

The Principles of Set Design

Since the set is generally the first element of a production that the audience sees, its job is to convey the information needed to launch the story. It should not try to tell the audience where the story is going, or anticipate the end.

An effective scenic design (partnered with a great lighting design) helps the audience see and hear the play better by telling them where to look and whom to listen to. **The audience's focus should be the actor in space.**

The audience will enjoy and understand the play much more clearly if:

- The set allows action to fall within the sightlines of the particular theatre.
- The doors and windows through which actors move are positioned for maximum visibility.
- The set focuses on areas where characters group or specific action is played through careful locating, creating levels, or delivering strong architectural detail that directs the eye.
- Color conveys mood and style accurately; a set for a comedy tends to use brighter colors than a set for a highly charged drama or tragedy.
- Period and location are as accurate as needed to help place the story, without overwhelming it with unnecessary detail.