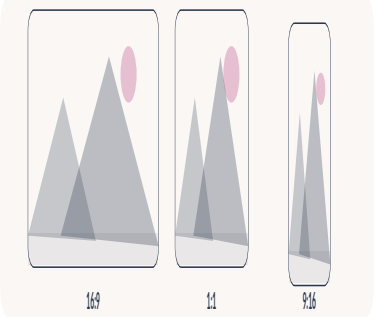
MICROINTERACTION



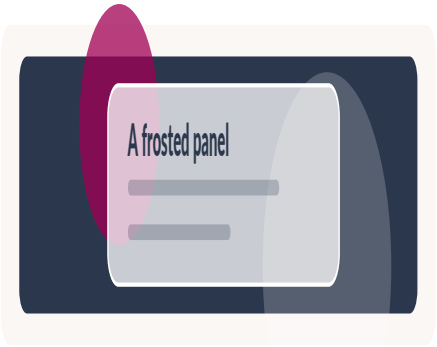
TYPOGRAPHY



ASPECT RATIO



GLASSMORPHISM



See it. Name it. Prompt it.

Design vocabulary gives AI a clearer target than vague instructions.

01

NOTICE

Look at the miniature example. Identify what changes visually.

02

NAME

Use the design term instead of words like modern, pop, or cool.

03

PROMPT

Describe the actual content, learner action, and intended treatment.

04

CHECK

Test readability, responsive behavior, keyboard access, and motion.

A better AI prompt contains:

- A real purpose
- A clear layout
- Specific visual behavior
- Brand constraints
- Accessibility requirements

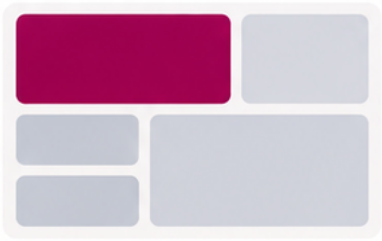
Examples throughout the guide use the eLearningDesign.org brand palette.

12 Design Terms That Help You Prompt Better

Simple visual reference for AI image, layout, and content prompts

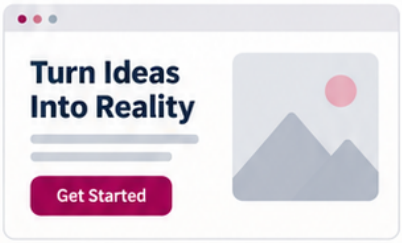
1 Bento Grid

A layout made of organized boxes that group content into easy-to-scan sections.



2 Hero Section

The main top section that introduces the big idea and call to action.



3 Negative Space

Intentional empty space that helps the most important content stand out.



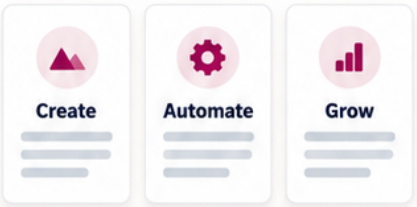
4 Visual Hierarchy

Using size, weight, and contrast to show what should be noticed first.



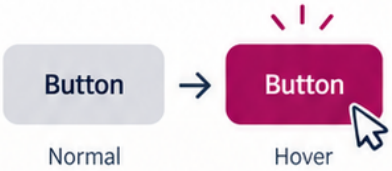
5 Cards

Separate content blocks that make information feel organized and modular.



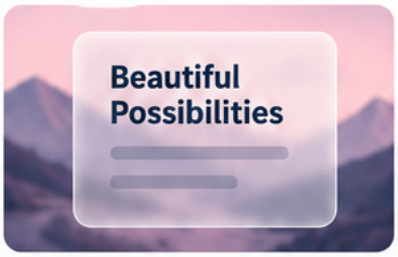
6 Micro Interaction

A tiny UI response, like a hover change, that gives feedback.



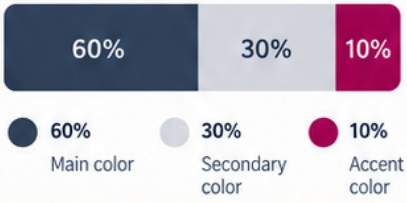
7 Glassmorphism

A frosted-glass style panel with transparency and soft blur.



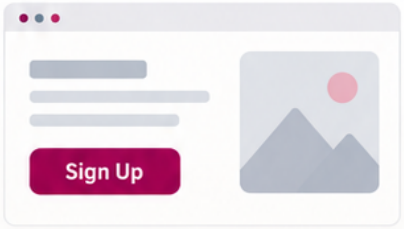
8 60–30–10 Rule

A color balance using one main color, one secondary color, and one small accent color.



