



## UNIT- 2

## Key principles of Interior Design

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Explain the principles of interior design including unity, balance, proportion, scale, rhythm and emphasis.
- ✓ Apply these principles to create effective and harmonious interiors.

## Unit 2

### Key principles of Interior Design

Interior design is a science in its own right, which is primarily about understanding the basic design principles. The first part of any project involves the gathering and analysis of information, as a foundation from which the designer can develop ideas. The second stage is the creative part of the process, guided by important design principles and guidelines. There have been various examples of such principles laid out over the centuries, but their purpose has always been the same: to create balanced and harmonious spaces, which are appropriate for their function. In order to achieve this, the designer has to understand and consider the following key areas:

#### Human Dimensions

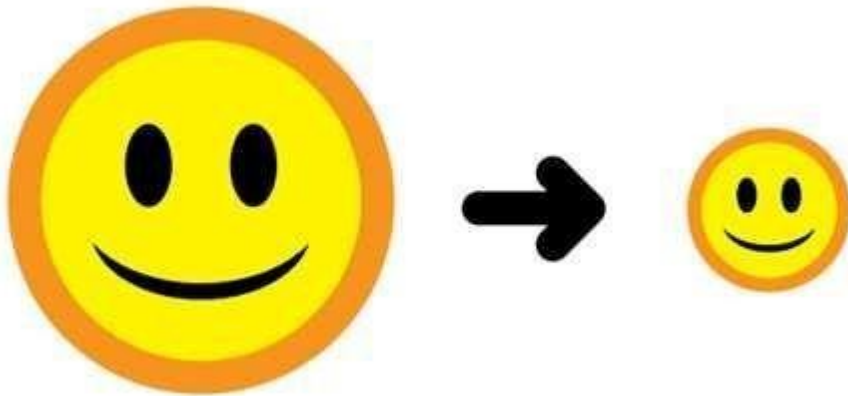
A designer needs to be familiar with the amount of space realistically required for certain activities, in order to create spaces that are comfortable for the end-users. The amount of room required differs between activities - putting a baby into a cot, shrugging on a coat, towel drying after a shower, making a bed etc. Also, the most convenient height for working surfaces or storage solutions must be considered at the initial planning stage of a project.

#### Scale and Proportion

Scale is the size of an object compared to other objects, while proportion refers the size of a part of an object compared to the rest of the object.

Proportioning systems have been developed through time in an attempt to establish an ideal measure of beauty. They have also allowed designers and architects to establish a consistent set of visual relationships that create balance and harmony.

In order to properly keep a room to scale, a designer has to take the sizes of all objects it contains into consideration. The heights and weights of the furniture should be relative to the size of the room. A giant sofa in a tiny living room would not look right - neither would tiny nightstands next to a huge king size bed. This also relates to the proportion of the objects – in this example, the shade of the lamp should be in proportion to the base. Scale also work well with contrast, which we can see if we put a small circle next to a big circle. It appears that the big circle is a lot bigger than the small circle, even it if isn't big in its own right.



### Balance/ Harmony

In China, lines are traditionally believed to affect people psychologically. Horizontal lines create a feeling of tranquility, while vertical lines are more energizing. A combination of the two is said to bring about harmony. Chinese philosophy is today used throughout the world to create balanced and harmonious interiors. There are different styles of balance: symmetrical, asymmetrical and radial.

Symmetrical balance is usually found in traditional interiors. It is a mirror image; one side is the mirror image of the other. It is characterised by the same objects repeated in the same positions on either side of a vertical axis. It also reflects the human form and we feel comfortable in this balanced setting. Asymmetrical balance is achieved with some dissimilar objects that have equal visual weight or eye attraction. Asymmetrical balance is more casual and less contrived in feeling, but difficult to achieve. Asymmetry creates a feeling of movement and leads to more lively interior space. Radial symmetry is when the elements of a design are arrayed around a centre point. A spiral staircase is a good example of radial balance.

The overall beauty of a design scheme can be achieved if it is well balanced. This balance is established using colours, shapes, sizes, textures and so on. Different colours, shapes, sizes etc, create different degrees of interest in a scheme. It is the distribution of this interest which you have to control. Balance can also be described as achieving equilibrium.



Symmetrical balance



Asymmetrical balance

## Contrast

We live in a world of contrasts. There are differences between tall and short, black and white, hard and soft, thin and thick, and so on. Contrasts can be introduced into interiors in many ways. Examples of which include contrast of form, different shapes, heights and sizes, contrast of colours, contrast of textures and contrast of light and shades.



## Colour

### contrast

## Rhythm

Rhythm refers to the repetition of elements in space and time. There is always a beginning and an end to the pattern: think of columns, or an organized grouping of photos. Symmetry, arranging elements around a central point like a fireplace, is one way to create rhythm. It is rhythmic to repeat a shape or colour (for example, a circular coffee table is matched with a circular mirror).

Rhythm is defined as continuity, recurrence or organised movement. To achieve these themes in a design, one has to think about repetition, progression, and transition. These mechanisms will impart a sense of movement to a space, leading the eye from one design element to another.

