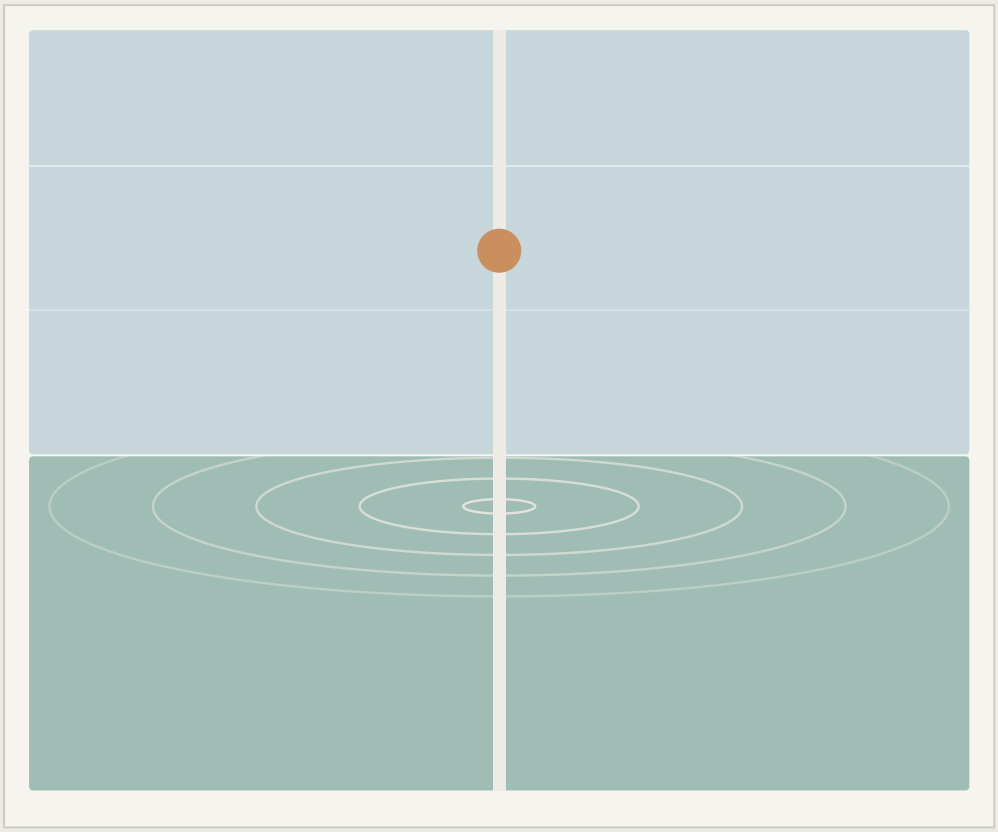


間

Ma

A design system after the music of Hiroshi Yoshimura.

ENVIRONMENTAL

QUIET · SLOW · OPEN

OCTOBER 2026

CONTENTS

How to use this bible

Ma is the rulebook for everything personal: covers, sites, notes, posters, interfaces. Read the principles once. Return to the colour, type and space pages whenever you make something. When in doubt, take something away.

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Ma — the space between

Ma (間) is the interval: the pause between two notes, the empty space between two things that makes both of them readable.

Hiroshi Yoshimura came to music from visual poetry and graphic design, and wrote much of it for places: museums, exhibitions, homes. His pieces are not events, they are surroundings. Five qualities carry almost everything:

1 **Short motifs that repeat and shift slightly.** A few notes, played several times, each time a little different. Like looking out of the same window at different times of day.

2 **Silence as material.** Long decays, pauses that stay unfilled. The pause is equal to the note.

3 **Soft attack, long resonance.** Electric piano and FM tones without a hard onset; a note swells and fades slowly.

4 **Consonance without tension.** Open, bright harmonies, hardly any dissonance, no drama, no climax everything runs towards.

5 **Nature as timbre.** Sky, water, plants, birdsong; glassy, cool tones with a single warm moment.

From music to form

Every rule in this book traces back to something the music does. If a rule cannot be traced, it does not belong here.

