BUILDING PAGES

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ONLINE CLASSES
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workshop taught by Debbie Hodge

# Lesson 3: SPACIOUS

- The Design
- Sketch & Variations
- Details
- Your Turn

## THE DESIGN

Given a blank canvas, your first instinct may be to fill it up. This happens to me not only on my scrapbook pages, but in rooms of my home. I keep adding bits until one day I realize that it's too much–that I can't see any of the parts for the jam-packed whole. Open space is a luxury and can make an environment more accessible, inviting, and manageable.

White space on scrapbook pages is not always white. It can be any color—it can even be patterned paper. The term "white space" refers to an area devoid of photos, embellishments, journaling, and title.

### why include white space on your pages?

- White space provides a resting point for the eye and breathing room for the viewer taking in your photos and journaling.
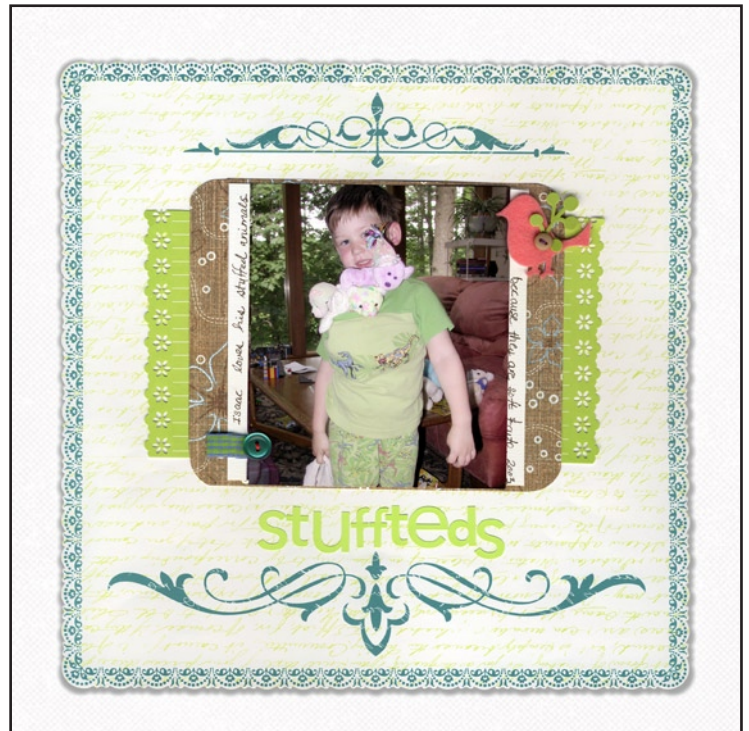
Lots of white space on "Stuffteds" makes this sweet photo the focus--and it lets the scallops and scrolls stand out, too.

- White space that surrounds blocks of text, photos, and photo groupings provides contrast. This draws the viewer's eye in and lets them easily understand what the page is about.

- Different parts of your page have differing levels of importance – there should be a place at which you want the viewer's eye to begin on the page: a focal-photo, the journaling, or an effective title. White space allows clear grouping of page elements that lets you establish a hierarchy of the elements on the page.

The white space on "Day 5" is in the form of gutters and margins. It's essential to giving this very full page organization and making it accessible to the viewer.

On "At Trail's End" the smaller, square photo becomes the focal point because of the wide margins surrounding it.

***understand that white space has a shape that can be active or passive***

**"Active white space is carefully considered emptiness."**
*- Alex White, The Elements of Graphic Design*

- *when that shape is symmetrical:*
  ◇ It's predictable.
  ◇ It's less consequential (than a symmetrical shape would be) to how we perceive the elements in the design; if it's noticed at all, it's noticed as background.
  ◇ It's passive.

