DESIGN
PRINCIPLES
for the
SCRAPBOOK
PAGE

by Debbie Hodge

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Introduction

Hi and welcome! I'm glad you've decided to spend time with me and these lessons. I love thinking about making scrapbook pages—combining photos, stories, and product to make a record of the life I'm living with family and friends. I found that once I understood layout design principles AND the essential parts of any page and how they relate to one another, scrapbooking got easier and more fun.

The 12 lessons in "Design Principles for Scrapbook pages" include an initial survey lesson, then 6 lessons covering the design principles important to making layouts, and then 5 more on what I consider primary parts of a scrapbook page.

We'll be breaking it all down and looking at each aspect individually—though, really, it's never possible to look at any aspect in total isolation. There will be some circling around and overlapping of material as we study it—and, then, ultimately, you'll want it all stirred up together when you make pages. That's how you'll get pages that are pleasing to look at AND that tell your stories well.

I hope you find these lessons helpful -- and I hope they get you chomping at the bit to scrapbook. If you have any questions along the way, please contact me via the Get It Scrapped website contact link.

Debbie

{LESSON ONE} # A Structure for Page Design

In this class we break the work of making a scrapbook page into the simplest and most useful elements: *design principles* which *we'll apply to* **scrapbook page parts.**

I wouldn't make anything beautiful and stable without structure--or scaffolding. This class lays out that scaffolding in a way that's easy to understand and apply.

four goals

When i make a page, I use my page parts and the design principles along with a story to achieve four goals:

1. capture the viewer's attention,
2. control the eye's movement,
3. convey information, and
4. evoke emotion.

a structure for page design

Here's how these four goals were achieved on "Grandpa's Girl" using design principles to place page parts.

1. catch the eye: The photo of my aunts and my niece singing catches the eye for many reasons, including: appeal, placement, and matting.

2. control the eye's movement: The tendency of the viewer's eye is to move diagonally down to the cluster of photos at bottom center then up to the top right and then back around.

3. convey information: Information is conveyed via journaling, photos, and the motifs on the page.

4. evoke emotion: The viewer of this page comes to understand that my niece adored her grandfather, and he loved spending time with her. To remember him, she learned one of his favorite songs and found people to help her remember him with a joyful and quirky singing of this song on the front lawn of his farm.

Emotion is evoked by the story, the contrast of seeing my father in days past with his granddaughter and then seeing her without him, offering her own original tribute to him and his part in her life.

a structure for page design

The lessons in this class will get you achieving those goals by teaching you about 6 design principles, 5 scrapbook page parts, and how to use them together.

design principles

Even if you've never formally heard about design principles in conjunction with scrapbooking, you're probably already using them on scrapbook pages or in other pursuits, as you arrange furniture and decorations in your home, select an outfit and accessories for a nice occasion, or make an invitation for the neighborhood picnic.

We'll focus on these six design principles, which can be remembered with a mnemonic: ECBARF.

• Emphasis
• Contrast
• Balance
• Alignment
• Repetition
• Flow

The rest of this lesson is a quick overview of those principles and page parts. We'll get deeper into using them in later lessons.

Design Elements

Think of design elements as the basic building blocks of visual design. Design principles are rules you can use to combine those blocks.

Eight design elements that will go a long way toward making pleasing pages are:

• Space
• Line
• Shape
• Size
• Pattern
• Texture
• Value
• Color

More Reading

Design Elements: article at Get It Scrapped

if you're a GIS Member

Design Play: Masterful Scrapbook Design class on using design principles and elements as jumping off spots for design. Teachers include Emily Pitts and Lisa Dickinson.

Rule Play: Masterful Scrapbook Design class that reviews the dos of design principles and then explores breaking those rules. Teachers include Doris Sander and Tiffany Tillman.

design principles | emphasis

Emphasis. Different parts of your page have different levels of importance, and the way you present all of the pieces should make this hierarchy apparent to the viewer. We'll cover this principle in more depth in Lesson 2, talking about the different parts that could be emphasized as well as how to emphasize them.

On "Proud and Happy Tourist," the larger photo of my son is the focal point. It's made so by several aspects, including its larger size, its positioning, its engaging content, and its embellishment

The viewer begins by looking at this photo and then takes in the smaller shots and the journaling.