MUSIC	DESIGN	TOKEN
Repetition with shift	Modular grids; recurring elements vary in one attribute only (colour *or* size *or* position)	`space-2` as pulse
Silence as material	White space is content; gaps grow like a decay, not linearly	`space-5` – `space-7`
Soft attack	No shadows, no hard contrasts; 1px lines, almost square edges	`hairline` `radius-sm`
Long resonance	Slow movement that tails off (see Motion)	—
Consonance	Type scale in major thirds (×1.25); colours of equal saturation	Type styles
Nature as timbre	Sky, water, moss as surfaces; one single warm accent	`sky` `water` `moss` `chime`

Four rules above all others

01

Background, not foreground.

Ma should accompany like music in a room. If an element demands attention, it has to earn it.

02

One note per view.

`chime` appears at most once per screen or page: the active state, the new entry, the one important point. Two warm accents cancel each other out.

03

Plan the pause first.

Before laying out, decide where nothing is. The most important element gets `space-7` of room before and after it.

04

Vary, don't switch.

Lists and grids repeat the same element. Differences come from a single shift, never from a break in style.

Day

A warm, light ground. Sky, water and moss are surfaces for large calm fields, not for text. One warm note.



paper

#EEEBE4

Ground of every surface. The silence everything rests on; it may take up most of any page.

paper-raised

#F6F4EF

Slightly lifted surface (card, panel). Only a breath lighter, like a second, quieter note.

ink

#2E3534

Text and lines on paper and paper-raised. Never pure black, never a hard attack.

ink-muted

#5C6461

Secondary text, captions, meta information on paper.

hairline

#C9CCC6

1px lines that divide space. Replaces shadows completely.

sky

#C6D6DB

Sky through a window. Large calm fields, image grounds, hero areas. No text except ink.

water

#9FBDB4

Water and celadon. Second identity colour for surfaces and illustration; marks selection quietly.

moss

#6F8A6A

Plants, green, growth. For progress and confirmation; use sparingly as a surface.

chime

#C98F5E

The one warm note. The only accent per view: a dot, an active state. Surfaces and dots only, never body text.

chime-ink

#8A5629

Accent colour for text and links on paper.

focus

#4F7A8A

Focus ring, 2px with a 2px offset. Calm, but unmistakable.

Evening

The same room after sunset: a deep, slightly green grey. Surfaces darken, the accent warms a little to stay audible.



paper

#1E2221

Ground of every surface. The silence everything rests on; it may take up most of any page.

paper-raised

#272C2B

Slightly lifted surface (card, panel). Only a breath lighter, like a second, quieter note.

ink

#E6E4DE

Text and lines on paper and paper-raised. Never pure black, never a hard attack.

ink-muted

#A3AAA6

Secondary text, captions, meta information on paper.

hairline

#3A403F

1px lines that divide space. Replaces shadows completely.

sky

#3E5157

Sky through a window. Large calm fields, image grounds, hero areas. No text except ink.

water

#5F8378

Water and celadon. Second identity colour for surfaces and illustration; marks selection quietly.

moss

#8FAA88

Plants, green, growth. For progress and confirmation; use sparingly as a surface.

chime

#D9A276

The one warm note. The only accent per view: a dot, an active state. Surfaces and dots only, never body text.

chime-ink

#E3B48B

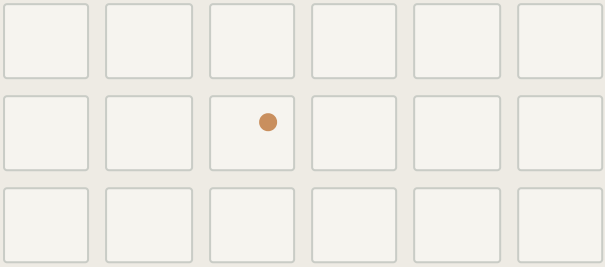
Accent colour for text and links on paper.

focus

#9CC3D0

Focus ring, 2px with a 2px offset. Calm, but unmistakable.

Rules and contrast



One chime per view. The eye finds it without being told.

● Couldn't save. The connection was lost.

There is deliberately no red. Errors are text in ink plus one chime dot; critical things get words, not an alarm colour.

