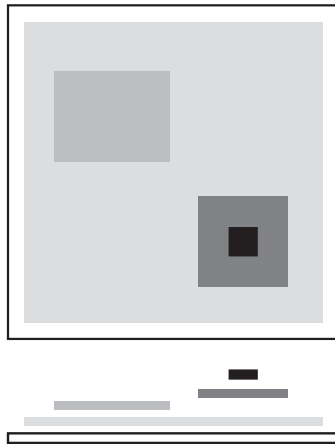


Intellectual and Visual Hierarchies

Your intent for your map drives its design. Intent suggests an **intellectual hierarchy**: what are the different elements on and around the map, and what are their relative importance? Once you have established a clear intellectual hierarchy, you can choose a **visual hierarchy** that reflects the intellectual hierarchy. If map elements are not important to your goals for your map, they are probably “map-crap” and can be left off.



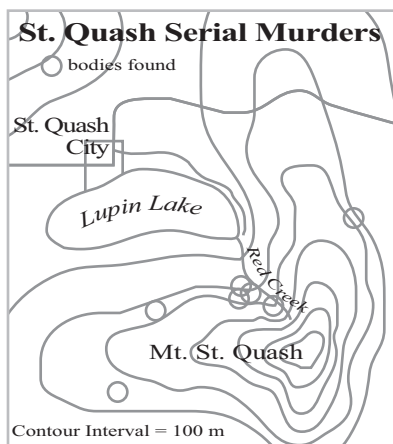
Depth on the flats...

Some elements **stand out**, and others **fall to the back**. This is **visual hierarchy**.

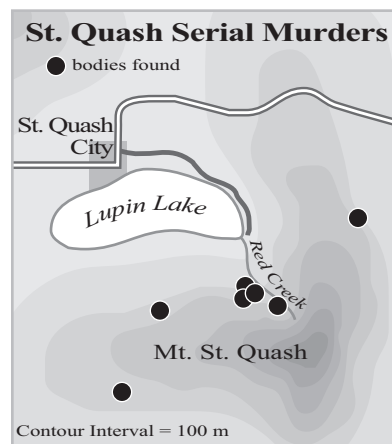
A successful visual hierarchy shows you what is most important **first**; these elements **jump out**. Less important elements are less visually noticeable and fall to the back. A successful visual hierarchy clearly communicates the intellectual hierarchy and **intent** of your map.

Side view of graphic above showing depth.

Poor visual hierarchy:

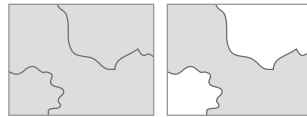


Good visual hierarchy:

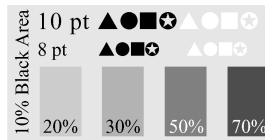


Coordinating intellectual and visual hierarchies:

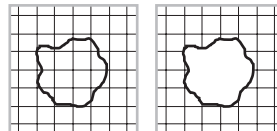
1 **Figure-ground defined and illustrated:** What is figure-ground and how does it work?



2 **Design guides for intellectual and visual hierarchies**



3 **Enhancing visual hierarchies on maps:**
How can depth be added to flat maps?



3 Enhancing visual hierarchies on maps

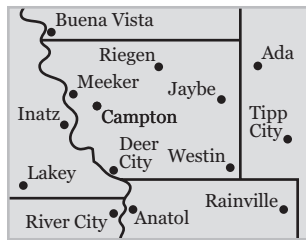
Add depth to flat maps to help the map reader see the point of your map.

visual difference

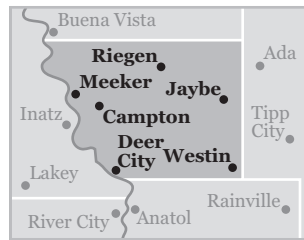
Noticeable visual differences separate figure from ground and enhance visual hierarchy. The examples on the following pages all enhance visual differences to build a visual hierarchy. To focus attention on the most important areas on your map, make it visually different from peripheral areas.



Poor visual difference:

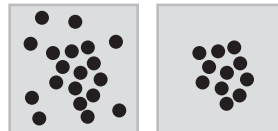


Good visual difference:

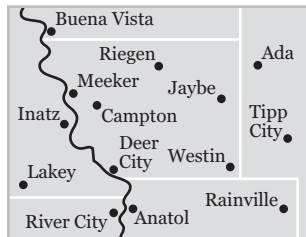


detail

Figure has more detail than ground. To focus attention on the most important area on your map, reduce detail in peripheral areas.



Poor detail:



Good detail:

