

BUILDING PAGES



workshop taught by Debbie Hodge

Lesson 5: Teeter Totter

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

THE DESIGN

A scrapbook page that is appealing to look at has a balance between the elements on it (including the white space).

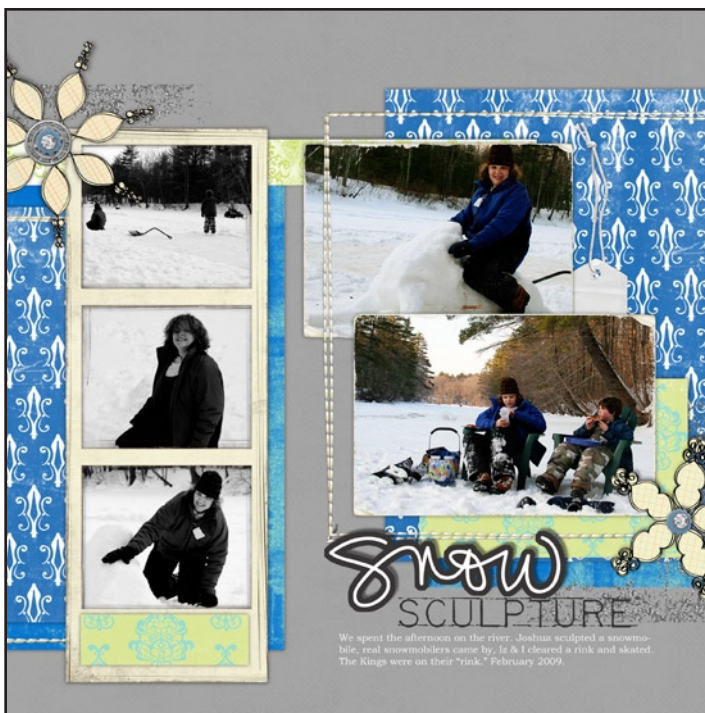
Just as you can take a scale and balance two equally-sized weights OR one heavy weight and several smaller weights, you can do the same on a page. You'll be looking for equal "visual" weights.

Our focus in this lesson is on balancing dissimilar weights--and, thus, creating pages with asymmetrical balance. There's is no formula for this: you'll be working to achieve a "felt" balance between the parts of the composition.



asymmetrical balance

Asymmetry in scrapbook page design means that none of your page elements are mirrored on the opposite side. Asymmetrical balance is more difficult to achieve than symmetrical balance, but it is more interesting. Why? When you balance dissimilar items you create tension, and, thus, energy. Note – when you use an uneven number of elements you have more options than when you use an even number.



Snow Sculpture balances three smaller, square, framed photos on the left side with two landscape-oriented photos, title, and journaling on the right side. Take a look at how these elements and their placements result in a balanced page. Read on for some general guidelines for achieving balance. See variations on this design in the sketches on page 6.



The balancing work here is done between the top and the bottom of the page. Title, journaling, one photo and a patterned paper block balance against two larger photos and a bookplate on the bottom of the page. Note the role that color and pattern have in adding (or not adding) weight to an element. This layout also comes from the sketches on page 6. Look for the similarities.

DETAILS***think about the following when you're balancing dissimilar elements***

Note: these are some general guidelines that can help you achieve asymmetrical balance. They are not, though, hard and fast rules.

- As an element moves away from the center of your page, it gains weight.
- An interesting element has more weight than a less-interesting one.
- An element on the right side of your layout has more weight than the very same element on the left side.
- Elements on the top seem to have more weight than those on the bottom.
- The weight of an element increases with its degree of isolation
- Regular shapes tend to have more weight than irregular ones
- Large flat areas without much detail can be balanced by smaller irregularly shaped objects since the eye is led towards the more intricate shape.

Let's take a look at how these ideas play out on "New Spot."

The primary page grouping at top left is balanced by a much smaller grouping at bottom right.