**Repetition** is the use of the same element more than once throughout a space. A pattern, colour, texture, line or any other element can be repeated in a design, often more than once.

**Progression** is taking an element and increasing or decreasing one or more of its qualities. The most common example of this could be one type of item used in different sizes. A cluster of candles of varying sizes on a simple tray creates interest, because of the natural progression shown. Progression can also be achieved via colour, such as in a monochromatic colour scheme where each element is a slightly different shade of the same hue. **Transition** is a little harder to define. Unlike repetition or progression, transition tends to be a smoother flow, where the eye naturally glides from one area to another. A common example of this can be curved lines to gently lead the eye, such as an arched doorway or a winding path.

Too many disparate and disjointed elements in a space can be disquieting to the mind's eye, and a designer can make use of rhythm and repetition of recurring elements or patterns to avoid this.



### **Emphasis/ Focal Point**

Every room needs a focal point - the area that draws our attention. This can be something as obvious as a fireplace or an eye-catching wall display. A focal point must be dominant to draw attention and interesting enough to encourage the viewer to look further. A focal point must therefore have a lasting impression, but must also be an integral part of the decoration, linked through scale, colour or theme. If there is no focal point in the room already, it can be created, by highlighting a particular piece of furniture or a piece of art, or by simply painting a contrasting colour in one area. A sense of balance is also required when making a focal point, so that the focal point does not hog all of the attention. You can also use emphasis to divert the eye from an existing focal point by placing bold colours or small and visually interesting items away from the area.



### **Unity and Variety**

Unity is 'togetherness' – the feeling that certain things belong together – and is the hallmark of a good design. It is the goal of the designer to create a composition where all the design elements work harmoniously together, giving the viewer a satisfying sense of belonging and relationship. Unity in a design scheme is achieved when all the design principles (balance, harmony, rhythm, emphasis, contrast, proportion, scale) have been applied correctly. Variety is change. Too much unity can be boring and too much variety can cause a headache (in a visual sense).



## Practical Planning

### **Purpose**

Although a designer will be aware of the aesthetic and holistic aspects of any space being planned, function and practicality are the obvious priorities. An area must be planned for a particular purpose or set of purposes. Any place being planned must cater the needs and activities of the people occupying that space, with special attention given to any physically challenged users.

### **Circulation**

Circulation through a space is a crucial aspect of a design. A designer working on a restaurant, for example, might generate a traffic-flow plan to ensure that staff and guests can move about the space in comfort and safety - from the entrance to the tables, from tables to the restroom and so on. In all aspects of planning, sufficient space needs to be provided around furniture for the opening of drawers, windows and cupboard doors.

### **Storage**

Storage plays a key role in all our lives. The designer has to plan this with precision, to ensure that everything required can be accommodated with minimum efficiency and ease of access.

### **Safety**

Safety in interiors is also a planning priority, and the designer should take particular care where children and elderly people are concerned. Planning regulations for public spaces are often complex and must be researched in-depth.

### **Structural Considerations**

Before making decisions on the structural side of a project, a designer should consult with an engineer or surveyor. It is also important for a designer to have a good understanding of how a building is put together in a structural sense. This will help them assess the constraints and opportunities that present themselves, and liaise knowledgeably with other professionals during the course of a project.

## Playing with the Rules

### Flexibility

Flexibility in planning is very important in modern interiors. It is now understood that private areas are also sometimes needed within a home for a variety of purposes. Sometimes, a designer will look to separate an area of a large space without actually isolating it. Spaces can be defined with floor and ceiling treatments. The oriental idea of incorporating moveable screens or sliding partitions has also recently found its way into western interiors.

### Visual Tricks

Designers can employ visual tricks to increase the feeling of space in smaller rooms. Removing or scaling down details such as cornices, which define corners, can expand the perception of a space.

Installing lightweight furniture and the strategic use of glass panels further enhances space and light. A designer can also use light to soften the lines where walls and ceilings meet, or install a false back lit wall that stops short of the ceiling for the same purpose. Height too can be amplified by opening up rooms, or installing lanterns, roof lights or sky lights. Mirrors are another tool that the designer can use to optimize the sense of space and light. In addition to hung framed mirrors, large area of mirrored material can be installed between dado and cornice or adjacent windows, or above a fireplace to reflect images and maximize the sense space.

For the designer who is well-versed in the principles of design, it is often a case of looking for ways to effectively blur the boundaries between classical and modern style.

Often less is more - the simpler the designer, the more timeless and popular it is likely to prove.

### Integrating the Services

Key services - though often unseen – are among the most important parts of the planning process and should be considered at the start of a project. These services include heating, lighting, plumbing, drainage, electricity, air conditioning, security, integrated entertainment and communication systems. A designer cannot be an expert in all these fields at the same time, especially in today's era of advanced technology. It is therefore usually necessary to work with specialist companies and contractors. However, in order to make informed design decisions and communicate appropriately with the contractors hired, the designer must be as well-informed in these specialist areas as possible.

### Further Reading:

- ✓ *The Fundamentals of Interior Design (2015) By Simon Dodsworth*
- ✓ *The Fundamental of Interior Design By Trung Hoang*