DESIGN PRINCIPLES for the SCRAPBOOK PAGE

{LESSON NINE} Photos and Design Principles

In the last lesson we made the move from focusing on design principles to looking at the basic parts of a scrapbook page. The choices you make regarding each page part should be done with an understanding of the implications for good use of design principles.

Today we'll look at photos. The general process we'll repeat each time we think about and choose photos is to:

1. consider page purpose

2. select photos

3. crop photos and consider placement options

4. place photos in combination with other page parts

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.

1. Consider Page Purpose

Knowing what you want to achieve on the page will drive your page parts choices. We talked about possible purposes in the previous section.

You can also use the Story Swoop tool which is part of a free Get It Scrapped membership to come to an understanding of your purpose.

2. Select photos

Decide:

- how many photos you will include,
- which photos you will include,
- and whether a photo or photo grouping will be your page focal point.

"Memorial Day" is an event page. I wanted to get lots of shots of the people and activities at our local parade (and that drove my decision to use a two-page canvas). I chose two photos to emphasize. The close in shot of my son and his friend in combination with the title is the focal point. The large shot of the boys posed with our local militia re-enactors is the next stop of the page. The rest of the photos are in a supporting block.

3. Crop photos

This is where you start thinking about how you'll use the design principles to achieve the effect you want.

crop photos | design principle: emphasis

If a photo is going to be your focal point, find a way to crop and emphasize it.

The focal point on "It's a Big Memory" is the photo in the middle with the title coming in a close second. Note how all of the photos are the same size but the one in the middle still dominates the other two.

That's because:

1. it's cropped in closer on my face,
2. it sits on top of everything else, and
3. it has a fancy frame.

Decide how much you want your photos to contrast with the background and with each other. Revisit the Contrast Lesson from this class, and keep in mind that for contrast to be a strong part of your design it needs to be obvious—no going part of the way.

Cropping options include:

- all photos the same size, with a focal photo emphasized in some way other than size
- a variety of photo sizes, with a focal photo emphasized via size and/or another technique
- one (or perhaps 2) focal-sized photos and supporting photos that are smaller but all of same supporting size

Consider how you want to present the content of your photo. Will one or more photos be zoomed in close to the subject? Will one or more photos include context? Will you apply any effects to the photo? You could render one in color and the rest in black and white. You could use special effects like a vignette to make the content of a photo shine.

The photos on "Big" are arranged with one dominant, portrait-oriented photo cropped in close, and three smaller, landscape-oriented photos cropped to show the context of the schoolyard. The three supporting photos are connected by their cropping within a half circle.

Check out these articles for more details on cropping and editing photos.

- Cropping Photos of People for Scrapbooking
- Speed Scrapbook Page Design with Smart Crops
- Scrapbooking Photos with Busy Backgrounds (& working with photo context)
- 10 Quick Ways to Make Over Your Photos

4. Place photos

place photos | design principle: balance

In the previous lesson, I recommended thinking first about how much space you want to give to photos and journaling on your page, and then, based upon these plans, moving on to consider your title and how much space it will get.

These three page parts--photos, journaling, and title--are the three page parts that usually determine basic space needs.