The top grouping gets weight from:

1. size
2. interest
3. placement higher up

The bottom grouping gets weight from:

1. placement to the right
2. isolation (lots of white space)



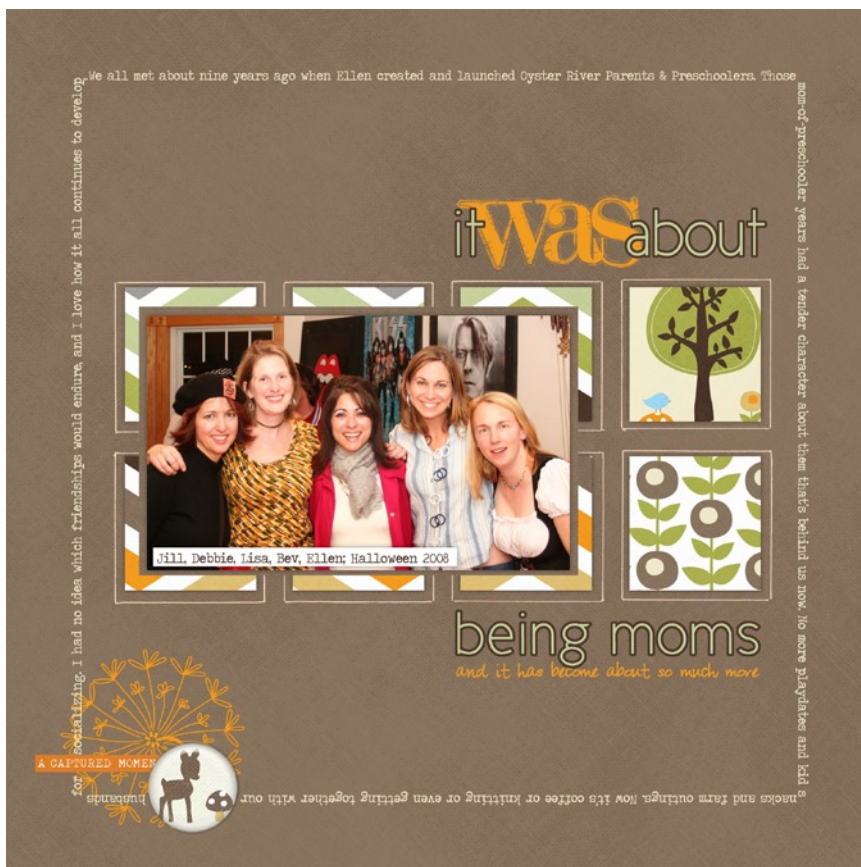
On "Glacier," the photo at top right balances against the two strips at bottom left.

The photo at top right gets weight from:

1. placement high up
2. placement on the right side

The strips get weight from

1. greater overall combined size
2. unexpected narrow shapes bleeding off page edge



"It Was About Being Moms" places a centered block of photos and paper and then adds interest by balancing the larger title work with the embellishment grouping at bottom left. The color orange is a key feature of both elements--which brings us to immediately connect (and then begin to balance) the two. The isolation (i.e., surrounding white space) of the smaller grouping provides its visual weight.

