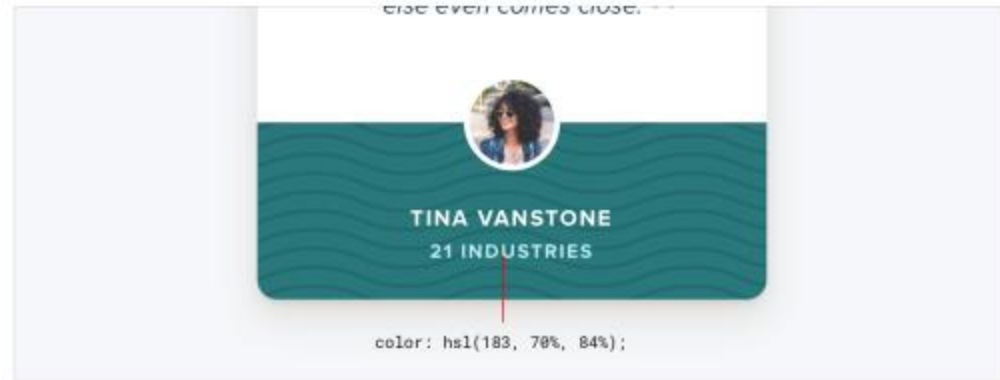**ITI0209: User Interfaces**

09. Tips for Layout

Martin Verrev
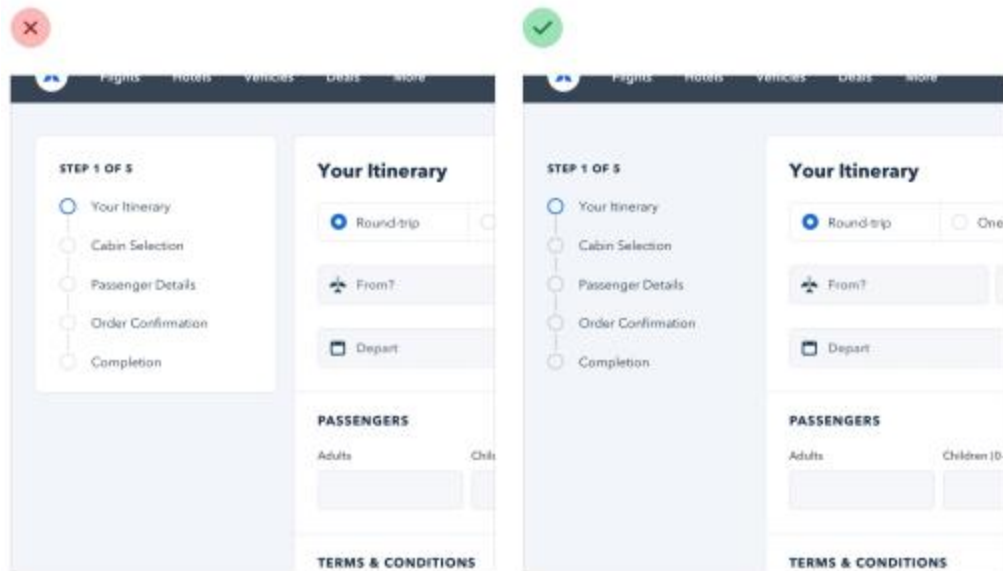
Spring 2022

Overall Tips

Don't use grey text on colored backgrounds

Making the text closer to the background color is what actually helps create hierarchy, not making it light grey. Choose a color with the same hue, and adjust the saturation and lightness until it looks right to you

Emphasize by de-emphasizing

Sometimes you'll run into a situation where the main element of an interface isn't standing out enough, but there's nothing you can add to it to give it the emphasis it needs.
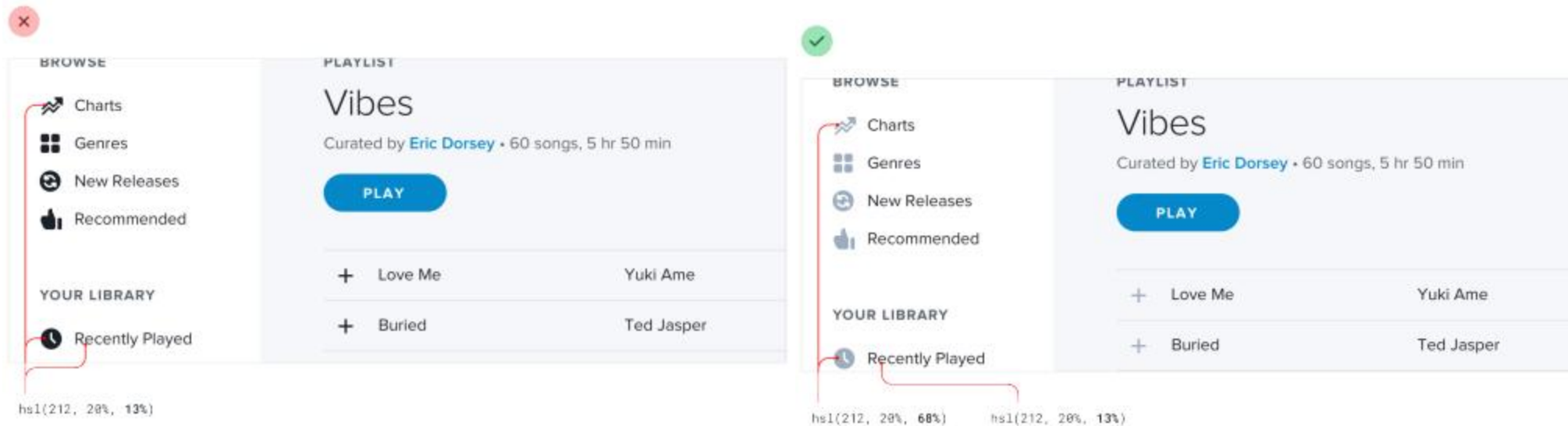
Combine labels and values

If you're building a real estate app, something like "Bedrooms: 3" could simply become "3 bedrooms".

Balance weight and contrast

The reason bold text feels emphasized is that in the same amount of space, more pixels are used for text than for the background. A simple and effective way to balance this is to lower the contrast of the icon by giving it a softer color.
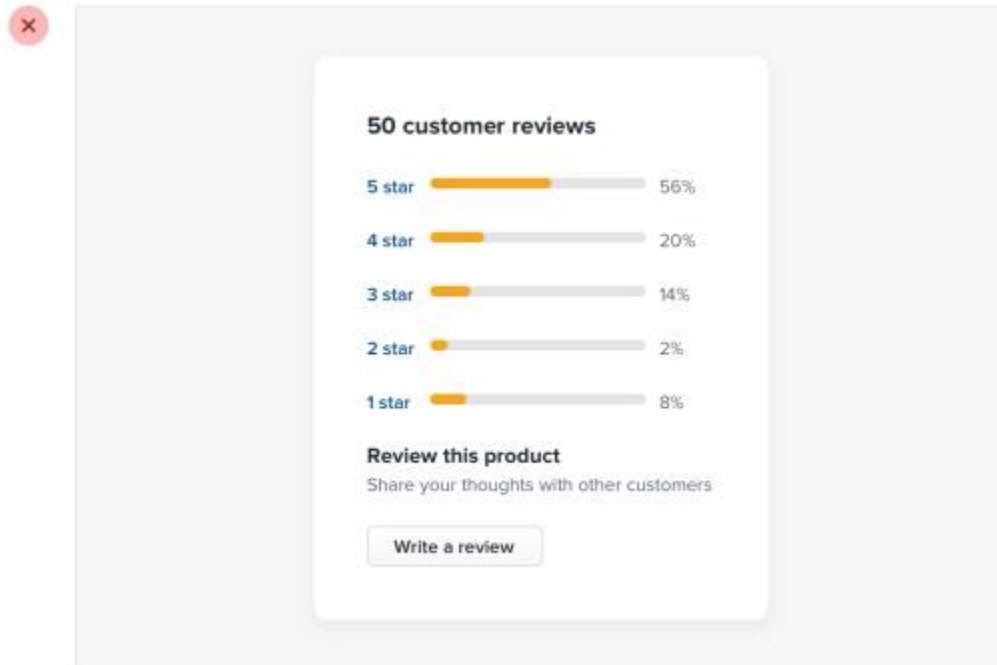
Start layout with too much white space