As you select and begin to crop photos and make space for journaling and title, work to incorporate all of these elements in a design that has balance and flow (and hopefully at least a little bit of white space). To do this, consider the relative size of the page parts and how they will play off one another.
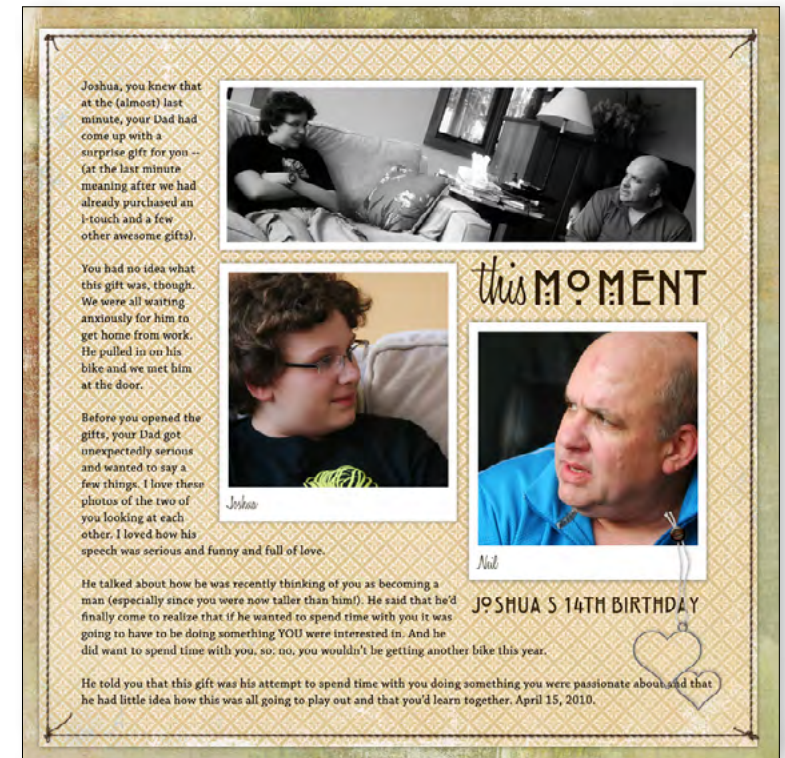
"This Moment" is a full page with 3 photos, substantial journaling, and a title. The challenge was to achieve balance with the photos and the lengthy journaling–which I really wanted to keep all together. At first, I had the square photo of my husband aligned with the square photo of my son, but things were out of kilter. Sliding the photo of my husband down and putting the title above it, lightened up the upper right area of the page enough that the lengthy but less-visually-dense journaling could hold its own.

Look to your photo content for colors, motifs, patterns, textures, lines (or anything else) you could repeat in other page parts.

A color that stands out in the photo could be repeated in the title or the embellishments. Motifs and patterns can be repeated in papers, embellishments, background stamping, and any other detailing you'll be adding. For a reminder on the importance of repetition and techniques for incorporating it (with variety) check back to the Repetition lesson.

In making "Cat's Cradle," I noticed the red in my mom's sweater and in the yarn she and my son were playing with. Adding a red date tab at the top of the larger photo and threading red yarn through the title gave this page the repetitions it needed for flow and unity. The red yarn does double repetition duty—repeating color and the image of the yarn in the photo.

The edges of your photos are great candidates for aligning with other photo edges and with other page parts, including the bottom, top or ends of a title, the justified edge of journaling, paper blocks, and embellishment borders.

The arrangement of the photos in "Seeing Me With You" drove the placement of all other elements on the page.

I placed one larger focal photo and three smaller photos in grid that ended up defining the borders for a patterned paper block, the title work and the journaling. See how the ends of the journaling and titles align with the photo edges.

And now, finally, we come to flow—though, really, flow should be on your mind throughout. Putting together a scrapbook page that does a good job of incorporating design principles isn't something that moves forward linearly. Rather, I think of it as making circles that slowly move forward.

Check out the Flow lesson, and keep the techniques for achieving it in your mind. As we cover the other page elements we'll talk more about this and how all of the page parts should contribute to a good page flow.

summary

Understand what your purpose with a page is as you select photos. As you crop and place photos, be sure to emphasize what's important. Look to your photos for their impact on and possibilities for adding flow and repetions to the design.

The focal point on "Archer" is the larger photo of my son emphasized with size contrast, content, and embellishment. The arrow that's in the photo points the viewer's eye next to the smaller stack of photos, which the eye will follow sequentially down, ending at an embellishment cluster--which then connects the eye back over to the embellishments on the larger photo.