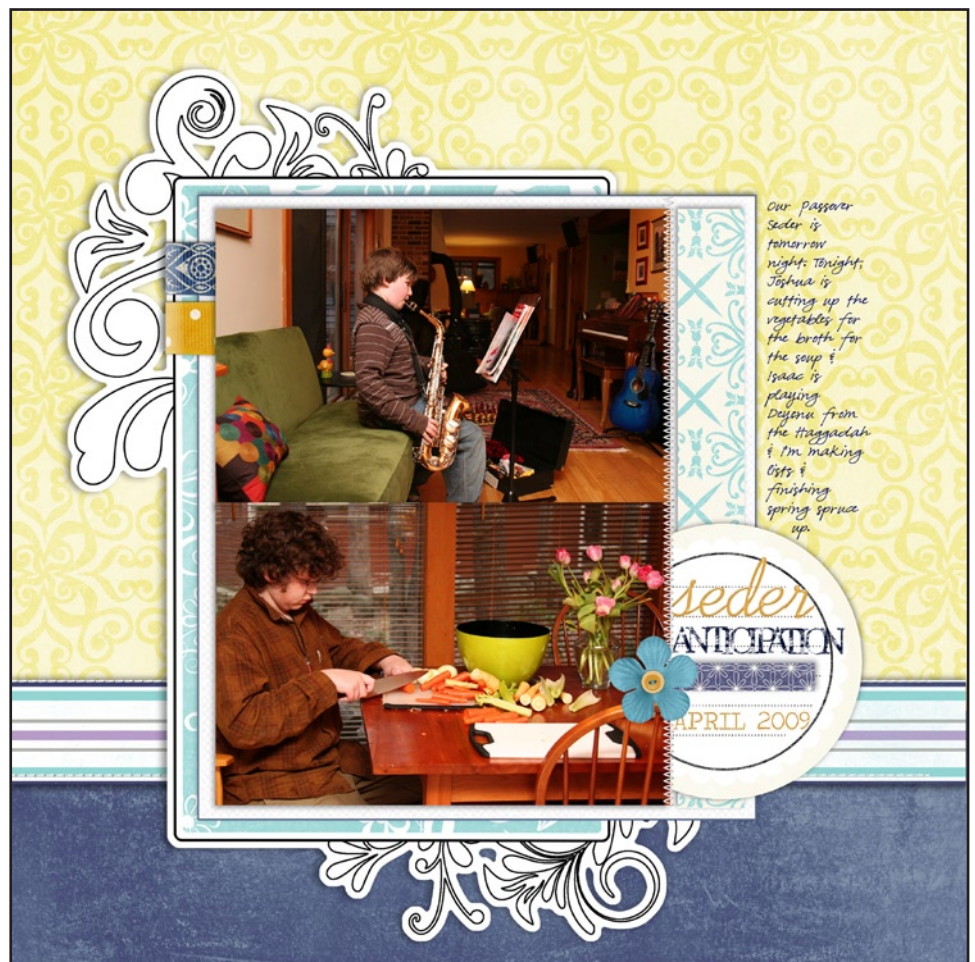
to test for asymmetrical balance

Ask yourself where your eye goes when you look at the page. Is it moving around the page more or less evenly (thus having balance)? Or does it always return to an area that is not your intended focal-point (thus meaning you should rethink your design)?

As you make a page, you'll be moving things around, subconsciously (or perhaps consciously) searching for balance.

It's not just the primary page elements and blocks that you're working to balance. You're trying to find balance in for all of your accents--and even your background pieces.