- White space should be removed, not added

- When designing for the web, white space is almost always added to a design - if something looks little too cramped, you add a bit of margin or padding until things look better.
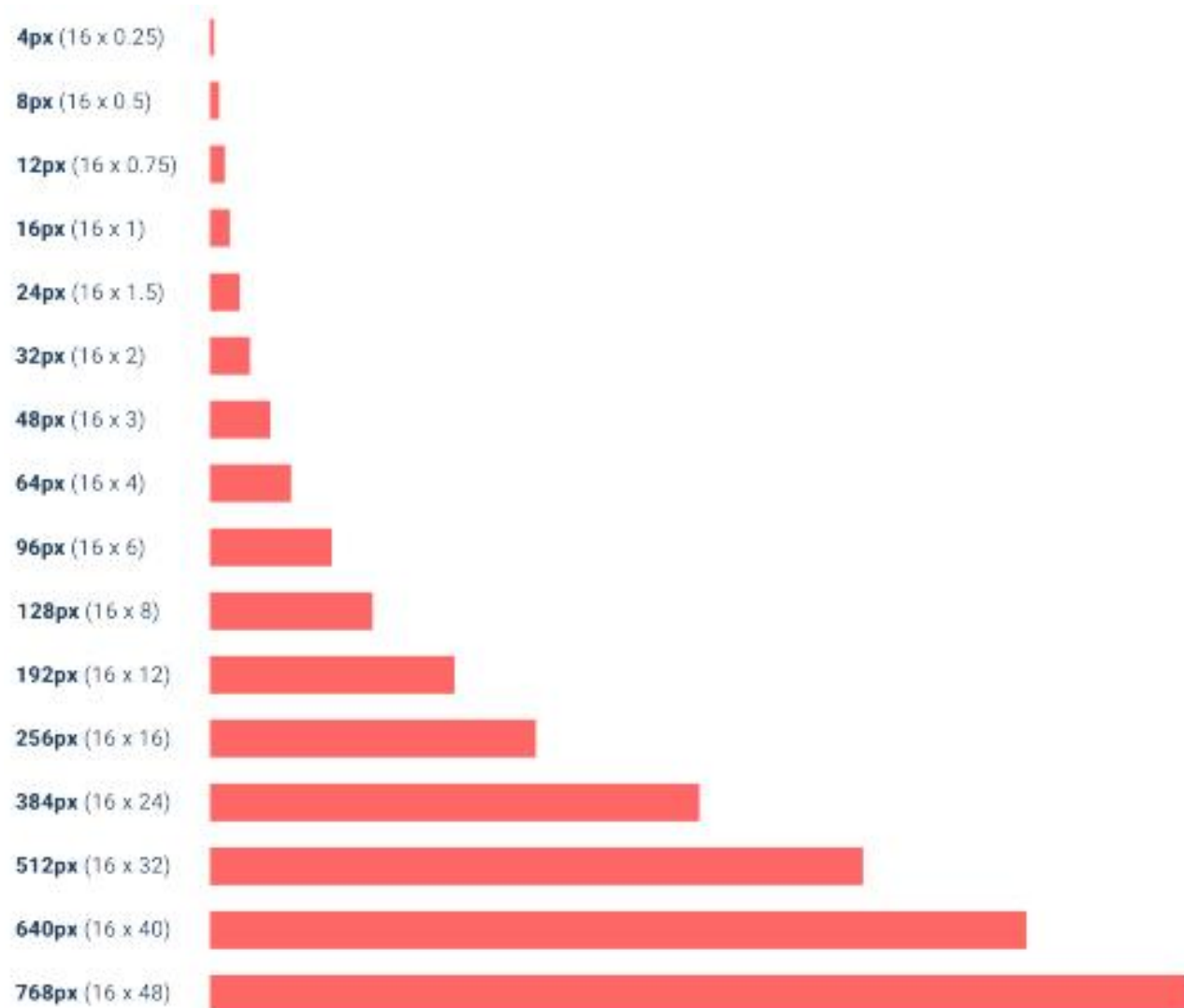
Start layout with too much white space

