

Lesson 1: Blocked

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THE DESIGN

A framework underlies the building of both simple garages and elaborate cathedrals. In construction terms, "blocking" refers to the horizontal boards placed between wall studs. In this lesson, we'll create a grid of blocks, and use them as guides for the placement of our page elements.

Before you worry that something so concrete as a "framework" will dilute the effects of your creativity, consider that the use of the *right* framework, rather than boxing you into making something formulaic, can, instead, be a foundation and spring-board to creating original pages that present all of the parts--title, journaling, photos, and embellishments--in an appealing design.



The blocking on "To Vegas & Back" splits the page in half vertically and then these two vertical blocks are further divided. Photos fill four blocks, another houses title and journaling, and one more is filled with a patterned paper "tab" and word embellishments.



“Symbols of Thanksgiving” is divided into three columns, with two of them *equal* in width. The “rows” within columns 2 and 3 are aligned, and the top and bottom rows are “joined” or “merged.”

The grid underlying “Sledding” is based upon three *unequal* rows and, if you look closer, three *equal* columns. Sticking over narrow gutters and rounded corners at top right and bottom left add interest.

units

When I make pages like “’07 Ready,” I don’t draw out and measure a grid. Rather, I hold the idea of an underlying structure loosely in my mind. As I move things around, I think about vertical and horizontal alignments (or columns and rows) as an aid to getting unity and balance on the page. So here’s an after-the-fact examination of how a grid underlies this design. Units are the basic building blocks here and they can be grouped into columns and rows. Laid over the example here is a 1” grid with 12 columns and 12 rows.



columns

The page is divided into three roughly equal columns. Title and journaling sit in the first column. A block of matted photos and patterned paper sit in columns two and three. The “Lucky Garden” photo sits only in column two while the portrait group photo sits only in column three. Note how the other two photos each begin in their own columns and cut into the neighboring columns. The black gems at bottom right stay in their own column and cover most of its width.

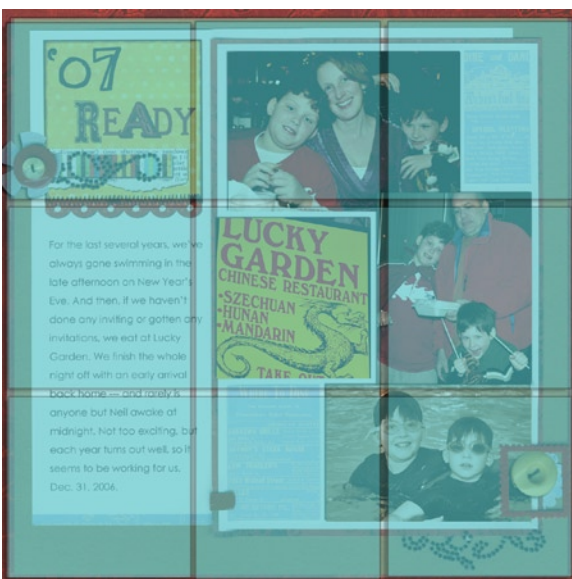
rows

See the three roughly equal rows in “’07 Ready” with the title block and topmost photo sitting in row one. While the journaling covers area in both rows three and four, the photos stay within their own particular rows.