9 Accent Color

A bright or contrasting color used sparingly to highlight key actions.



10 Font Pairing

Two fonts chosen to work well together, usually for headings and body text.

Big Ideas
Brighter Futures

Clear design for a more creative, connected world.

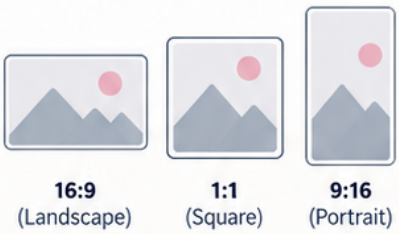
11 Tracking

The spacing between letters in a word or line of text.

Tight (-50)	DESIGN
Normal (0)	D E S I G N
Wide (+200)	D E S I G N

12 Aspect Ratio

The shape of an image or video, such as 16:9, 1:1, or 9:16.



1 Bento grid

LAYOUT & STRUCTURE

A layout of differently sized tiles that makes related information easy to scan.



USE IT Show a learning pathway, dashboard, or resource collection.

ASK AI

"Arrange six modules in a responsive bento grid. Emphasize the current module and preserve a logical reading order."

WATCH FOR: Too many tiles can make a simple message feel busy.

2 Hero section

LAYOUT & STRUCTURE

The prominent opening area that introduces a message and its main action.



USE IT Introduce the learner's challenge and a clear Start action.

ASK AI

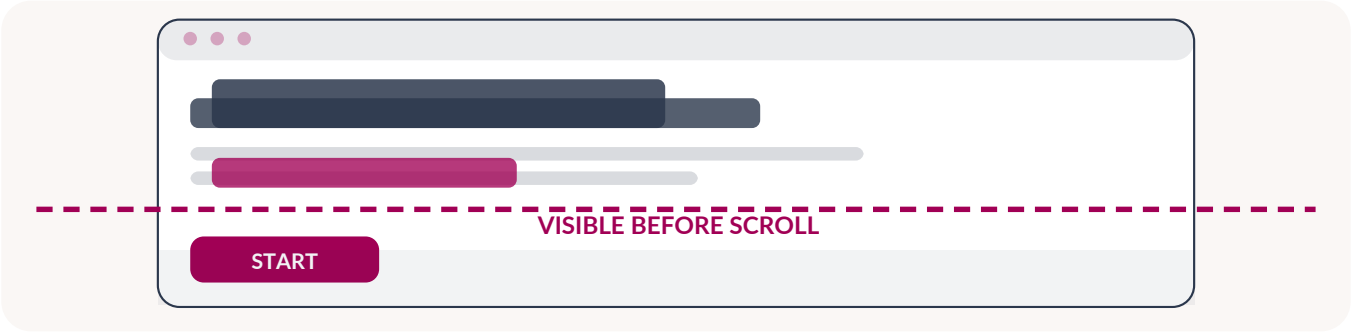
"Create a hero section with the workplace challenge, one line of context, and a visible Start Scenario button."

WATCH FOR: The main action must remain obvious on smaller screens.

3 Above the fold

LAYOUT & STRUCTURE

The area visible before scrolling, which changes with screen size.



USE IT Keep the activity purpose and first action easy to find.

ASK AI

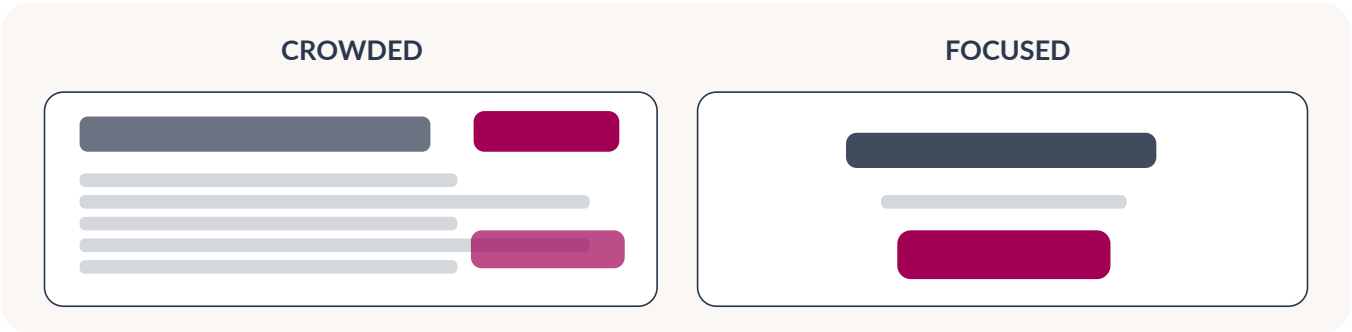
"Place the scenario title, one-sentence directions, and primary action in the initial viewport on laptop and mobile."