A better approach is to start by giving something way too much space, then remove it until it you're happy with the result.
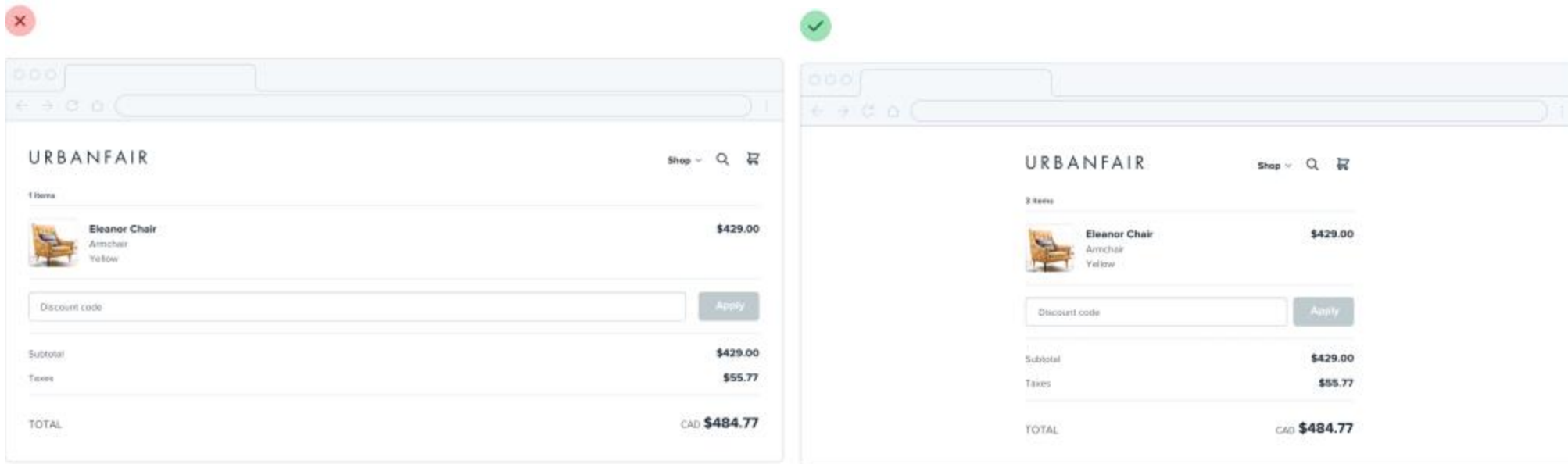
Establish spacing and sizing system

- Limit yourself to a set of values, defined in advance.

- Make sure no two values are ever closer than about 25%.

- Start with a sensible base value, then build a scale using factors and multiples of that value. **16px** is a great number to start. It also happens to be the default font size in a web browser.