PAIR	DAY	EVENING
ink on paper Body text	Aa 10.5:1 pass	Aa 12.6:1 pass
ink-muted on paper Secondary text	Aa 5.1:1 pass	Aa 6.8:1 pass
chime-ink on paper Links, accent text	Aa 5.1:1 pass	Aa 8.6:1 pass
ink on paper-raised Text on cards	Aa 11.4:1 pass	Aa 11.1:1 pass
ink on sky Text on sky	Aa 8.4:1 pass	Aa 6.6:1 pass
ink on water Text on water	Aa 6.2:1 pass	Aa 3.3:1 ● large / UI only
ink on moss Text on moss	Aa 3.3:1 ● large / UI only	Aa 2.0:1 ● fail
focus on paper Focus ring (needs 3:1)	Aa 3.9:1 pass	Aa 8.5:1 pass
hairline on paper Hairline (decorative)	Aa 1.4:1 decorative	Aa 1.5:1 decorative

● **Watch the moss.** Ink on moss measures 3.3:1 by day and 2.0:1 in the evening, so it is below the 4.5:1 needed for reading text. Treat moss as a pure surface: large headings at most, never body text, captions or labels.

Two voices

One calligraphic voice for display and headings, one plain voice for everything you read. Both cover Japanese and Latin.

DISPLAY

間 Ag

Shippori Mincho

500 for display, title and heading. Calm, brush-derived, never bold. Headings like to stand alone, with lots of room, like a title on a postcard.

TEXT

水 Ag

Zen Kaku Gothic New

400 for reading, 500 for labels. Generous leading (body 15/26). Uppercase labels get wide tracking: 0.2em.

あいうえお · アイウエオ · 環境音楽 ·

ABCDEFGHIJKLM abcdefghijklm 0123456789

The scale in major thirds

12 · 15 · 19 · 24 · 38 · 60. Each step about ×1.25, the interval of a major third: consonant, never tense.

display 60px / 64px · 500 Shippori Mincho	間 Ma
title 38px / 48px · 500 Shippori Mincho	Music for a quiet room
heading 24px / 32px · 500 Shippori Mincho	The pause comes first
lead 19px / 32px · 400 Zen Kaku Gothic New	Background, not foreground. Ma should accompany like music in a room.
body 15px / 26px · 400 Zen Kaku Gothic New	Short motifs repeat and shift slightly, like looking out of the same window at different times of day.
caption 12px / 20px · 400 Zen Kaku Gothic New	Caption · meta information · 12 / 20
label 12px / 16px · 500 Zen Kaku Gothic New	SIDE A · 4 PIECES

Space decays like a note

The pulse is 8px. But gaps do not grow evenly; they grow like a fading tone. Small steps inside a group, large leaps between groups.

4 · 8 · 16 · 24 · 40 · 64 · 104

space-1 4px		Smallest gap: icon to label.
space-2 8px		The pulse. Gaps within a group.
space-3 16px		Padding of small elements, rows in lists.
space-4 24px		Card padding, mobile page margin.
space-5 40px		Between related sections. A short pause.
space-6 64px		Between sections. A real pause.
space-7 104px		Long decay: before and after the most important element on a page.

space-2 inside a group, space-5 between groups. Every page needs at least one space-6 breathing room.

Lines, edges, no shadows

A soft attack: depth comes from tone and hairlines, never from shadows, gradients or gloss.

radius-sm · 2px

surfaces, cards, images

sky as surface

ink text only

water as surface

quiet selection

CONTROLS · RADIUS-MD 6PX

Save

Later

Title of the piece

Focused

Focus: 2px ring in focus, 2px offset. Touch targets at least 44px.

DOTS · RADIUS-FULL

Fully round only for dots and drops: status and progress. Everything else stays almost square.

