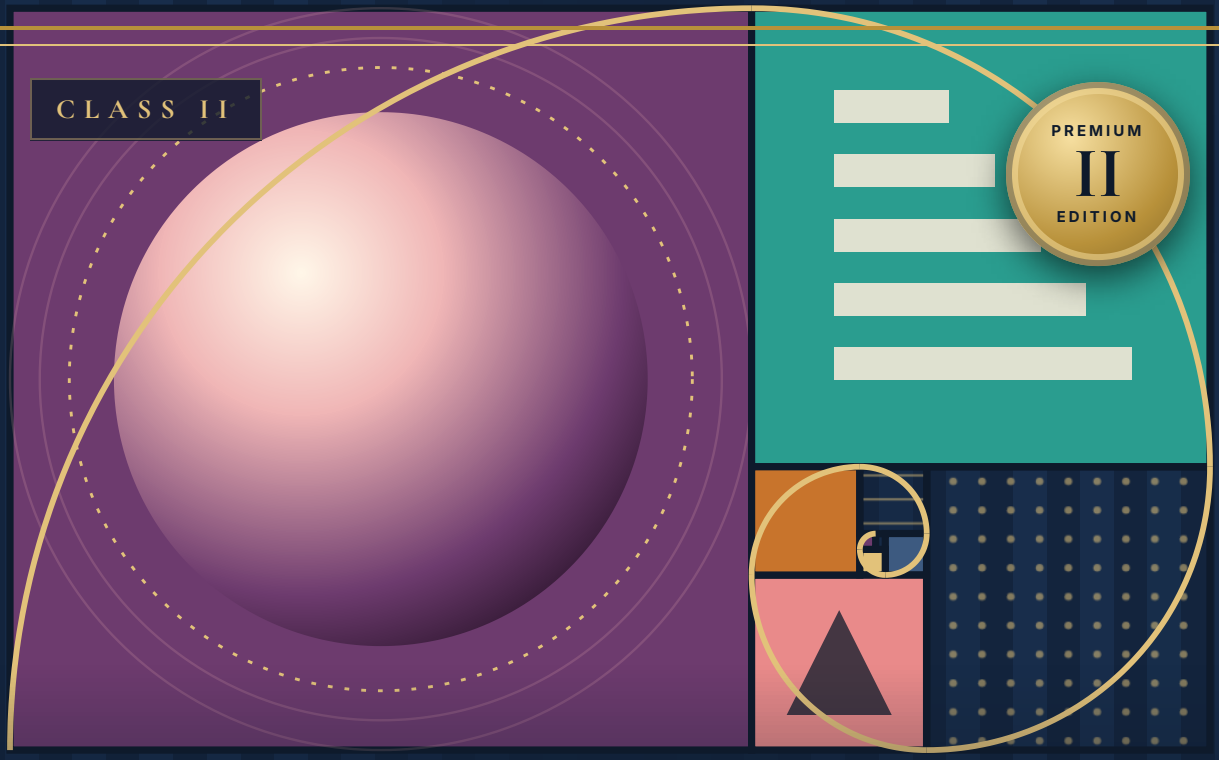


KECUDO

DESIGN PRINCIPLES SERIES

The Principles of *Composition*

Arranging the elements with intent — with original illustrations, worked examples and 64 self-check questions

BALANCE · PROPORTION · EMPHASIS · HIERARCHY · MOVEMENT · CONTRAST · ALIGNMENT · GESTALT · GRID · UNITY

CLASS 2 · 2026 EDITION · DESIGNER SERIES

KECUDO

Front matter

Contents

About this book 2

Part I · Foundations

01 From Elements to Composition 5
02 Balance 8
03 Proportion & Scale 11
04 Emphasis & Focal Point 14

Part II · Core

05 Hierarchy 18
06 Contrast 21
07 Rhythm & Repetition 24
08 Movement 27

Part III · Advanced

09 Alignment & Proximity 31
10 Gestalt Principles 34
11 Unity & Variety 37
12 Grids for Composition 40
13 Composition Audit 43

Self-assessment

Self-assessment 46
Your result 52

FOUNDATION

Chapter 1

From Elements to Composition

CHAPTER 01

In Class 1 you met the raw materials: line, shape, value, colour, texture, space. **Composition** is the arrangement of those materials inside a frame so that the viewer understands what matters, in what order, and what to do next.

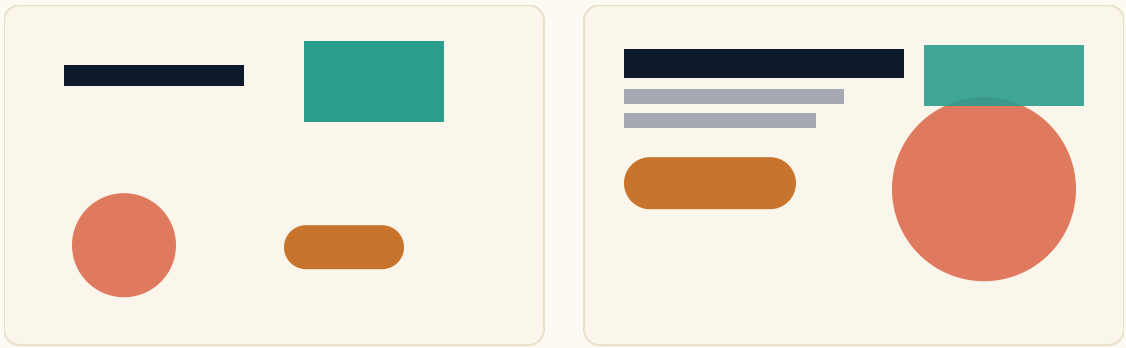


FIG 1.1 · The same four elements — only the arrangement changed.