- *when that shape is asymmetrical:*
  ◇ It's dynamic.
  ◇ It's unpredictable and requires active involvement from the viewer.
  ◇ It can make the parts on your page look great.
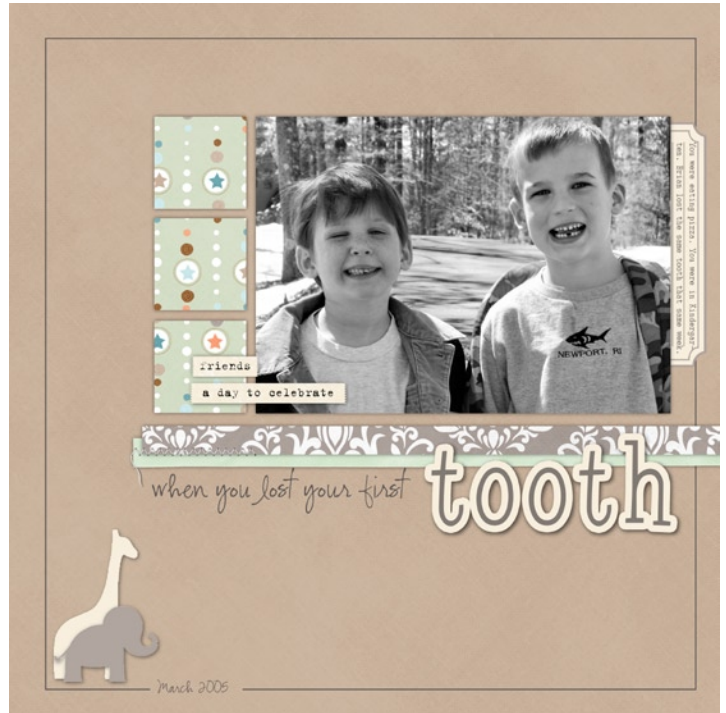


The even margins on "Ready for  Launch" make a tidy border against which the inner canvas pops. This is not, though, dynamic white space.

The white space on "When You Lost Your First Tooth" is generous and asymmetrically-shaped. The resulting design is unexpected and eye-catching.

Tips for activating your white space include:

- Create a "block" of photo, title, journaling, and embellishments, and position this block off-center on your page.

- Use an embellishment to break into regularly-shaped white space/margins.

- Integrate the white space into your elements (this relies on the principle of closure)

**The principle of closure**

In studies of perception, there is the idea of closure which maintains: if a viewer is given enough pieces of a whole, their mind will complete that whole. The brain spontaneously makes connections to finish a known shape. The partial heart and star above illustrate this.

*Here are two more versions of "Ready to Launch" (see the first on the previous page) that show variations in use of white space.*

*In the top layout here, the photo sizes are reduced. Photos and papers are layered on a 9" x 9" mat placed off center horizontally and vertically. Embellishments break out into the asymmetrical margins.*

*In the 3rd version, the 9" x 9" light blue mat has been removed. The upper left corner of this square is not filled with title and embellishment but, rather, white space. The viewer will perceive a square shape (based on the principle of closure). This is an example of integrating white space into the elements.*

**SKETCH & VARIATIONS**

Now it's time to look at a sketch and a variety of ways to incorporate white space on your pages. This full sketch was used to make "When You Lost Your First Tooth" on page 3. It features generous and dynamic white space. Click to download layered psd file for digital pages.

1.5" x 1.5"

1.5" x 1.5"

1.5" x 1.5"

7" x 5"