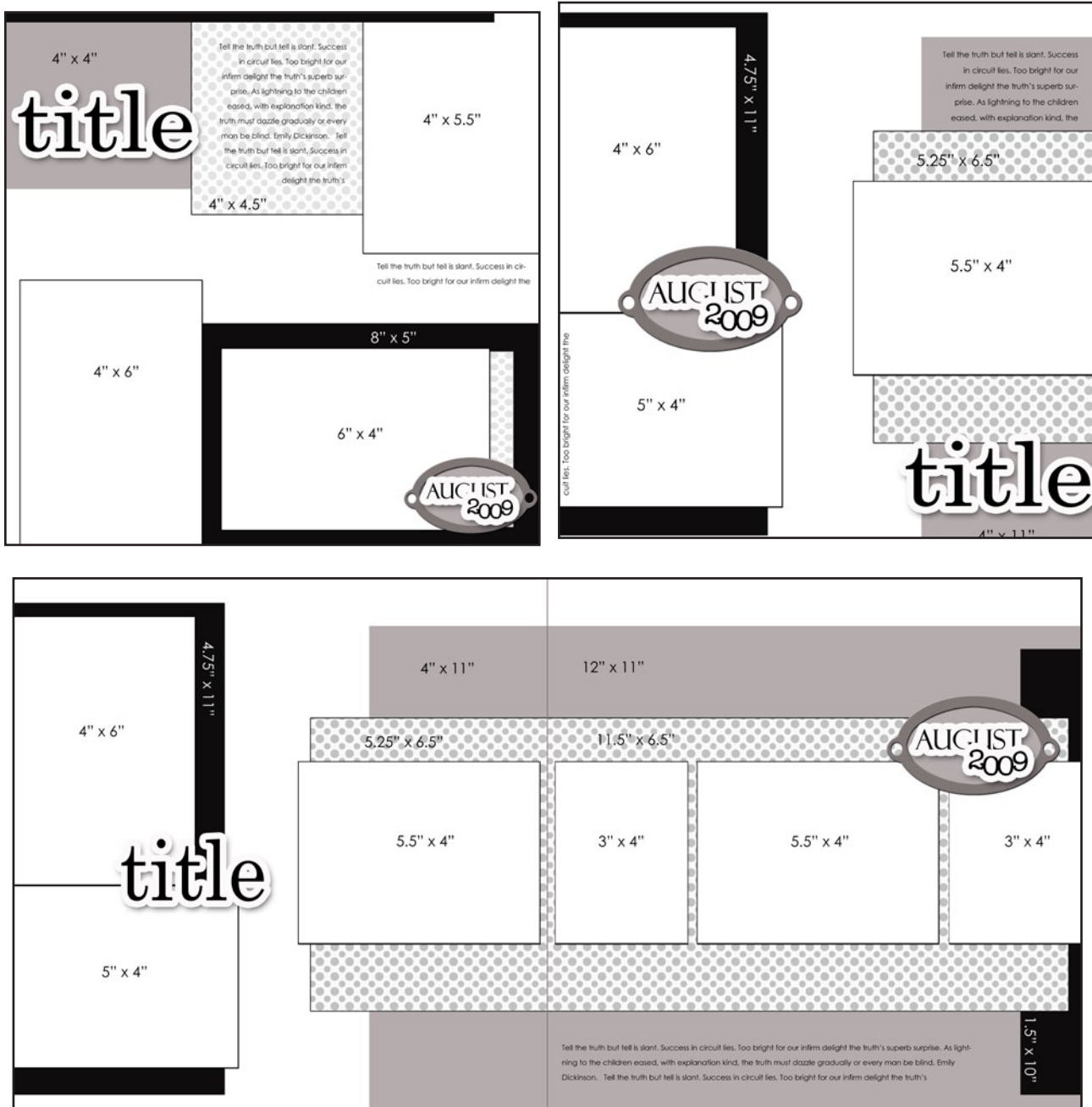
Take a look at the background on "Seder Anticipation." The top yellow block is much larger than the bottom dark blue block. Because of its lighter color, though, its visual weight balances the smaller, dark blue area.