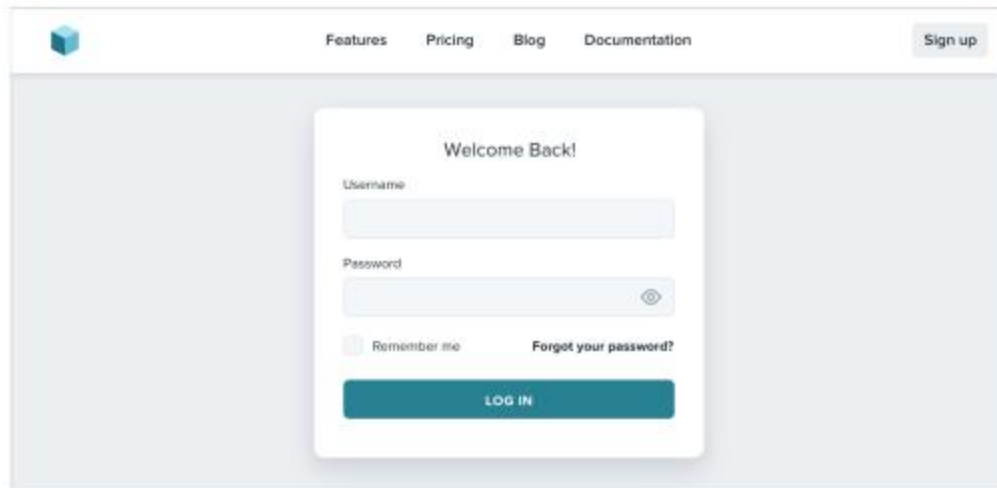|	
4px (16 x 0.25)	▮
8px (16 x 0.5)	▮
12px (16 x 0.75)	▮
16px (16 x 1)	▮
24px (16 x 1.5)	▬
32px (16 x 2)	▬
48px (16 x 3)	▬
64px (16 x 4)	▬
96px (16 x 6)	▬
128px (16 x 8)	▬
192px (16 x 12)	▬
256px (16 x 16)	▬
384px (16 x 24)	▬
512px (16 x 32)	▬
640px (16 x 40)	▬
768px (16 x 48)	▬

You don't have to fill the whole screen

If you only need 600px, use 600px. Spreading things out or making things too wide just makes an interface harder to interpret, while a little extra space around the edges never hurt anyone.
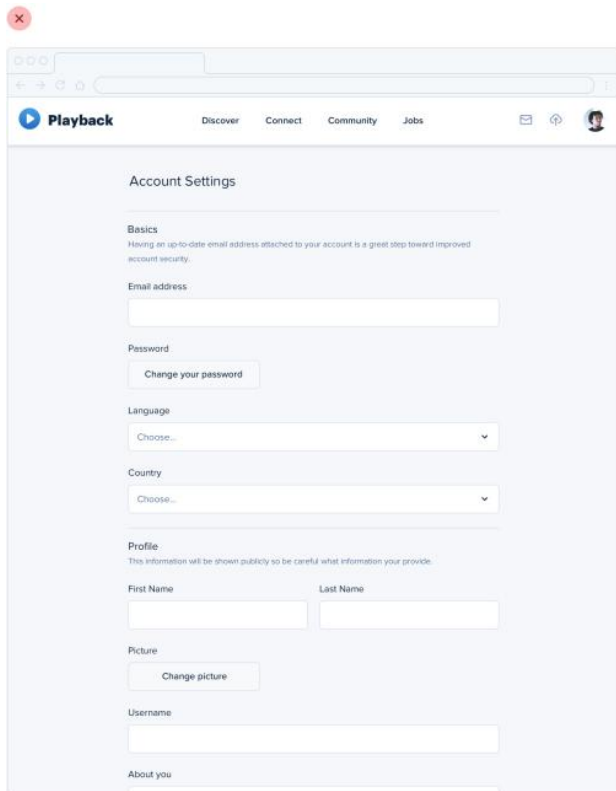
You don't have to fill the whole screen

This is just as applicable to individual sections of an interface, too. You don't need to make everything full-width just because something else (like your navigation) is full-width.