*here goes a subtitle before* title

*date here*
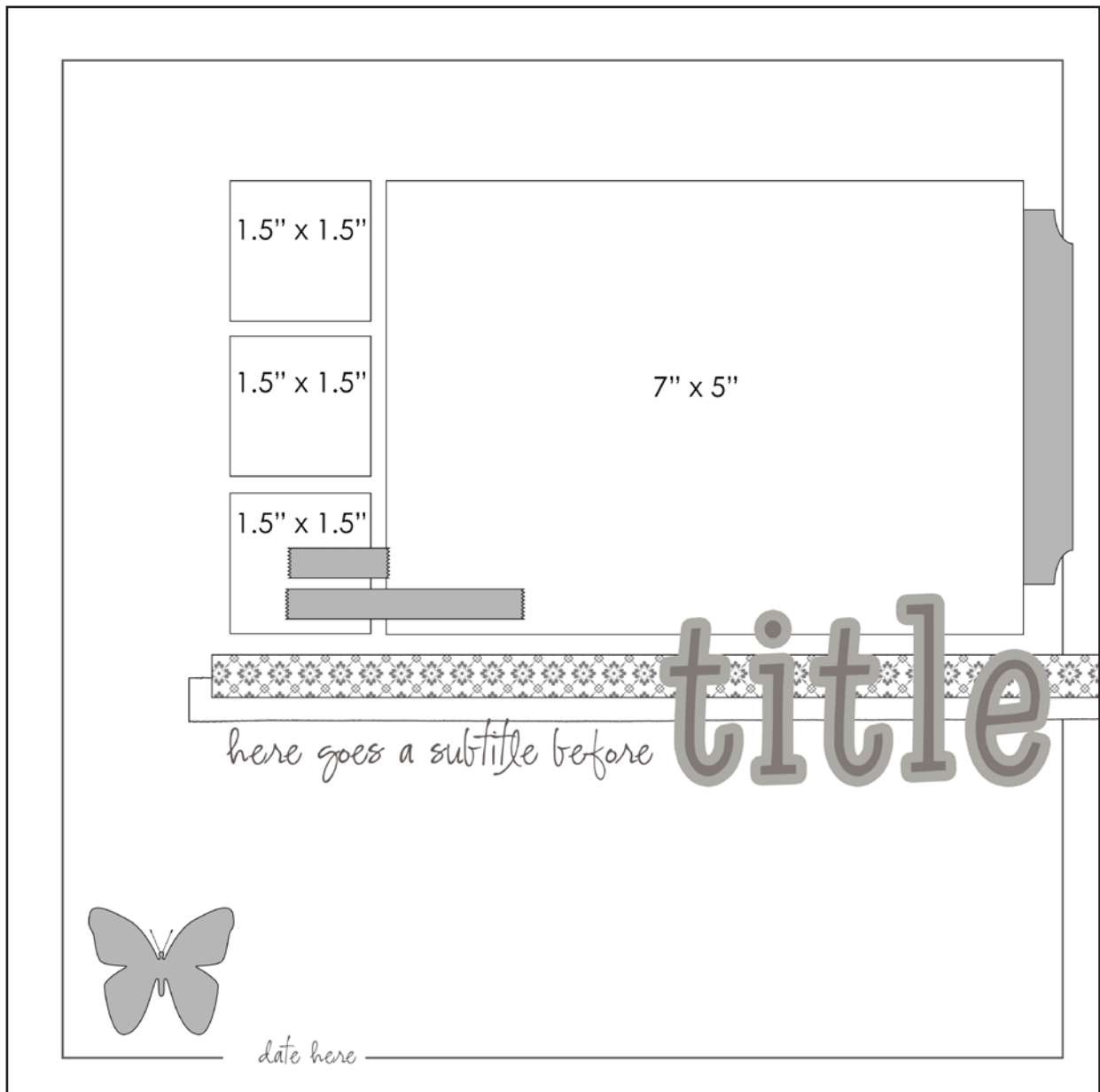
These are broad representations of possibilities for incorporating white space. Read the descriptions for a better understanding. Use these as "starters" for your pages.
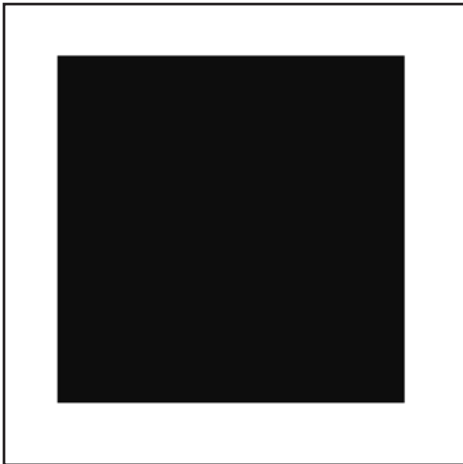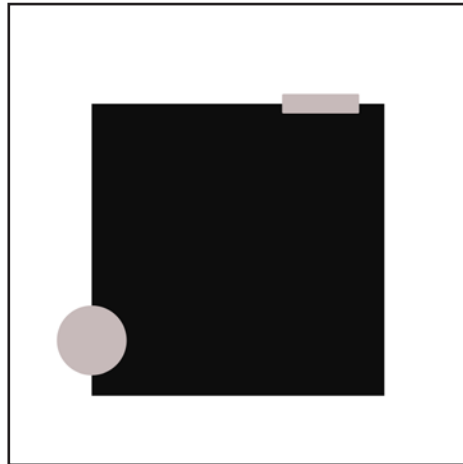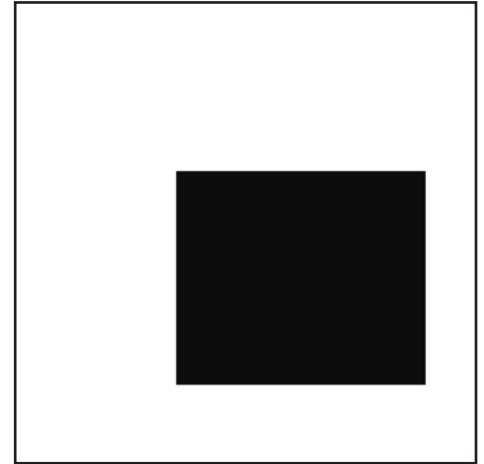
Variation A. Broad, even margins set off an inner canvas and work well on classic pages. The symmetry of the white space makes this a formal and clean choice.