- **The frame comes first.** Format and edges shape every decision: a phone screen, a poster and a banner need different compositions.
- **Principles are tools, not laws.** Balance, proportion, emphasis, rhythm, movement, contrast and unity each solve a specific problem.
- **Every composition answers three questions:** where do I look first, where next, and what do I do?



Portrait
posters, phones

Landscape
slides, web heroes

Square
social posts

Panorama
banners

FIG 1.2 · Common formats and where you meet them.

PRINCIPLE	THE PROBLEM IT SOLVES
Balance	Does it feel stable — or deliberately tense?
Proportion & scale	Are the size relationships pleasing and meaningful?
Emphasis	Is there one clear focal point?
Hierarchy	Is the reading order obvious?
Contrast	Are differences clear enough?
Rhythm & movement	Does the eye travel smoothly?
Alignment & Gestalt	What belongs together?
Unity & variety	Does it feel like one design?

WORKED EXAMPLE · KECUDO BREW CO.

Kecudo Brew's order-ahead page had good ingredients — a warm palette, a great cup photo, clear copy — but they were placed where they happened to fit. In this class we keep every element and only change the **arrangement**. By Chapter 13 the score doubles.

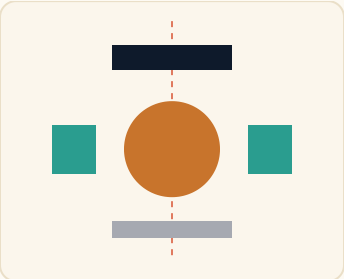
FOUNDATION

Chapter 2

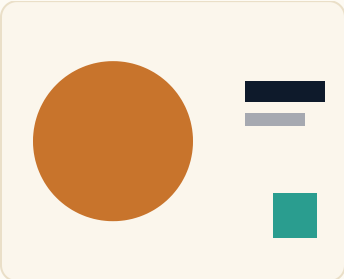
Balance

CHAPTER 02

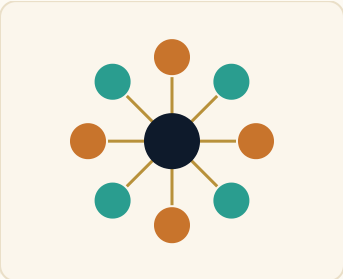
Every element has visual weight. Balance is distributing that weight so the composition feels stable — or deliberately unstable when you want energy.



Symmetrical
formal, calm



Asymmetrical
dynamic, modern



Radial
focused on a centre

FIG 2.1 · Three kinds of balance.

What makes something “heavy”

ADDS VISUAL WEIGHT	EXAMPLE
Size	A large photo outweighs a small icon
Dark value	Espresso brown outweighs Cream
Saturation	Crema orange outweighs grey
Complexity	A detailed image outweighs flat colour
Isolation	One object alone in space gains weight
Position	Items higher or further from centre feel heavier

FOUNDATION

Chapter 3

Proportion & Scale

CHAPTER 03

Proportion is the size relationship between parts of a whole. **Scale** is the size of one thing compared with another, or with the viewer. Together they decide what feels important, pleasing and real.

Ratios you will meet every day

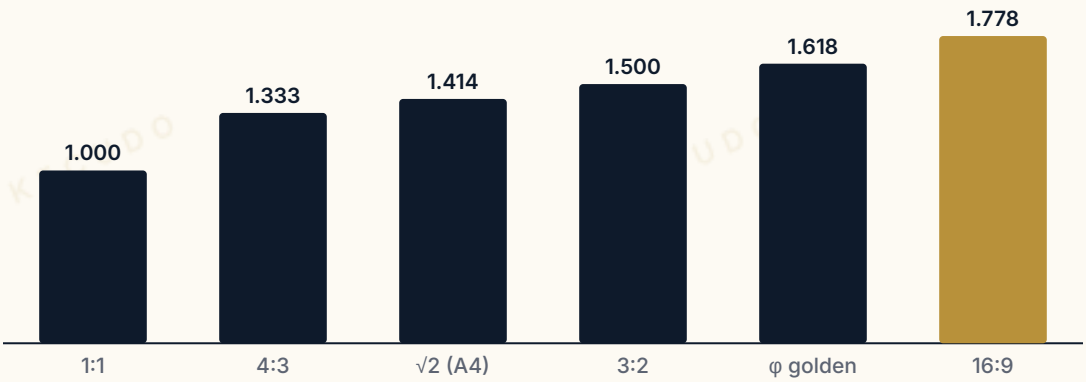


FIG 3.1 · Common width-to-height ratios, as a decimal.

RATIO	WHERE	EXAMPLE
16:9	Video, slides, screens	1,920 × 1,080
3:2	Photography	1,200 × 800
√2 ≈ 1.414	A-series paper	A4 = 210 × 297mm
φ ≈ 1.618	Golden ratio layouts	1,200 → 741.6 + 458.4

Self-assessment

Part A · Basics

1. Mirror-image halves create which balance?

- **A** Radial
- **B** Symmetrical
- **C** Asymmetrical
- **D** Progressive

2. The focal point is…

- **A** Where the eye lands first
- **B** The page footer
- **C** The grid gutter
- **D** The texture

3. Proportion describes…

- **A** Colour temperature
- **B** Font licensing
- **C** Size relationships between parts
- **D** Line quality

4. Rhythm in design is…

- **A** A sound effect
- **B** Random placement
- **C** Repetition with intervals
- **D** Only for animation

5. The Gestalt principle that groups near items is…

- **A** Closure
- **B** Proximity
- **C** Continuity
- **D** Similarity

K

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Thank you for learning with Kecudo.

NEXT IN THE SERIES

Class 3 · Typography & Color Systems

Type anatomy and pairing, type scales for every screen, and turning one brand colour into a full, accessible palette.

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