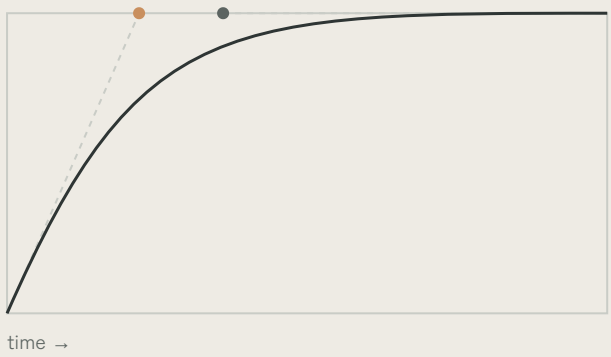
DIVISION

A row

Another row

A 1px hairline replaces every shadow.

Movement is a decay, not an event



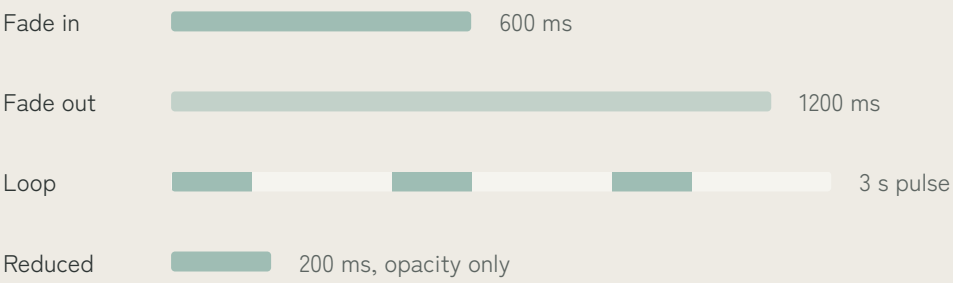
cubic-bezier(0.22, 1, 0.36, 1): arrives quickly, settles slowly.

Fade in: 600ms, opacity and at most 8px of travel.

Fade out: 1200ms, same curve. Things leave more slowly than they arrive.

Loops (loading): one dot pulses over 3s, opacity 0.4 to 1. Never spin, never jump.

Reduced motion: opacity only, 200ms.



SOUND · OPTIONAL

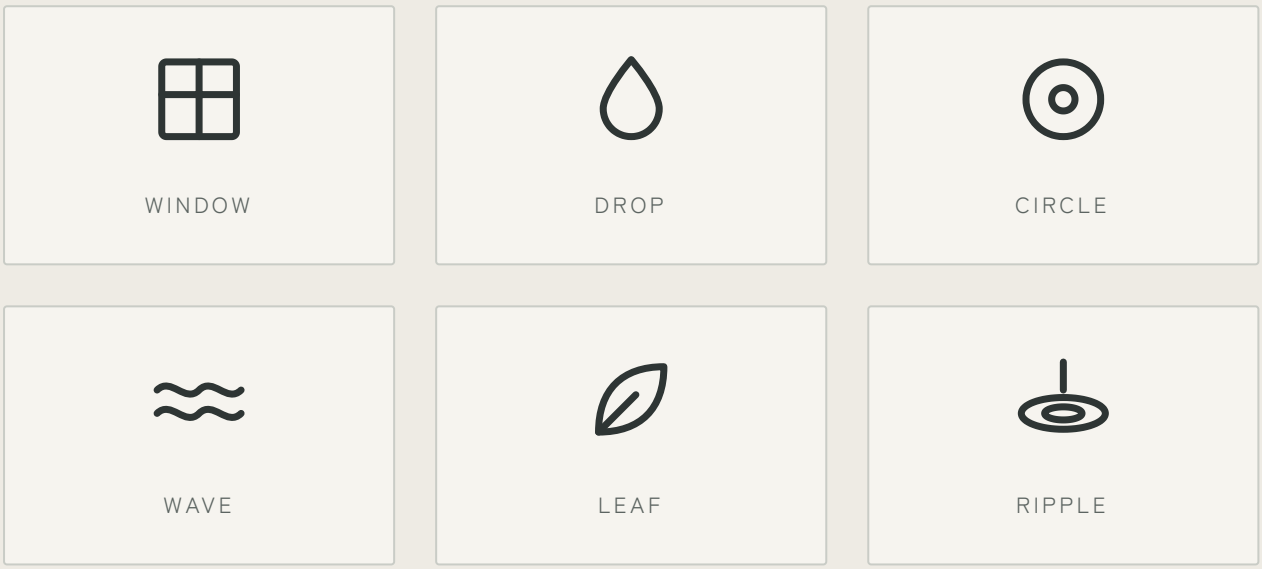


Soft attack under 300ms, resonance over one second.