WATCH FOR: There is no single universal fold line.

4 Negative space

LAYOUT & STRUCTURE

Intentional empty space that creates focus and breathing room.



USE IT Reduce visual competition around a decision prompt.

ASK AI

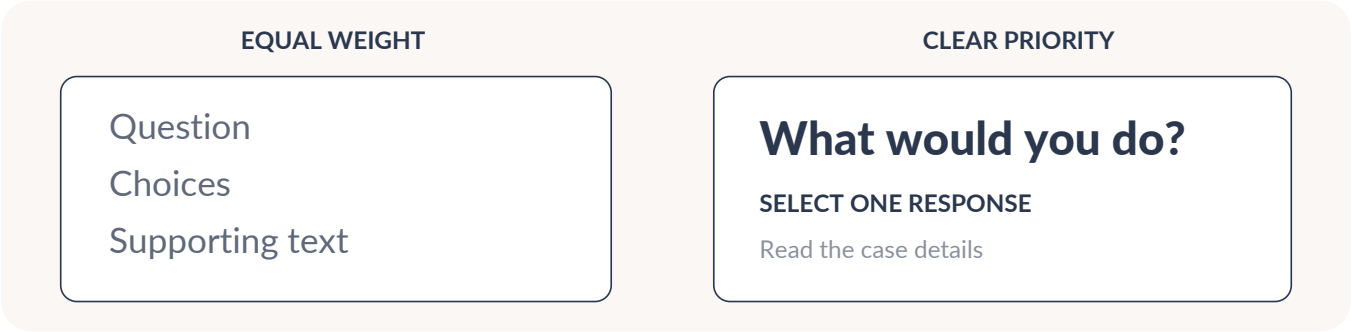
"Redesign the activity screen with generous negative space around the question and its response choices."

WATCH FOR: Whitespace should clarify, not hide necessary information.

5 Visual hierarchy

LAYOUT & STRUCTURE

Size, weight, placement, and contrast show what matters first.



USE IT Make questions prominent and supporting detail secondary.

ASK AI

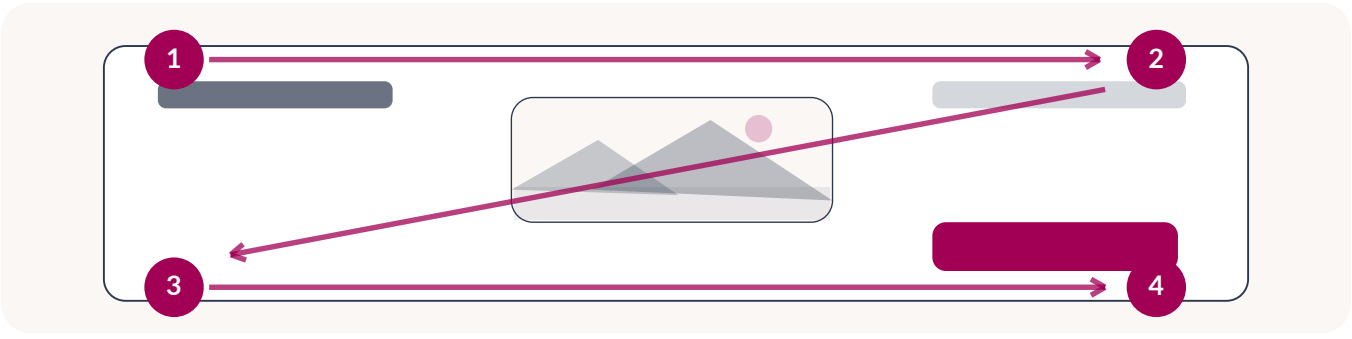
"Establish clear visual hierarchy: decision question first, choices second, and supporting evidence third."

WATCH FOR: Use semantic heading order as well as visual styling.

6 Z-pattern

LAYOUT & STRUCTURE

A possible eye path across a simple page, down diagonally, and across again.



USE IT Organize a short landing screen or promotion.

ASK AI

"Test a Z-pattern for a short landing page: title top-left, benefit top-right, image center, action bottom-right."

WATCH FOR: Not suitable as a universal rule for text-heavy pages.

7 Cards

LAYOUT & STRUCTURE

Separated containers that group one related topic, choice, or action.



USE IT Present scenario decisions or resource collections.