Variation B. The margins here are larger than those on Variation A, and they are unequal which results in asymmetrical white space. Break into the white space with embellishments.

Variation C. When your inner canvas is a block that covers less area than that of the white space you're making a dramatic statement. Consider that the white space balances against the non-white space.
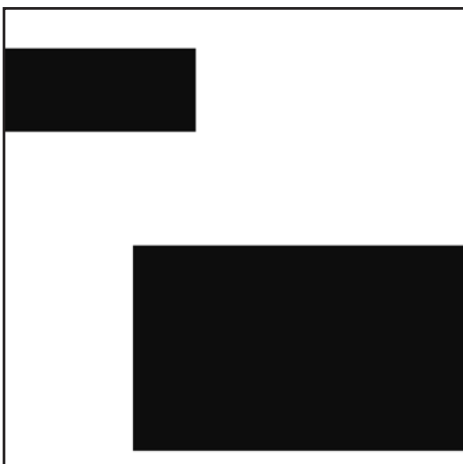
Variation D. Use complexity in your balance and placement of elements to get even more interesting white space. Here a contiguous area surrounds two differently-size blocks.
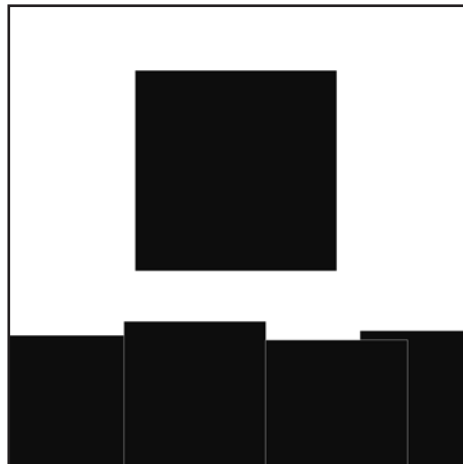
Variation E. Set one element off from a grouping of several other elements with generous margins.
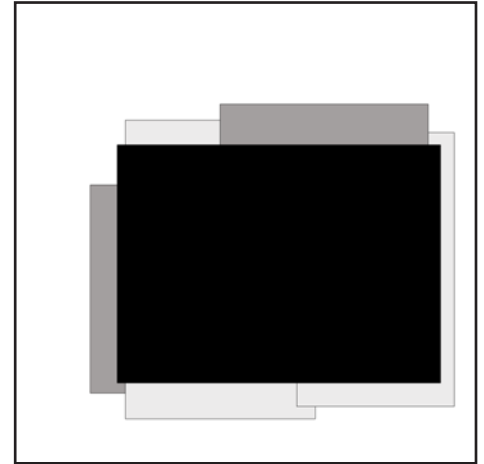
Variation F. Combine elements and integrate white space into them. Rely upon the principle of closure to engage the viewer.

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## DETAILS

Take a look at the layouts that follow. Think about them in the context of the lesson above and the broad variations that are sketched out. Tuck these configurations and possibilities into your mind so that you'll have them handy when you're building your next page.