Where an interface uses sound: one soft sine or electric-piano tone around 660 Hz, quiet. Confirmation and notice differ by pitch (a fifth apart), never by volume.

Drawn with one line

Line icons at 1.5px stroke in ink, round caps, lots of inner space.
Motifs from the world of the music. No filled icons, no emoji.





Grid · 24 × 24, 2px live margin on each side

Stroke · 1.5px at 24px, scales with size

Ends · round caps, round joins

Colour · ink; chime only as the single accent of a view

Space · let the inside breathe; if a motif needs detail to read, choose another motif

Short, kind, no exclamation marks

Describe rather than demand. Empty states may stay empty, with a single sentence.

MA	NOT MA
Saved	~~Successfully saved!~~
Nothing here yet.	~~Oops! Looks like it's empty...~~
Couldn't save. The connection was lost.	~~ERROR: Save failed!!~~
Four pieces, about twenty minutes.	~~Don't miss this amazing release!~~
Later	~~No thanks, I don't like good things~~

Write the way the music sounds: in short phrases, with room after them. One idea per sentence. Labels in uppercase only when they are meta information, never for emphasis.

水の窓 · Mizu no Mado

The first piece made under Ma: a record cover for an imagined Kankyō Ongaku release.



Window · sky over water, split by a horizon hairline and a paper mullion: repetition with one shift

One note · the sun disc and its reflection; no chime needed when the picture carries the warmth

Ripples · six ellipses widening and fading like a decaying tone

Type · title in Shippori Mincho, meta in Zen Kaku Gothic with 0.2em tracking

Pause · the frame owns the page; text stays at the edges

● **Drift to resolve.** The cover predates the tokens and uses near-misses: ground #ECE9E1 (paper is #EEEBE4), sky #C9D8DC (#C6D6DB), water #DCE5E3 (the token water #9FBDB4 is much deeper), text #3A4142 / #2F3736 (ink #2E3534). Either snap the cover to the tokens, or add a lighter water tone to the system if that pale surface is intended.

What Ma does not do

- × Shadows, gradients, gloss.
- × More than one chime per view.
- × Text on sky, water or moss in any colour other than ink — and on moss, no small text at all.
- × Full pages without a pause. Every page needs at least one space-6 breathing room.
- × Red, alarms, urgency.
- × Filled icons, emoji, exclamation marks.
- × Motion that spins, bounces or jumps.

REFERENCE

Token sheet

COLOUR	DAY	EVENING
paper	#EEEBE4	#1E2221
paper-raised	#F6F4EF	#272C2B
ink	#2E3534	#E6E4DE
ink-muted	#5C6461	#A3AAA6
hairline	#C9CCC6	#3A403F
sky	#C6D6DB	#3E5157
water	#9FBDB4	#5F8378
moss	#6F8A6A	#8FAA88
chime	#C98F5E	#D9A276
chime-ink	#8A5629	#E3B48B
focus	#4F7A8A	#9CC3D0

STYLE	VOICE	SIZE	WT
display	Mincho	60px / 64px	500
title	Mincho	38px / 48px	500
heading	Mincho	24px / 32px	500
lead	Gothic	19px / 32px	400
body	Gothic	15px / 26px	400
caption	Gothic	12px / 20px	400
label	Gothic	12px / 16px	500

SPACE

1=4px · 2=8px · 3=16px · 4=24px · 5=40px · 6=64px · 7=104px

RADIUS

radius-sm 2px · radius-md 6px · radius-full 999px

MOTION

in 600ms · out 1200ms · loop 3s · reduced 200ms · cubic-bezier(0.22, 1, 0.36, 1)

FAMILIES

display: Shippori Mincho, Hiragino Mincho ProN, Yu Mincho, serif

sans: Zen Kaku Gothic New, Hiragino Sans, system-ui



WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE ROOM