More Reading

How to Create Focal Points on Scrapbook Pages: article at Get It Scrapped.

if you're a GIS Member

Focal Points: Masterful Scrapbook Design class on creating and using focal points in design. Ebook + videos with guest teachers Noell Hyman, Kelly Purkey, Krista Sahlin, Betsy Sammarco and Celeste Smith.

design principles | repetition

Repetition. Repeating elements on a page adds unity. You can repeat colors, shapes, textures, motifs, and patterns. Note, though, that repetition without variety can be dull. The challenge, then, is to think about how to change something while keeping it the same.

Take a look at the repetitions of color on "The Punch Bowl." A visual triangle of oranges (title, bookplate, circle burst spot) guides the eye around the page. There's another triangle of repeating greens.

Repetitions in texture occur with the pompom fringe and the crocheted doily. See also the repetitions of "splatters" behind the cluster of elements at the bottom left corner of the page.

More Reading

Lily, Hannah Jane, Caroline
Christmas Eve
2011

Alignment. Alignments provide order, margins, and meaningful white space–they let you organize and group elements. You can even create visual connections between elements that are not near one another. (Note—this does not mean that everything needs to be perfectly lined up, but, rather, that you should consider when to align and when to break from alignment.)

"Leaving Seattle" is a page with several obvious alignments. When we get to the lesson that focuses on alignment, you'll learn about less obvious alignments and what they can do for your page designs.

Here, just to start, notice how the photos are all aligned along the bottom edges. Notice also that the end of the title aligns with the end of the photo block. Notice how the journaling block is the same width as the photo below it. This is the principle of alignment at work as I sized and placed page parts.

the end of a good day at EMP museum

July 4, 2013

Isaac & I spent the last afternoon in Seattle at the EMP museum (after lunch with Grant & Kathy). Neil didn't feel well & Josh wanted to hang out at the hotel. We took the monorail back over to the train to get us to our airport hotel.

leaving SEATTLE

design principles | balance

The parts of your scrapbook page should be distributed to create "visual" balance — a sense of balance. We never want to feel like the pieces in a layout are going to topple one another.

There's lots to talk about when we get to the lesson on balance, including addressing what might be your first question: Why not just balance things symmetrically.

For now, take a look at "Geo-cache," and note how the strip of photos along the left balances the larger landscape-oriented photo and the mat behind it. While this larger photo and mat fill more physical space, the smaller strip can balance it because it sits higher up and has more complexity.

It "feels" right – and we'll talk a lot more about how to get to this "good feeling" in a later lesson.

There should be obvious visual differences between the elements on your page. Contrast will draw the viewer's eye and add interest and variety.

Let's take a look at just a few of the contrasts on "H."

The green and blue patterned paper is bold and pops against the tan cardstock behind it. The white text print is yet another paper with enough difference in color and value to pop against the layers beneath.

There are also differences in scale on the page that make it interesting. An oversized butterfly rub-on is juxtaposed with small birds on the journaling card and in the cluster at bottom right.

All of these differences draw the eye and make the page pleasing and easily understood and viewed.

Flow refers to how the viewer's eye moves through the layout. Flow should begin with an element that is purposefully emphasized. You can arrange and choose other elements to move the eye through the rest of the page—and then end up back at the first, dominant element. If you can get the viewer to take in your page in a particular order – then you can show them the story as you'd like it understood.

When we get to the lesson on flow (or we could call it movement, too). We'll talk about a variety of flow patterns AND how to create those patterns.

On this page the flow starts with the focal point photo which is emphasized with size, embellishment and engagement. The arrow in the photo sends the eye over to the stacked photo and then, because of embellishments and repetitions, it circles around again.

archer

Isaac's early birthday present is a bow and arrows. He'd been loving archery in gym class and he's pretty good! May 2014.

# Page Parts

The basic parts of a scrapbook page are:

- Photos
- Journaling
- Embellishments
- Title
- Canvas

Not every page has every part—but most pages have most parts. Knowing this gives you a framework, touch points as you put things together and make photo, supply, and design choices. It's also a great starting point for getting new ideas for your pages.