The pages here all have an inner canvas that is roughly square shaped. Note the variations in margin size and width. "Sparkle" is centered. The other two pages are off center both horizontally and vertically. The orderly white space is broken into by embellishments which serve to jazz up that white space AND ground the inner block to the outer canvas.
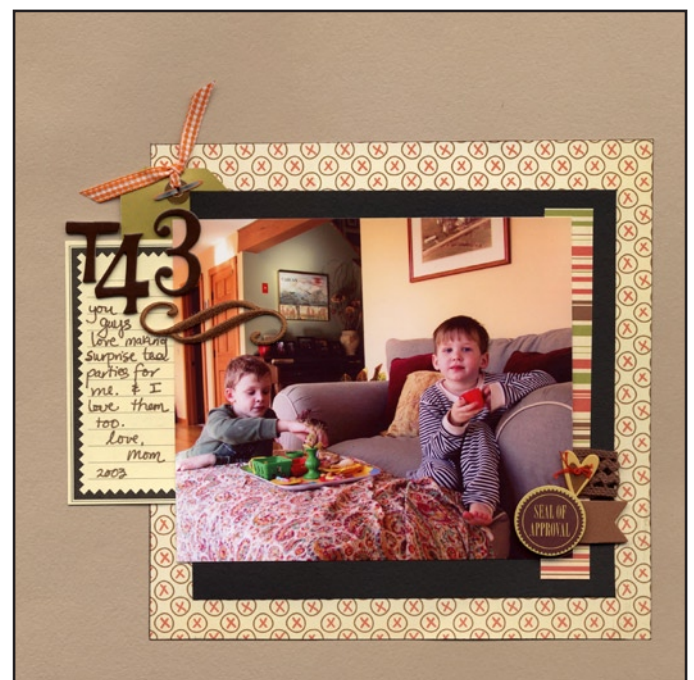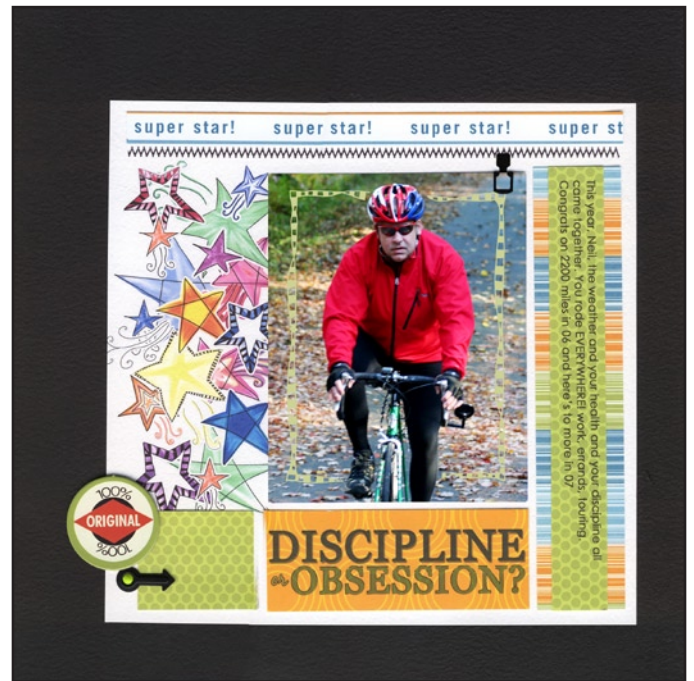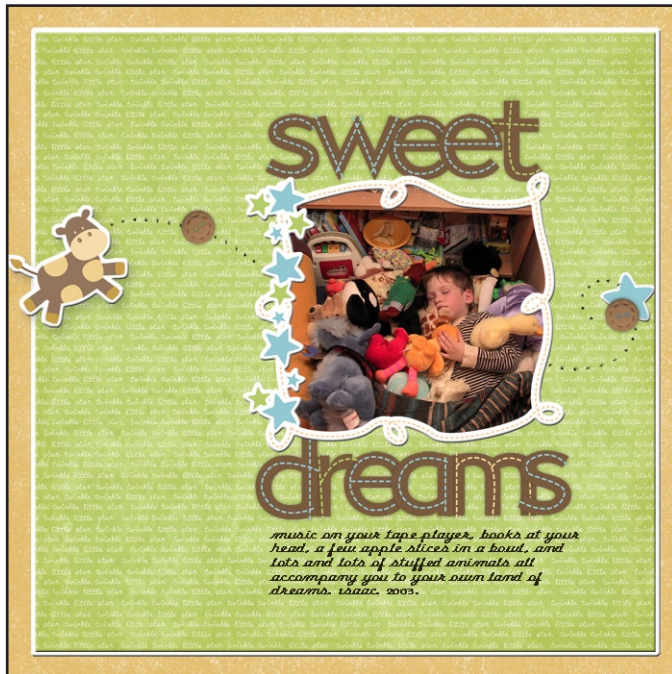
Here are three layouts that use white space in an interesting way. "Sweet Dreams" presents a block of elements whose connection to one another is cemented by the surrounding white space.

