

Some tips for GUI's

“Software for Use” (Constantine & Lockwood)

3 Tips:

1. Wise use of white space
2. How to get the right layout complexity
3. Increasing task visibility

1. White space:

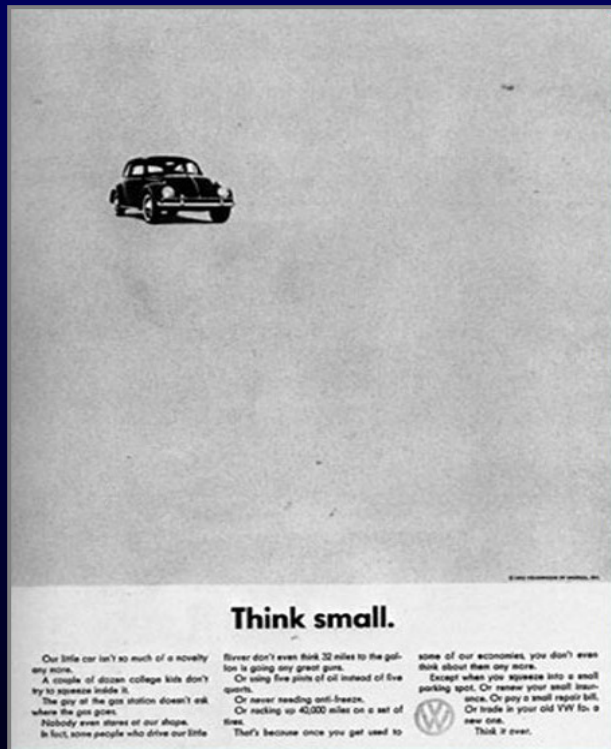
Definition: Space between graphical elements

Balance between used- and blank space:

- Elegant look
- Easier to understand
- Accentuate important parts

Examples

Good



Think small.

Our little car isn't so much of a novelty any more. A couple of dozen college kids don't try to squeeze inside it. The guy at the gas station doesn't ask where the gas goes. Nobody even stares at our shape. In fact, some people who drive our little

river don't even think 32 miles to the gallon is going any great guns. Or using five pints of oil instead of five quarts. Or never needing oil, filter, or never needing oil, filter. Or racking up 40,000 miles on a set of tires. That's because once you get used to

some of our economies, you don't even think about them any more. Except when you squeeze into a small parking spot. Or renew your small insurance. Or pay a small repair bill. Or trade in your old VW for a new one. Think it over.

- Accentuate relevant parts
- Elegant look

Bad



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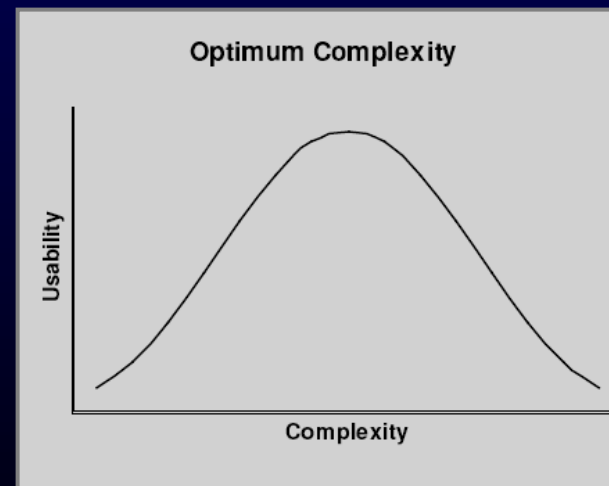
- Important parts hard to distinguish
- Unprofessional/incoherent look

2. Layout complexity:

Definition: Variation in object dimension & position

A lower layout complexity is easier to understand, however different interface objects will become hard to distinguish:

A moderate degree of complexity is best



Investigating layout complexity - Tim Comber, 1996

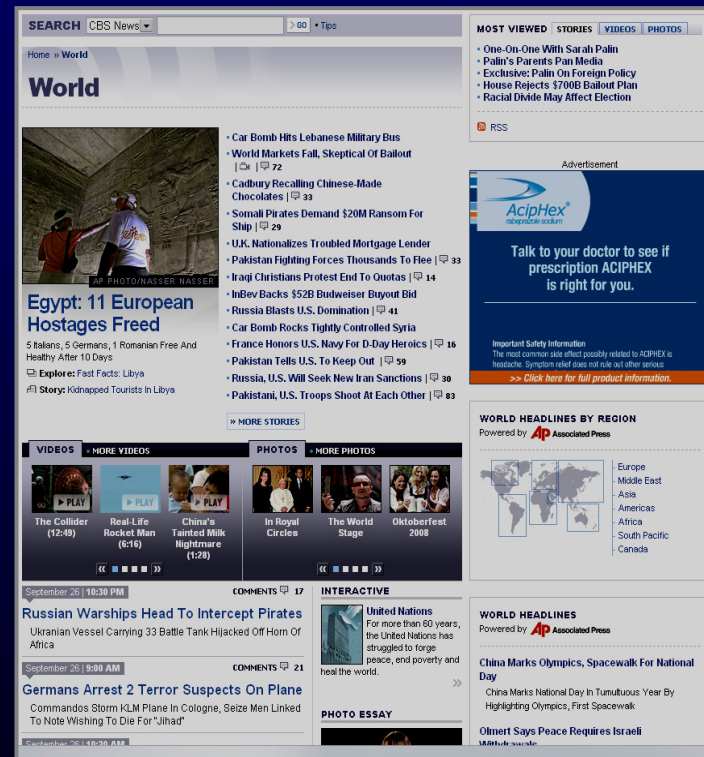
Examples

Good



- Easy to identify different parts
- Looks well-structured

Bad



- A lot of parts with different sizes
- Weird positioning creates confusion

3. Task visibility:

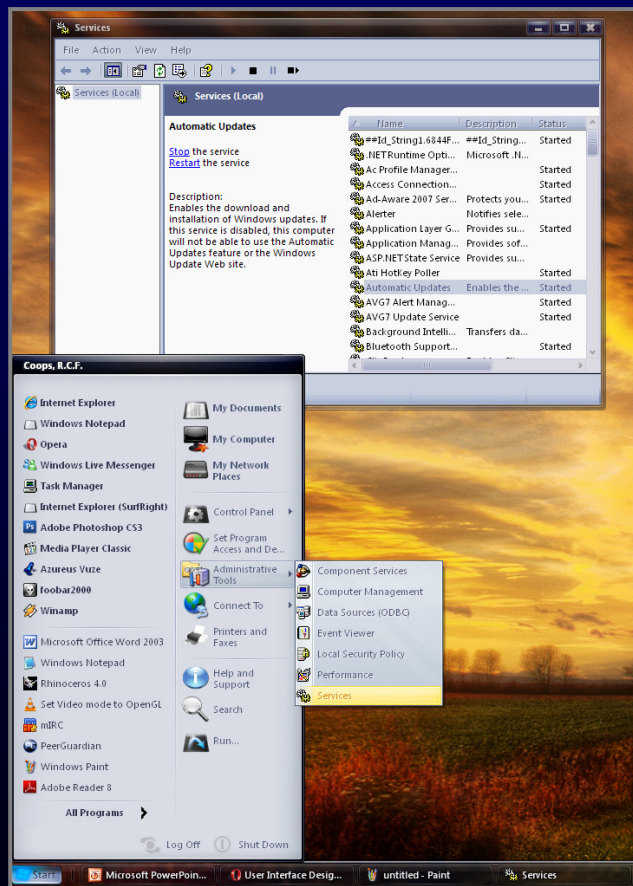
Definition: GUI's should show users what they need to know or to use to complete a certain task.

More or less decided by amount of steps until the action is visible and the visibility of each step.

Less steps required → better task visibility

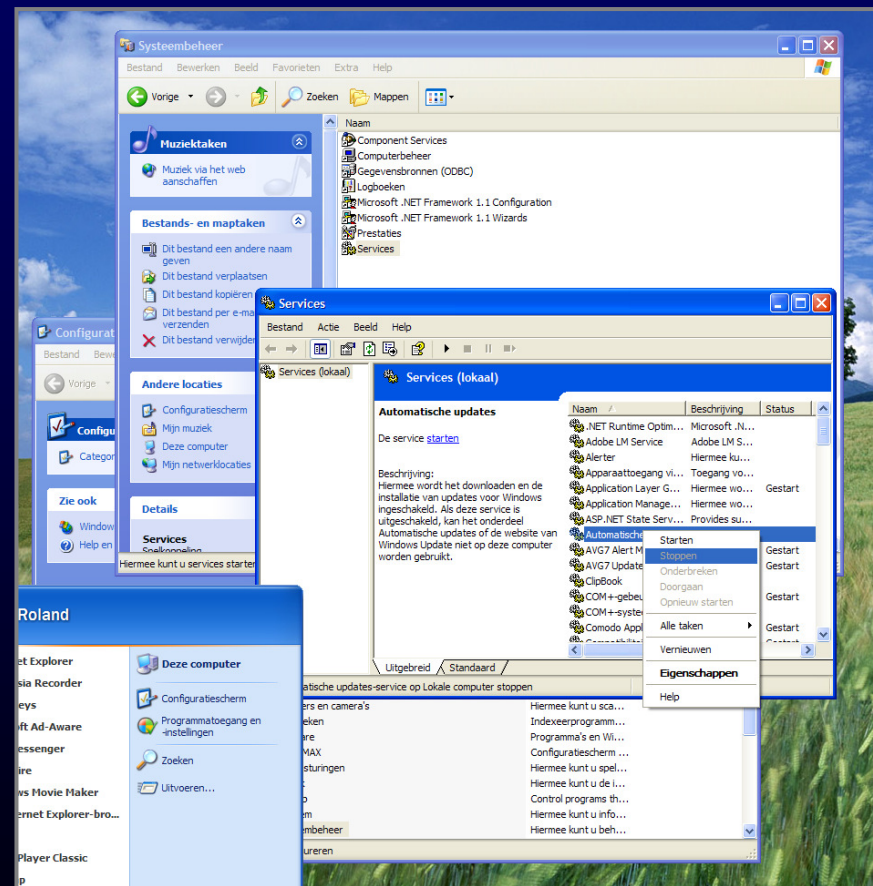
Examples

Good



- Less steps (2) before visible

Bad



- More steps (4) before visible

Thank you