Photos. The photos are very probably the reason for your page — though not always. The first concern is usually the selection of photos to put on your page. Then there are decisions to make about how many photos to use, whether to feature one or two over the others, how to crop your photos, and how to place them on the page.
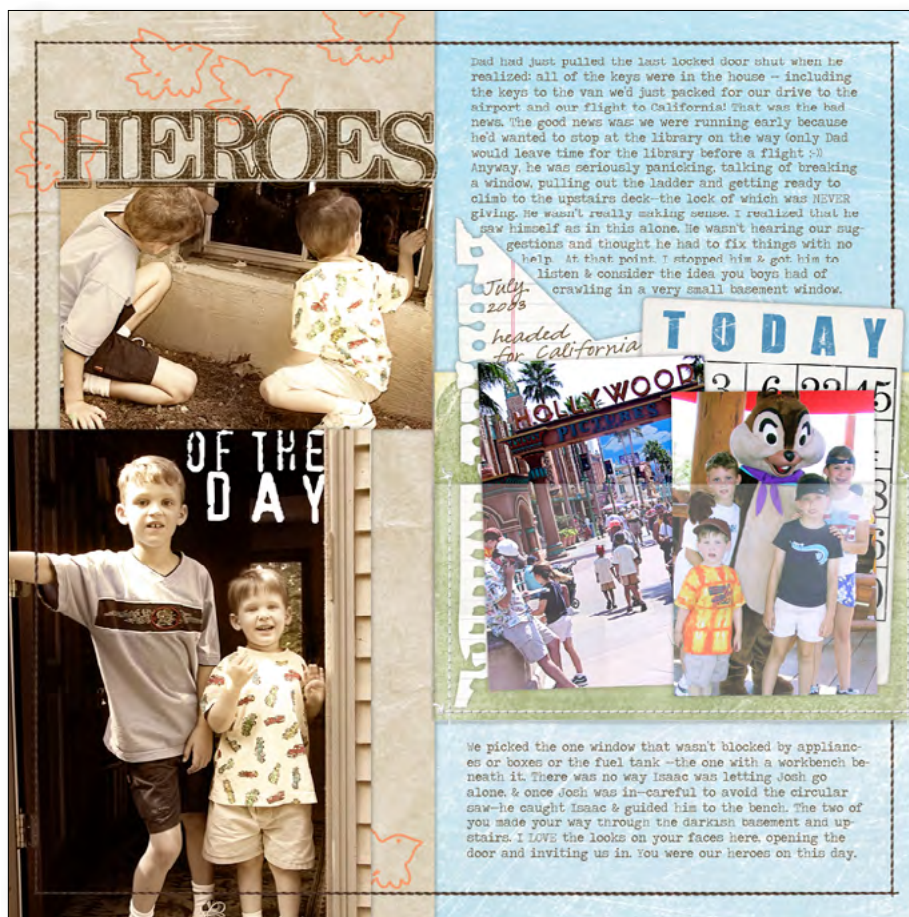
On "Heroes of the Day" I didn't have great photos BUT I really wanted to tell this story. We locked our house and car keys in the house and ourselves out right before we needed to leave for a trip to California and family and Disney.

The photos of my kids first getting in the basement window and second greeting us at the door as they saved the day were of poor quality I removed most of the color and did some digital "sharpening." To really reinforce the story (and the point of WHY being locked out at this moment was so important) I included two smaller and very colorful photos of us at Disney later. This combination of photos helps me present my story in a clear and compelling way.

More Reading

Photos articles on the Get It Scrapped blog.

If you're a GIS Member

Photos and Photo Play. Masterful Scrapbook Design classes including ebooks and videos with guest teachers including Katrina Kennedy, Anna Aspnes, Jana Morton, and Emily Pitts.

Journaling. Journaling can range from a few specifics about who is in the photos and where you were and when – to a detailed story like the one in my layout "Heroes of the Day" above.

Start making pages by understanding how much journaling you'll want to include – and understanding that you'll need to leave the appropriate space for it on the canvas.

As you move forward, this knowledge will factor into how you choose other elements, what you emphasize as well as how and where everything gets placed and the way in which you'll render your journaling (handwritten, typed, on a tag . . .).