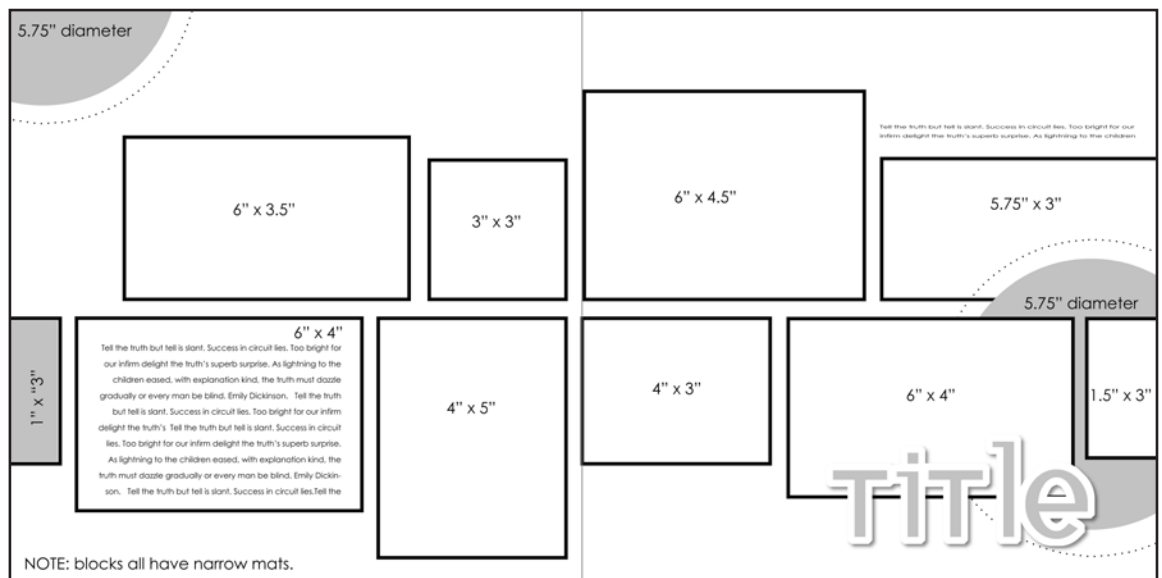
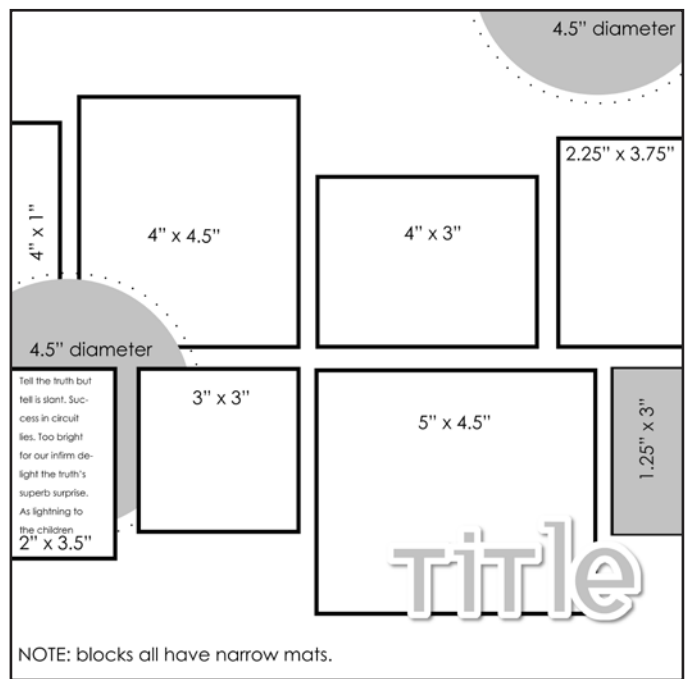
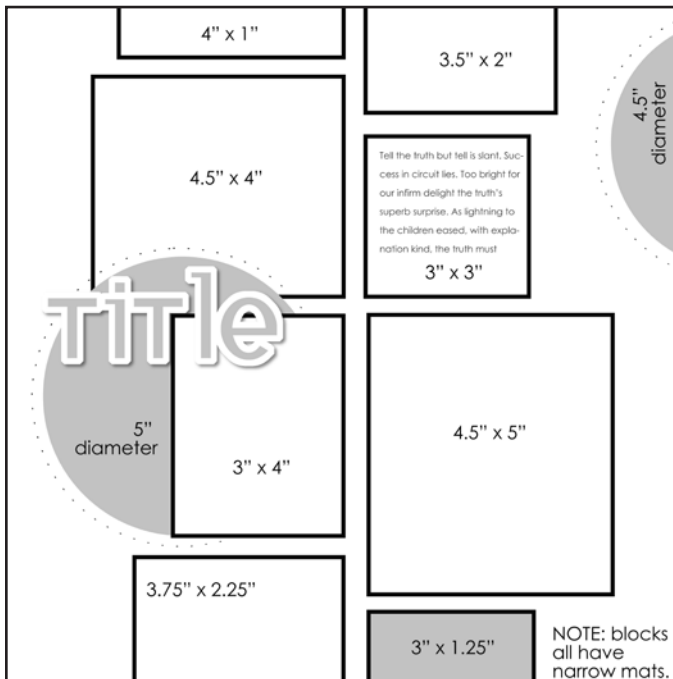
Now take a look at the embellishments. The viewer's eye will connect similar elements. The white flourish at top left is nicely balanced by a smaller (white) flourish and (white) circle tag at bottom right.

SKETCH & VARIATIONS

Now it's time to look at a sketch and variations. I originally made these designs as a challenge to myself to play with balance in a strong way. When you use these sketches, be sure to think about the impact that the color and pattern of any piece will have upon its weight within the whole. [Click to download layered psd file for digital pages.](#)



Here's another set of sketches that originally appeared in the Get It Scrapped Sketch Gallery. They're great to study for this class, because, again, I made them to play with balance--this time along a straight axis. While the photo blocks are of differing sizes, the ones on the top generally fill about the same total area as those on the bottom. The circles and dark shaded rectangles contribute to both flow and balance here.



YOUR TURN

Now it's your turn to make a page that incorporates asymmetrical balance. Use one of the sketches provided or take off on your own!