Thinking in columns

If you're designing something that works best at a narrower width but feels unbalanced in the context of an otherwise wide UI.
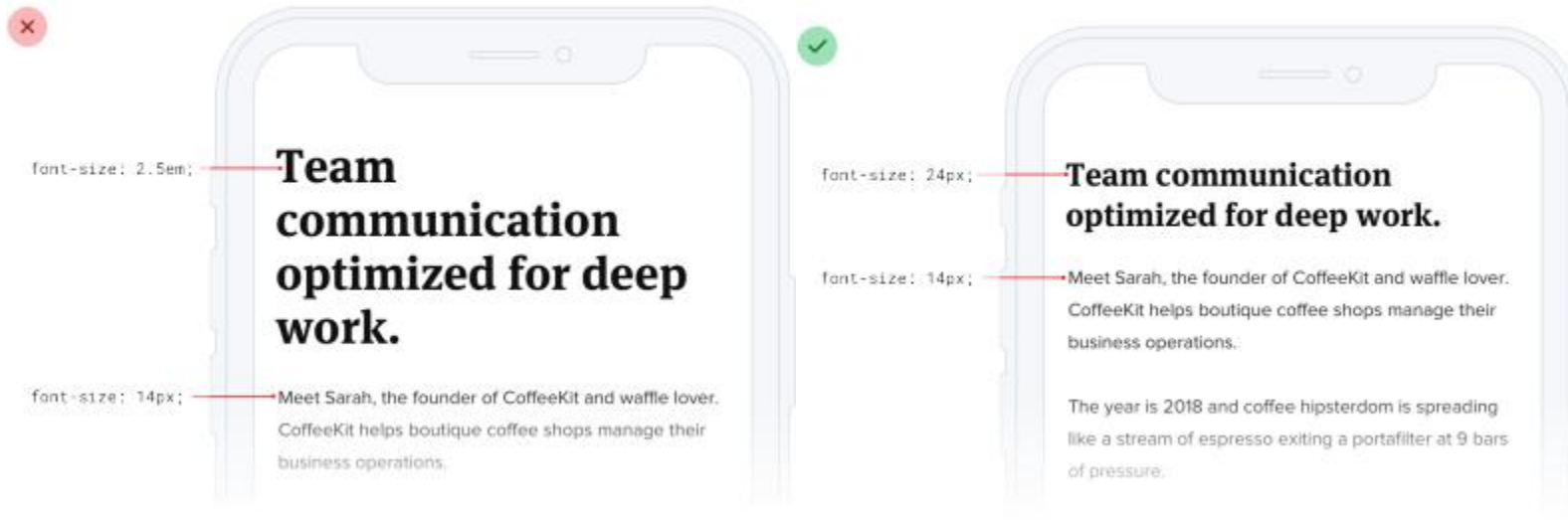
Thinking in columns

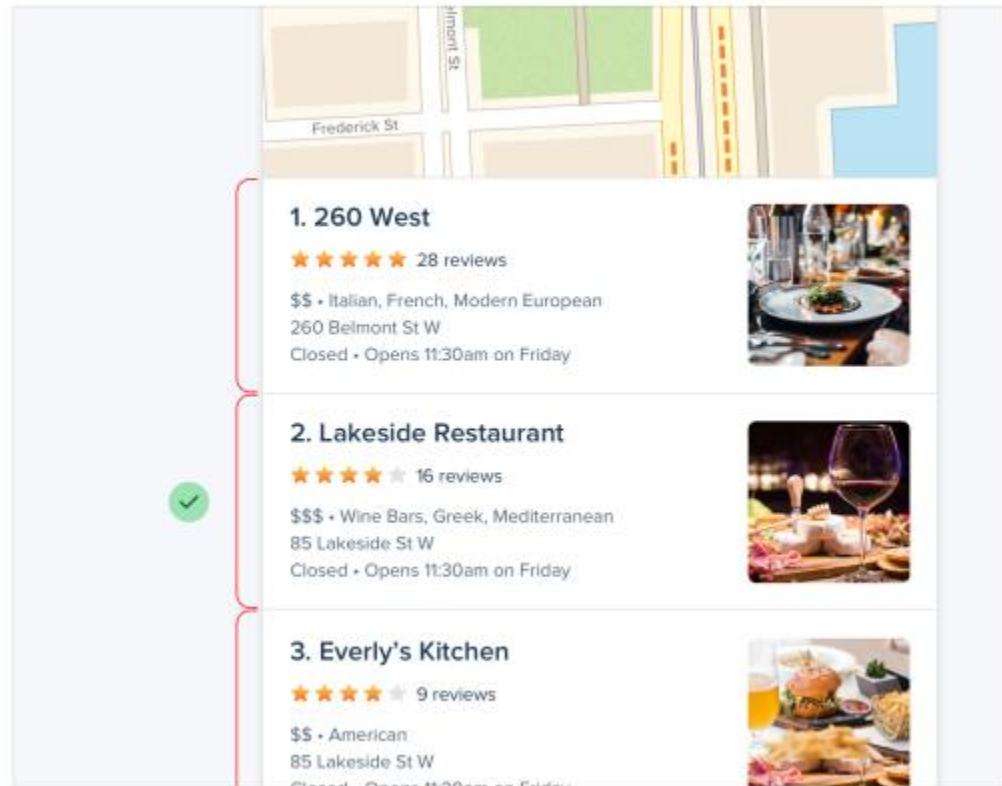See if you can split it into columns instead of just making it wider.