ASK AI

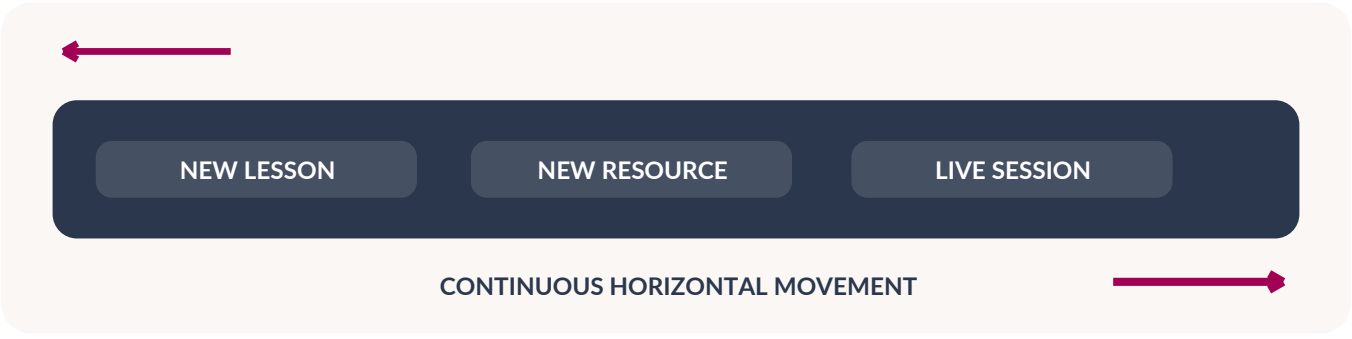
"Place four decisions in equal cards with clear labels, consistent spacing, and visible focus and selected states."

WATCH FOR: The whole card should not look clickable if it is not.

8 Marquee

MOTION & INTERACTION

Text or images moving across the screen, often horizontally.



USE IT Display optional announcements or rotating highlights.

ASK AI

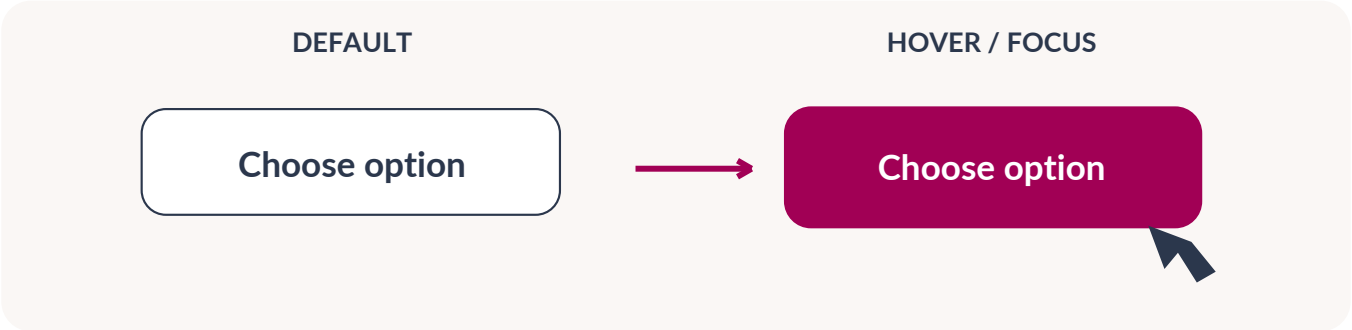
"Create a slow, pausable horizontal marquee for optional course highlights. Stop movement on hover and focus."

WATCH FOR: Do not place essential instructions in continuously moving text.

9 Microinteraction

MOTION & INTERACTION

A small response to an action, such as a button changing on hover.



USE IT Confirm selection, saving, opening, or submitting.

ASK AI

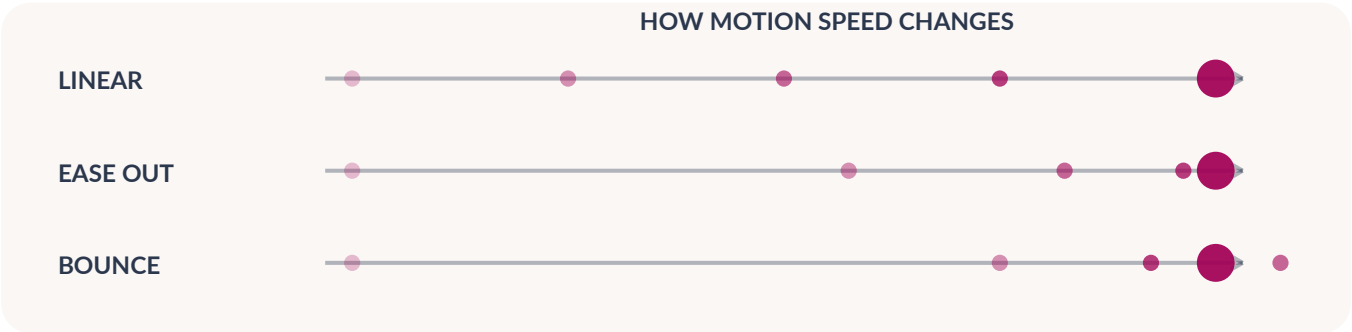
"Add subtle hover, focus, and selected states to response cards. Make feedback visible without relying on motion."

WATCH FOR: Hover-only feedback excludes touch and keyboard users.

10 Easing

MOTION & INTERACTION

The way an animation accelerates and slows down.



USE IT Make page turns and reveals feel deliberate and smooth.

ASK AI

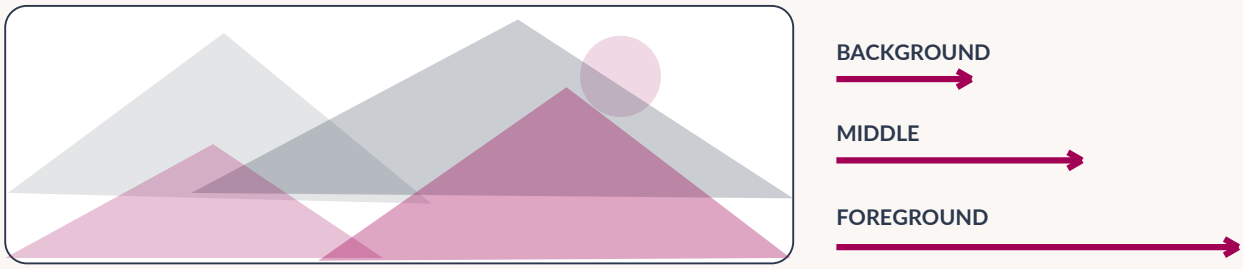
"Animate the page turn with a 350 ms ease-in-out transition and include a reduced-motion alternative."

WATCH FOR: Avoid bounce when the task calls for a calm, serious tone.

11 Parallax

MOTION & INTERACTION

Foreground and background layers appear to move at different speeds.



USE IT Introduce subtle depth to an environment or simulation.

ASK AI

"Use restrained parallax on background layers only. Keep instructional text stationary and honor reduced-motion settings."

WATCH FOR: Strong parallax can distract or cause motion discomfort.

12 Kinetic typography

MOTION & INTERACTION

Text that moves or changes size to emphasize spoken or written ideas.



USE IT Emphasize short key phrases in a course teaser.

ASK AI

"Animate three short terms in sequence: Notice, Decide, Act. Keep each readable and provide captions."

WATCH FOR: Never use motion as the only way to communicate meaning.

13 Lower third

MOTION & INTERACTION

A label or information strip in the lower part of a video frame.



USE IT Introduce an instructor, expert, or concept during video.

ASK AI

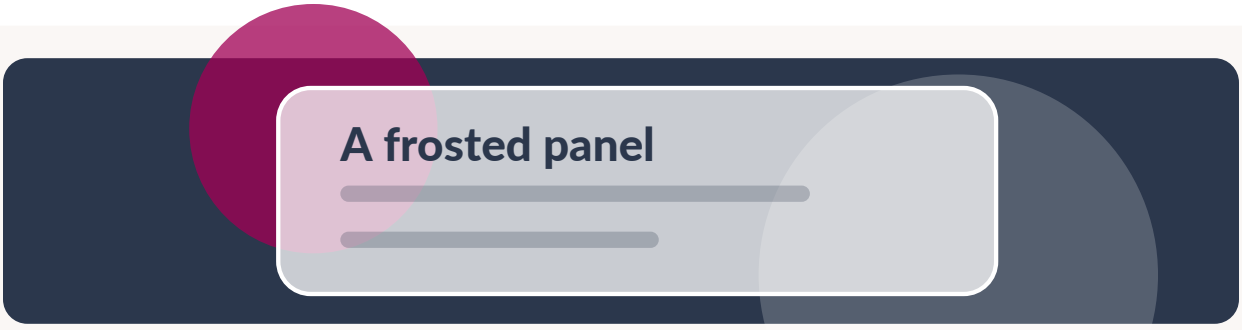
"Design a simple lower-third name and role graphic inside safe margins without covering captions."

WATCH FOR: Keep titles readable and clear of video controls.

