Elements of Art

AP 2-D Art and Design · Vocabulary in context

Word	Example
elements of art /ˈelɪmənts ɒv ɑːt/	Line, shape and colour are **elements of art**.
line /laɪn/	The artist used a thick black **line** to draw the outline.
Contour /ˈkɒntʊə/	A **contour** drawing shows only the outer edge of the hand.
gesture /ˈdʒestʃə/	A quick **gesture** drawing shows how the dancer moves.
Implied lines /ɪmˈplaɪd laɪnz/	The eyes of the figures make **implied lines** that lead us across the picture.
shape /ʃeɪp/	A circle is a simple flat **shape**.
form /fɔːm/	Shading turns a circle into the **form** of a ball.
Geometric /ˌdʒiːəʊˈmetrɪk/	Squares and circles are **geometric** shapes.
organic /ɔːˈgænɪk/	Leaves and clouds have **organic** shapes.
Positive shape /ˈpɒzɪtɪv ʃeɪp/	The vase is the **positive shape** in the drawing.
negative shape /ˈnegətɪv ʃeɪp/	The space between the two faces makes a **negative shape**.
Value /ˈvæljuː/	**Value** is how light or dark a colour is.
value scale /ˈvæljuː skeɪl/	A **value scale** goes from white to black in steps.

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highlight /ˈhaɪlaɪt/	The **highlight** is the brightest spot.
midtones /ˈmɪdtəʊnz/	The **midtones** sit between the brightest and the darkest parts.
core shadow /kɔː ˈʃædəʊ/	The **core shadow** is the darkest part of the object.
reflected light /rɪˈflektɪd laɪt/	**Reflected light** bounces back into the shadow.
cast shadow /kæst ˈʃædəʊ/	The **cast shadow** falls on the table.
Chiaroscuro /ˌkjɑːrəˈskjʊərəʊ/	Caravaggio used **chiaroscuro**: bright light against deep shadow.
Colour /ˈkʌlə/	**Colour** can make a picture feel happy or sad.
colour wheel /ˈkʌlə wiːl/	A **colour wheel** shows how colours relate to each other.
hue /hjuː/	Red, blue and green are each a different **hue**.
saturation /ˌsætʃəˈreɪʃn/	High **saturation** makes a colour bright and strong.
Primary /ˈpraɪməri/	Red, yellow and blue are the **primary** colours in painting.
secondary /ˈsekəndəri/	Orange, green and purple are **secondary** colours.
Complementary /ˌkɒmplɪˈmentəri/	Red and green are **complementary** colours.
neutralise /ˈnjuːtrəlaɪz/	Mix in a little green to **neutralise** a bright red.

Word	Example
analogous /əˈnæləgəs/	Blue, blue-green and green are **analogous** colours: they sit side by side on the wheel.
Warm /wɔːm/	Red and orange are **warm** colours.
cool /kuːl/	Blue and green are **cool** colours.
Texture /ˈtekstʃə/	The rough bark has a strong **texture**.
Actual (tactile) texture /ˈæktʃuːəl ˈtekstʃə/	Sand glued onto the canvas gives **actual (tactile) texture** that you can feel.
Implied (visual) texture /ɪmˈplaɪd ˈtekstʃə/	Fine lines give **implied (visual) texture** that looks like fur.
impasto /ɪmˈpæstəʊ/	Van Gogh used thick **impasto** that stands up from the canvas.
Space /speɪs/	The empty **space** around the figure makes it look lonely.
overlapping /ˌəʊvəˈlæpɪŋ/	**Overlapping** shapes show which object is in front.
foreground /ˈfɔːgraʊnd/	The tree in the **foreground** looks big and close.
middle ground /ˈmɪdl graʊnd/	The house sits in the **middle ground**, behind the tree.
background /ˈbækgraʊnd/	The figure stands out against a dark **background**.
Linear perspective /ˈlɪnɪə pəˈspektɪv/	**Linear perspective** makes the road get narrower as it goes away.
• **vanishing point** /ˈvænɪʃɪŋ pɔɪnt/	Lines meet at the **vanishing point**.

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atmospheric perspective /ˌætməsˈferɪk pəˈspektɪv/	**Atmospheric perspective** makes distant hills paler.