the whole thing

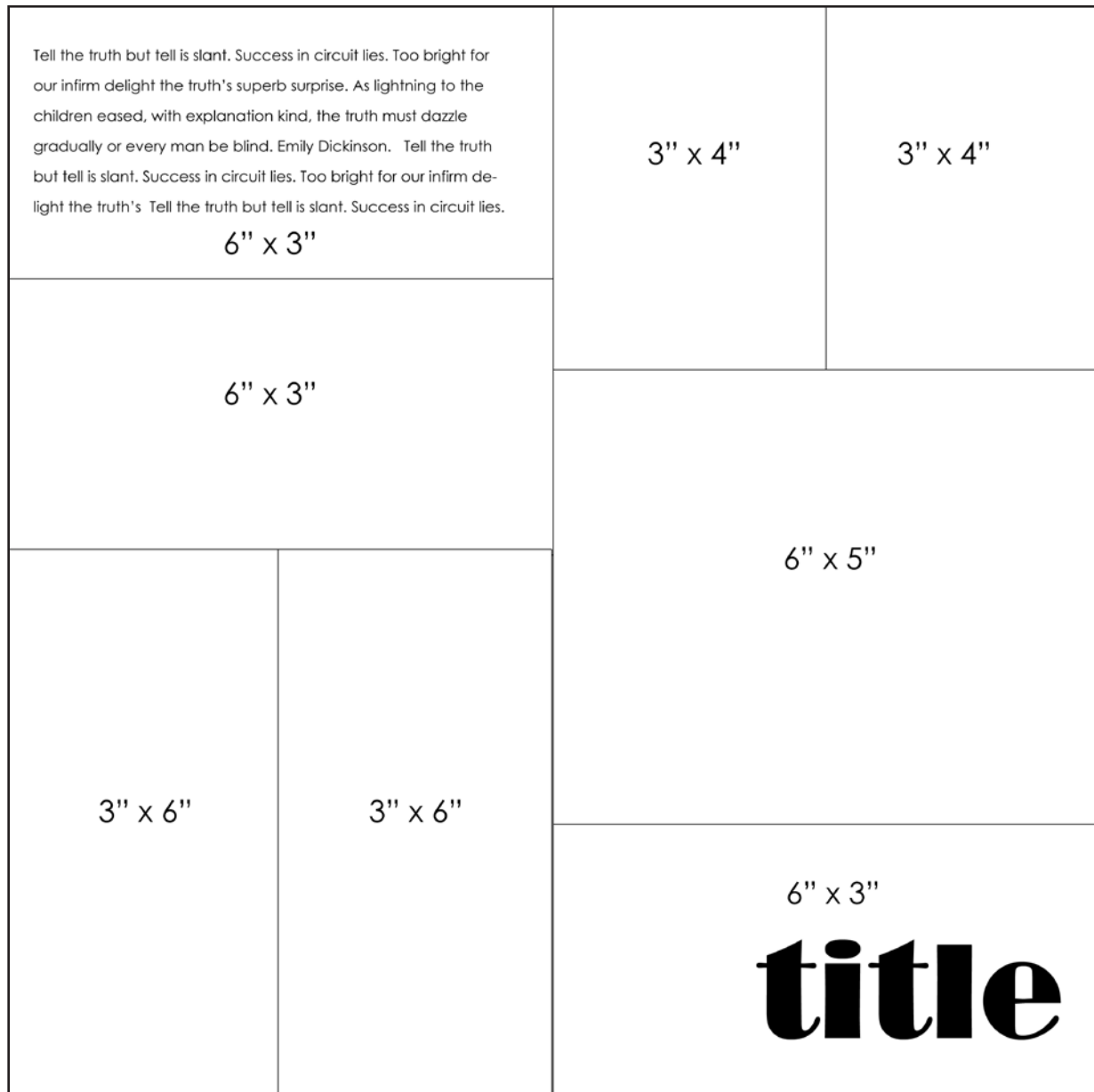
Take a look, now, at how the column and row groupings come together to position title, journaling, and photos in their own well-defined spots on the page. Note though, that the structure is not absolutely

precise and that objects do cross areas. The idea is to let the structure underlie the piece not control it.



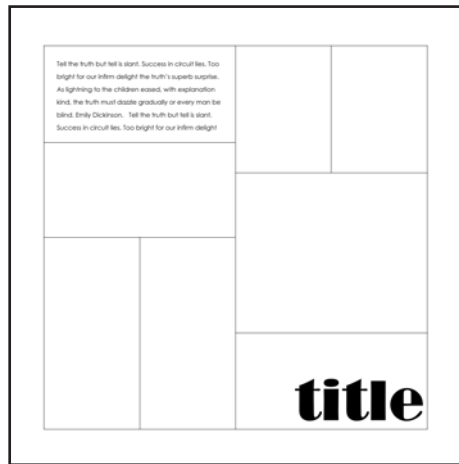
SKETCH & VARIATIONS

Now it's time to look at where you can take an initial blocked design. Begin with this blocked design, then use the ideas that follow to use it over and over in many different ways. [Click to download layered psd file for digital pages.](#)

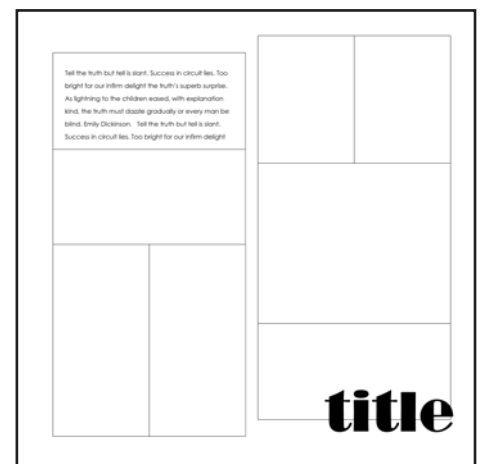




Rotate a blocked design. Flip it horizontally or vertically. Here, the sketch is rotated 90 degrees counterclockwise.