"Awesome View" integrates white space into the block of elements to create a block that will be perceived as square but that offers much to stop and take a second look at.

The white space on "10 Years Ago" is generous and less traditionally asymmetrical than "Sweet Dreams."

Now here are three examples of very interesting white space. The scalloped, circular journaling spot on "Lineage" results in white space that has both corners AND curves.
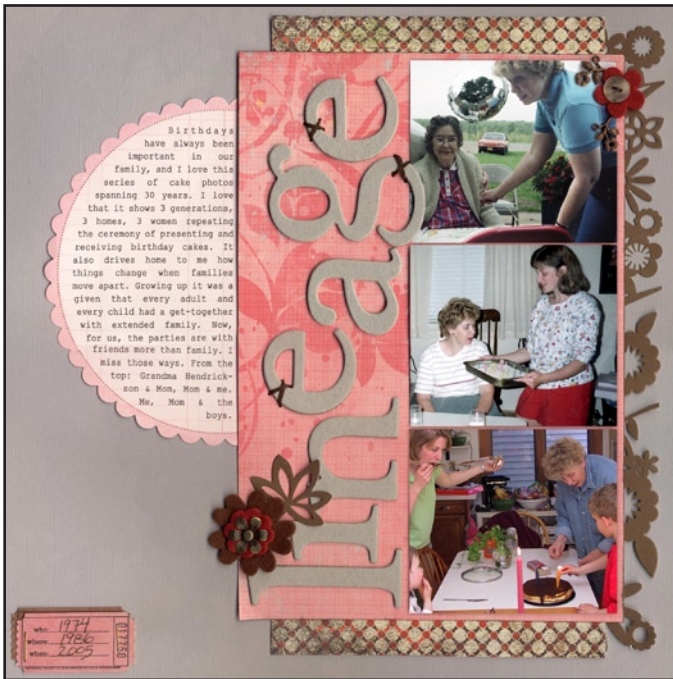
"Bright Spot" and "Trick or Treat" both use white space that runs between major elements. On "Bright Spot" two vertical blocks bleed off the page sides and are staggered in their vertical placement. The result is white space of an unexpected, yet appealing, shape.

"Trick or Treat" runs its white space around and through its elements like a misshapen figure 8. Think about whether you like it and how you might apply this idea on your own pages.
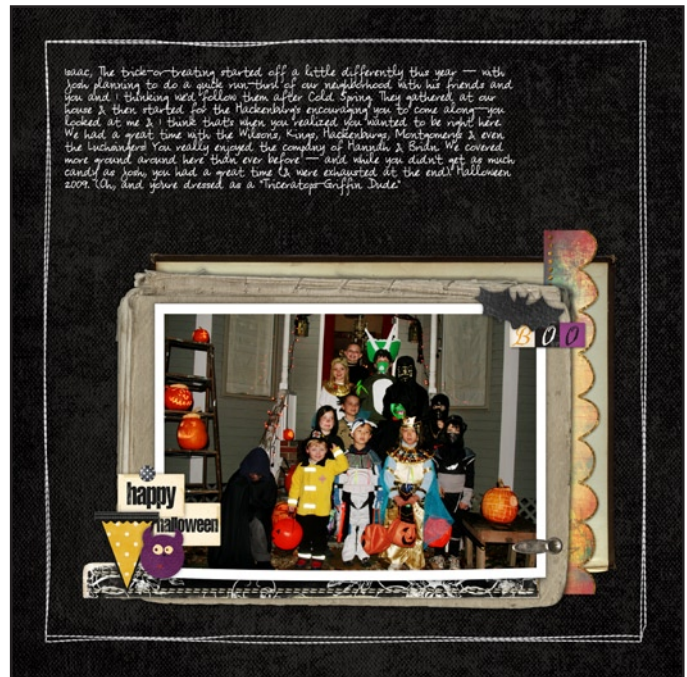
**YOUR TURN**

Now it's your turn to create a page with considered use of white space. Take a look at the "starters" on page 6. Make a page that includes **asymmetrically**-shaped white space.