14 Glassmorphism

STYLE & SURFACE

Frosted, translucent panels over a visible background.



USE IT Create a layered appearance for a preview or cover.

ASK AI

"Use a restrained frosted-glass panel with sufficient opacity so every heading and control is readable."

WATCH FOR: Low-contrast text on glass can become illegible.

15 Neumorphism

STYLE & SURFACE

Soft shadows make controls look slightly raised or pressed in.



USE IT Add dimensional polish to secondary controls.

ASK AI

"Give the button subtle raised depth but retain a border, text label, and obvious keyboard focus state."

WATCH FOR: Purely shadow-defined buttons have weak affordance.

16 Gradient mesh

STYLE & SURFACE

Multiple soft regions of color blend across a surface.



USE IT Give a background gentle visual depth.

ASK AI

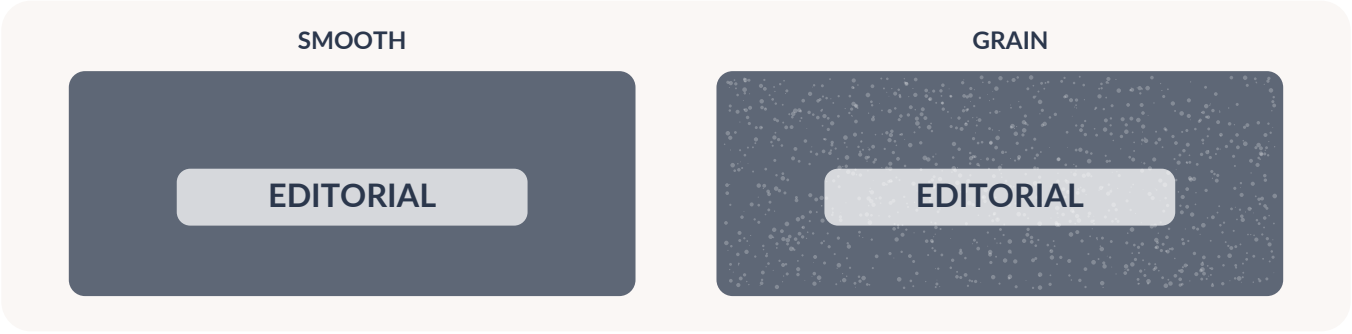
"Build a restrained mesh from approved brand colors while keeping the content area clear and high contrast."

WATCH FOR: Avoid introducing off-brand colors or muddy text areas.

17 Grain texture

STYLE & SURFACE

Fine visual noise that adds a tactile or printed quality.



USE IT Give editorial illustrations a subtle finish.

ASK AI

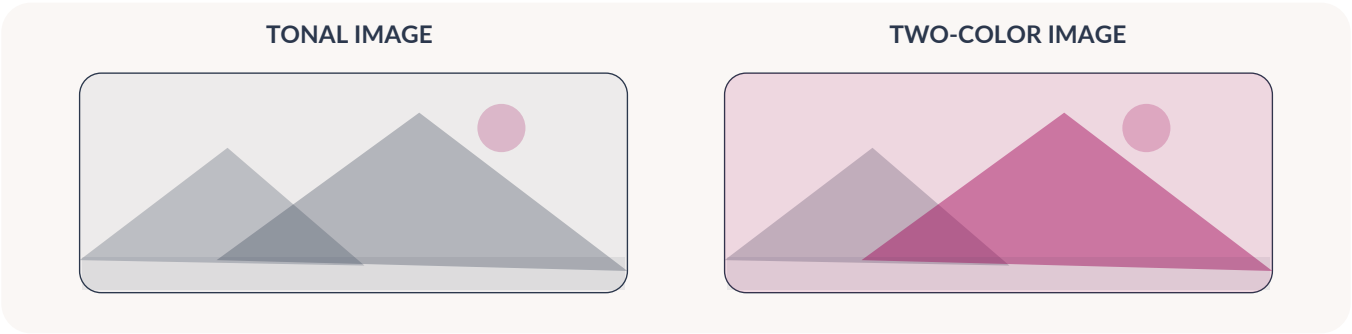
"Apply fine grain to decorative areas only, leaving text and controls crisp and clean."

WATCH FOR: Heavy noise harms legibility and video compression.

18 Duotone

STYLE & SURFACE

An image rendered using two main colors or tones.



USE IT Bring a set of photographs into a consistent brand style.