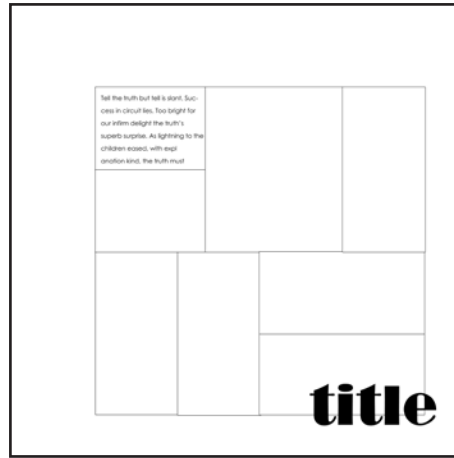
Reduce the entire block and mat it with equal and symmetrical margins.



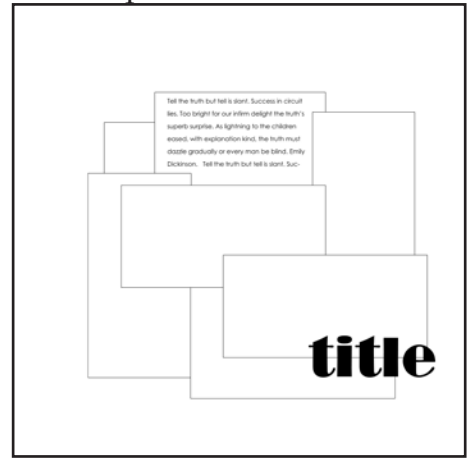
Separate the two columns with a gutter. Additionally consider nudging the two columns out of horizontal alignment. Here the left column has been nudged a bit down and the right column a bit up



Put gutters between several blocks. Here there are several horizontal gutters and one vertical gutter. Placing vertical gutters between the blocks at top right and bottom left would have required changing block widths. Keep gutters equally sized.



Reduce block size even more. Mount it with uneven margins, and, thus, asymmetrical white space around it.



Move the individual blocks from their grid design and make a layered design. Perhaps delete one or two blocks.

Several blocked variations follow. Look at them for: underlying grid, absence or presence of margins, gutters, and blocks.

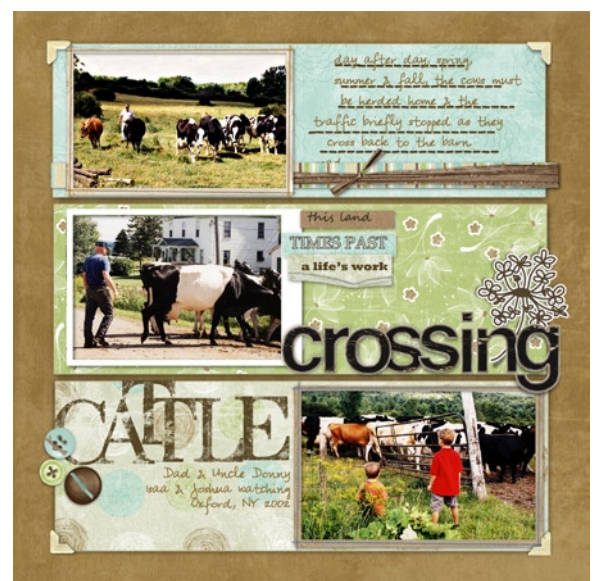
DETAILS

The finishing touches on a page can be as important as its underlying structure. Suggestions and recommendations for adding details to blocked pages follow.

- Leave one or two blocks to be filled with patterned paper and/or embellishments. See the upper right square on "Pay It Forward." It's filled with patterned paper upon which is placed a ribbon-tied frame. See the staggered blocks of striped paper on "Impulse to Soar."



- Allow your embellishments—and even your title—to cross from one block over to another to create flow and avoid a page that is overly rigid. Note how the word strips and titling on "Cattle Crossing" do this.
- Leave a block empty or selectively round corners as on "Impulse to Soar."



- Add a border around your blocked grouping. Use hand-drawn lines, stitching, or border rub-ons. See the stitching on "First Snow" and "Pay It Forward" on page 7.
- Ground a block to the canvas by placing embellishments that overlap both block and canvas. See the popsicles at bottom right of "Summer's Best Read" and the ties and Santa circle on "Christmas Journey. (Connect pieces within your block this same way.)



YOUR TURN

Now it's your turn to create a blocked design and see how you can stretch it to new uses. Use the 12x12 grids here to sketch out ideas. Your assignment is to make a blocked design that uses either 3 columns or 3 rows. Or both 3 columns and 3 rows. They could be equal in width/height or vary. Go to the edge or use margins. Decide whether to use gutters. Make with it what you will!