Avoid ambiguous spacing

Relative sizing doesn't scale.

Avoid ambiguous spacing

When groups of elements are explicitly separated — usually by a border or background color — it's obvious which elements belong to which group.

Avoid ambiguous spacing

At best the user has to work harder to interpret the UI, and at worst it means accidentally putting the wrong data in the wrong field. The fix is to increase the space between each form group so it's clear which label belongs to which input.

Keep your line length in check

- Line length isn't the only factor in choosing the right line-height — font size has a big impact as well.

- When text is small, extra line spacing is important because it makes it a lot easier for your eyes to find the next line when the text wraps.

- Line-height and font size are inversely proportional — use a taller line-height for small text and a shorter line-height for large text.
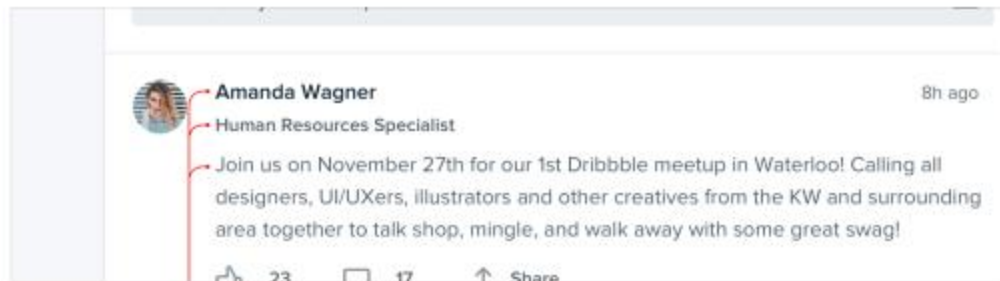
x

~120 characters per line

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and

Alignment

- In general, text should be aligned to match the direction of the language it's written in, In general, text should be aligned to match the direction of the language it is written in.

- Center-alignment can look great for headlines or short, independent blocks of text.

- If you're designing a table that includes numbers, right-align them.

Amanda Wagner   8h ago
Human Resources Specialist

Join us on November 27th for our 1st Dribbble meetup in Waterloo! Calling all designers, UI/UXers, illustrators and other creatives from the KW and surrounding area together to talk shop, mingle, and walk away with some great swag!

23   17   Share

text-align: left;

Border Radius

- As small of a detail as it sounds, if and how much you round the corners in your design can have a big impact on the overall feel.

- A small border radius is pretty neutral, and doesn't really communicate much of a personality on its own:

- A large border radius starts to feel more playful, while no border radius at all feels a lot more serious or formal:

Language

- While not a visual design technique in itself, the words you use in an interface have a massive influence on the overall personality.

- Using a less personal tone might feel more official or professional.

- Using friendlier, more casual language makes a site feel, well, friendlier.

Words are everywhere in a user interface, and choosing the right ones is just as (if not more) important than choosing the right color or typeface.

Thank you!