ASK AI

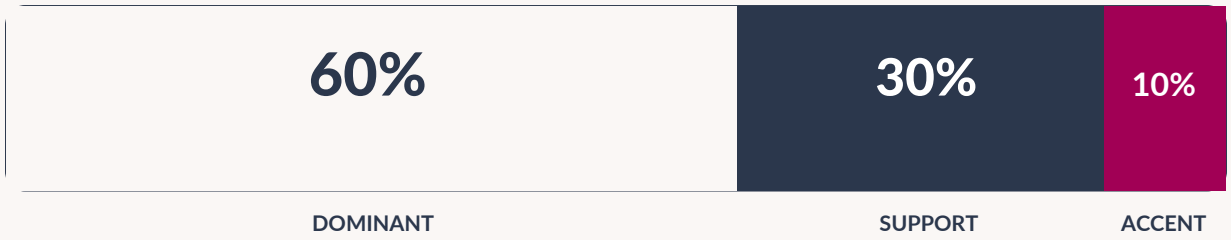
"Convert the illustrative photo to a dark-blue and raspberry duotone without losing the subject or important detail."

WATCH FOR: Check recognizable facial and object details remain clear.

19 60-30-10 rule

COLOR & BRAND

A starting ratio: dominant color, supporting color, and small accent.



USE IT Balance large content areas against one key action.

ASK AI

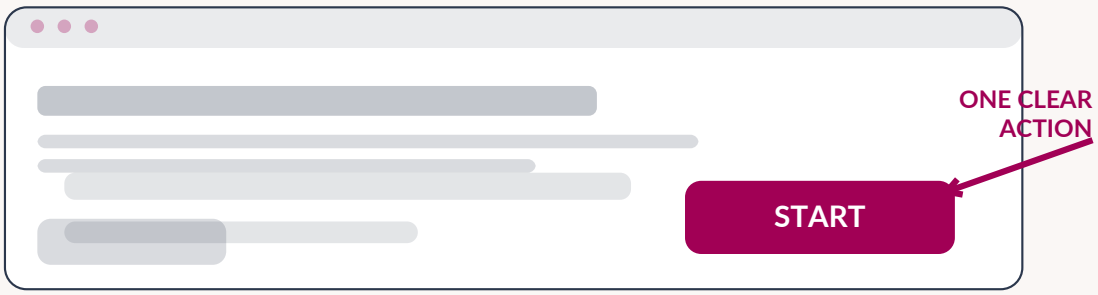
"Allocate about 60 percent to the main neutral, 30 percent to support, and 10 percent to an action accent."

WATCH FOR: A flexible heuristic, not an exact accessibility rule.

20 Accent color

COLOR & BRAND

One contrasting color used sparingly to signal priority.



USE IT Draw attention to a primary action or selected state.

ASK AI

"Reserve Dark Raspberry #A10055 for the primary action and selected states. Keep the rest visually quieter."

WATCH FOR: Never depend on color alone to show state or correctness.

21 Font pairing

TYPOGRAPHY

Two compatible typefaces used for different visual roles.



USE IT Separate titles from instructional content clearly.

ASK AI

"Pair a confident display font for headings with a highly legible sans-serif for paragraphs and interface labels."

WATCH FOR: Ornate typefaces rarely work for dense instructions.

22 Tracking

TYPOGRAPHY

The spacing applied uniformly between letters in a text range.



USE IT Refine short section labels or navigation headings.

ASK AI

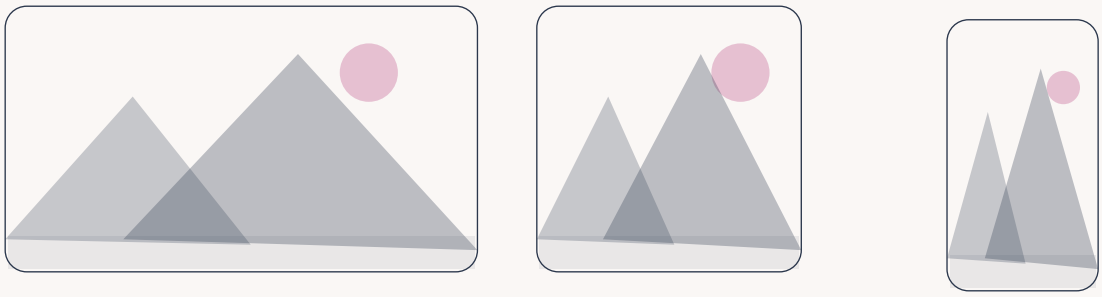
"Add a little tracking to short uppercase labels, but preserve normal spacing in body paragraphs."

WATCH FOR: Tracking and kerning are not the same adjustment.

23 Aspect ratio

IMAGES & VIDEO

The width-to-height proportion of a visual or video.



