Unraveling the Mystery of Design Elements and Principles in Clothing

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
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By learning and using the elements and principles of design, you will increase your understanding of how and why some things work together and some simply "don't look right."
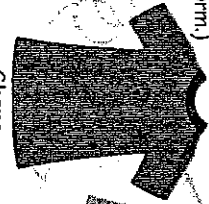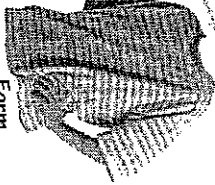
Elements of Design

The elements of design are shape/form, color, texture, and line. These are the tools used by you and clothing manufacturers when a garment is designed and constructed to enhance your appearance.

Shape/Form

Form is the shape and structure of an item. Shape is two-dimensional and appears flat; form is three-dimensional with length, width, and depth. (A circle is a shape; a ball is a form.)
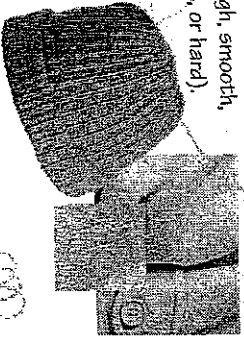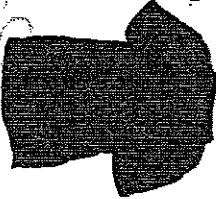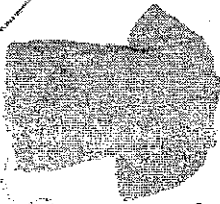
Shape

Form

Texture

Texture is the surface quality of an item. It is how something feels when it is touched or looks like it would feel if touched (rough, smooth, soft, or hard).
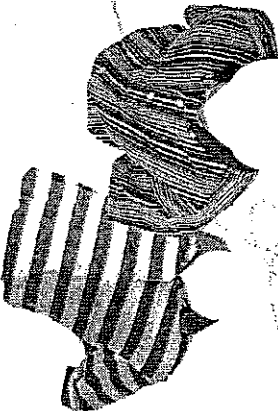
Color

Color is the hue, value, and intensity that defines parts and sets off one area of design from another. Hue is the name of the color (red, blue). Value is how light or dark the color is (light blue, navy blue). Intensity is how bright or dull it is (4-H green, neon-green).

Line

Line can show direction, draw your attention, outline an object, divide a space, or communicate a feeling. Lines can be straight, curved, diagonal, thick or thin, horizontal or vertical. They can be part of the fabric (stripes or plaid) or part of the design (a yoke or seam).