I made "Work is Play" really just wanting to convey how much pleasure my mom takes in keeping her yard. I only need room for a small amount of journaling which I printed directly to a piece of patterned paper.

More Reading

20 Lessons on Scrapbook Page Journaling: article at Get It Scrapped

If you're a GIS Member

Journaling. Masterful Scrapbook Design class on the approaches to writing, rendering, and designing with journaling. Teachers include Dina Wakley, Lain Ehmann, Emily Pitts, and Paula Gilarde.

Embellishments. Ah, embellishments: the decorations for your scrapbook pages!

Your primary tasks when it comes to adding the embellishments to your page are: 1) choosing them, and 2) placing them. These bits are great for adding repetitions and for creating flow. And they're just plain fun to work with.

The embellishments on "Senior party" add interest to the page and they support the story subject. The owl represents study, the butterfly change, and the cake just represents a cake at a party!

Embellishments don't have to be themed. Versatile and meaning-neutral bits like buttons, ribbon, gems and brads make great decorative touches.

More Reading

Does that embellishment belong on your scrapbook page? 4 ways to know: article at Get It Scrapped.

If you're a GIS Member

Details and Artful Embellishing. Masterful Scrapbook Design classes on embellishing with Jenni Bowlin, Amber Ries, Erin Bassett, Kayleigh Wiles, Doris Sander, and more.

page parts | titles

Most of my pages have titles. Not all of them—but most of them do. I like how a title cues the viewer to the subject. I like how it gives me an opportunity to immediately set tone or put a twist on the story.

There are lots of questions to ask and answer about your title when you begin a scrapbook page. How important will your title be? Will it be clever or straight-forward? How much space will it take up? Will you use it as a major design element—incorporating colors and textures that will be repeated elsewhere, lead the eye, and set tone? You don't have to know your title absolutely when you start, but you need to know if you'll have one and how much space you think you'll give to it. I often mull over title possibilities in my mind as I make a page, refining them as I go along.

The title on "Awesome Boy" is mostly straightforward. Yes he's a boy. But there were lots of possible adjectives I could have used: outdoors boy, all boy, fishing boy. I settled on "awesome," though, because I really do think this boy is remarkable in many ways. I often incorporate contrast in my title as I've done here—"awesome" is in all caps and stamped to patterned paper while "boy" is lower-case and oversized and in chipboard with lots of dimension. The roughed-up chipboard supports the outdoor theme, and this title ends up being the dominant element on the page.

More Reading

Roundup of Ideas and Tutorials for Scrapbook Page Titles: article at Get It Scrapped.

If you're a GIS Member

Titles. Masterful Scrapbook Design class on coming up with rendering, placing, and using technique with scrapbook page titles. Teachers include: Karen Grunberg, Doris Sander, and Kayleigh Wiles.

page parts | canvas

Canvas. The canvas is the piece of paper (or digital background) upon which you build your page. For me, thinking about the canvas means thinking about how I will fill it and what role it will play in the page's design.

Just a look back at the layouts we've covered in this lesson, will give you an idea of the different ways there are to approach the canvas. You can fill it totally or incorporate white space. You can organize things in a grid with lots of alignments or you can layer or even scatter. You can use patterned paper or cardstock, narrow mats or fun edging techniques. We'll be talking about all of this in a lesson 12.

More Reading

6 Ways to Make the Scrapbook page Canvas: article at Get It Scrapped.

If you're a GIS Member

Canvas. Masterful Scrapbook Design class on approaches to the scrapbook page canvas.

a structure for page design

Make a scrapbook page with four goals in mind: 1) catch the eye, 2) guide the eye, 3) convey information, and 4) evoke emotion.

To do this you've got five basic page parts to combine on the page: 1) photos, 2) title, 3) journaling, 4) embellishments, and 5) canvas.

To know how to place those parts, let six design principles (which you can remember with the mnemonic ECBARF) guide you. Those principles are: emphasis, contrast, balance, alignment, repetition, and flow.

In the upcoming lessons, we'll go through each of the design principles with scrapbook page illustrations, and then we'll consider each of the page parts and how design principles work with them.