USE IT Plan landscape courses and vertical social clips.

ASK AI

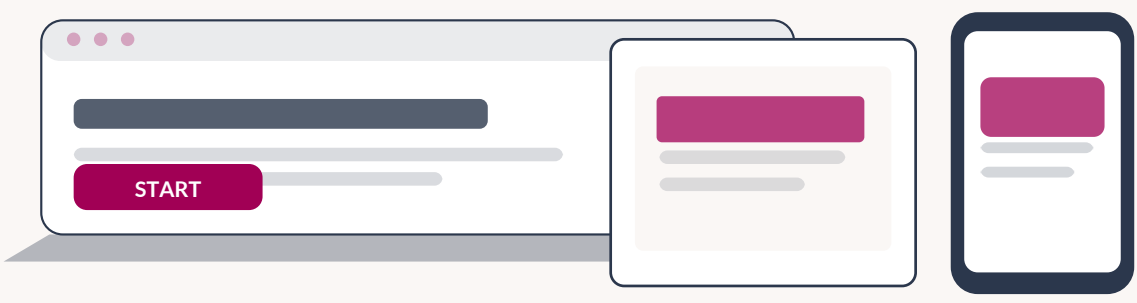
"Create separate 16:9, 1:1, and 9:16 compositions with readable text and safe margins. Do not just crop one layout."

WATCH FOR: A crop can remove critical text, faces, or controls.

24 Mockup

IMAGES & VIDEO

A design shown in context, such as on a laptop, tablet, or phone.



USE IT Present how a course or tool appears across screens.

ASK AI

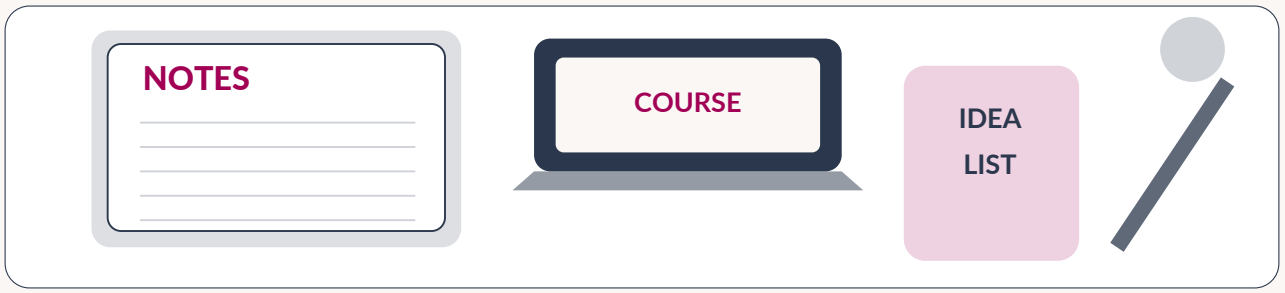
"Show the real interaction in laptop, tablet, and phone mockups; preserve the interface and do not invent features."

WATCH FOR: Mockups do not prove the real interface is responsive.

25 Flat lay

IMAGES & VIDEO

A top-down view of objects deliberately arranged on a surface.



USE IT Illustrate tools, materials, or workplace resources.

ASK AI

"Create an overhead flat lay of a facilitator's notebook, laptop, cards, and pen with room for a short title."

WATCH FOR: Decorative objects should not compete with the message.

Design isn't a decoration checklist.

Choose the terms that help a learner see, decide, remember, or act. Skip the rest.

GET SPECIFIC

Purpose + content + structure + behavior + visual style + accessibility + review criteria

NEXT: USE THE PROMPT FORMULA ON THE LAST PAGE

From vague request to useful prompt

VAGUE

"Make it clean, modern, and more interactive."

SPECIFIC

Create a responsive scenario screen for property service teams. Use visual hierarchy to make the decision prompt most prominent, four consistent cards for choices, generous negative space, and a single raspberry primary action. Add visible hover, focus, and selected states with subtle ease-out transitions. Support touch, keyboard navigation, and reduced motion.

Reusable prompt formula

Design [asset or interaction] for [audience] so they can [observable learning outcome]. Use [layout / hierarchy terms] to organize [content]. Add [interaction / motion terms] only where they support an action. Apply [brand, typography, and image terms]. Meet [accessibility, responsive, and platform requirements]. Verify [what success looks like].

The point

These terms are tools for expressing an idea, not ingredients to throw into every design. Use the smallest combination that makes the experience clearer and more useful.

Based on the 25 terms introduced in Techie Tonya's video, expanded for eLearning design.
Source: youtube.com/watch?v=lPI_8CC4IOk