DESIGN
PRINCIPLES
for *the*
SCRAPBOOK
PAGE

by Debbie Hodge

Introduction

Hi and welcome! I'm really glad you've decided to spend some of your time with me and these lessons. I love thinking about making scrapbook pages—combining photos, stories, and cool 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 email me at debbie@debbiehodge.com.

Debbie

{LESSON ONE} A Structure for Page Design

Just as trees grow branches and branches grow leaves, I believe that a scrapbook page structure can grow ideas for you - original layout ideas that flow easily once you've established a starting place.

The structure for a scrapbook page has two components that correlate to the parts of a tree - the trunk and the leafy branches.

The "trunk" of a scrapbook page is made by the use of design principles.

The "branches" of your scrapbook page are the pieces parts that you combine (using the trunk to guide your choices and placement of them on the page).

Design Principles

- Emphasis
- Contrast
- Balance
- Alignment
- Repetition
- Flow

Page Parts

- Photos
- Journaling
- Title
- Embellishments
- Canvas
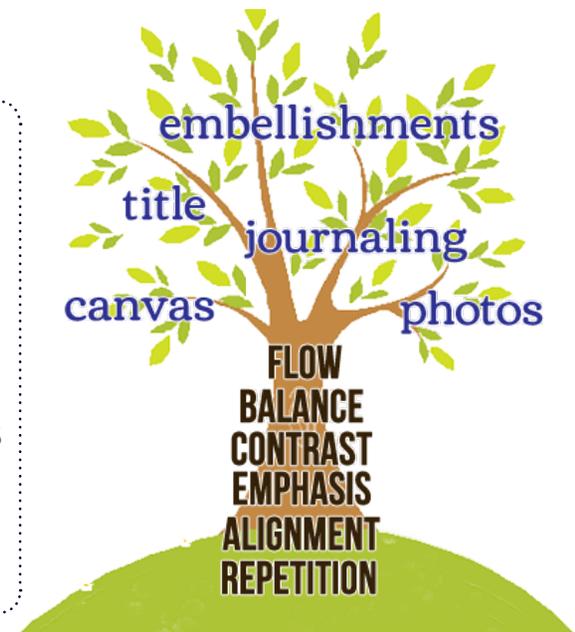
Design Principles

The "trunk" of a scrapbook page is the use of design principles. There aren't a ton of them, and even if you've never formally heard about them in conjunction with scrapbooking, you're probably already using them as you scrapbook - or even as you're arranging the furniture and decorations in your home.

While visual design needs to take the science of perception into account, it is more an art than a science. Thus, the "principles" of design can somtimes vary by teacher. We'll focus on these six, which can be remembered with a mnemonic: ECBARF.

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
Design Play Seminar: starter bonus when you subscribe to Masterful Scrapbook Design.

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 "Making Spirits Bright," the larger photos of my son is the focal point. It's made so by it's larger size, positioning in a sweet spot, and engaging content.

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

More Reading

Focal Points issue of Masterful Scrapbook Design.

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

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

4 Ways to Use Repeated Photos on Your Scrapbook Pages: article at Get It Scrapped

Tap the power of "3" for your scrapbook page designs: article at Get It Scrapped.

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.)

"Keepin' It Real" 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 elements within each column align on their side edges. The top of the "in high spirits" word art aligns with the end of the sideways journaling.

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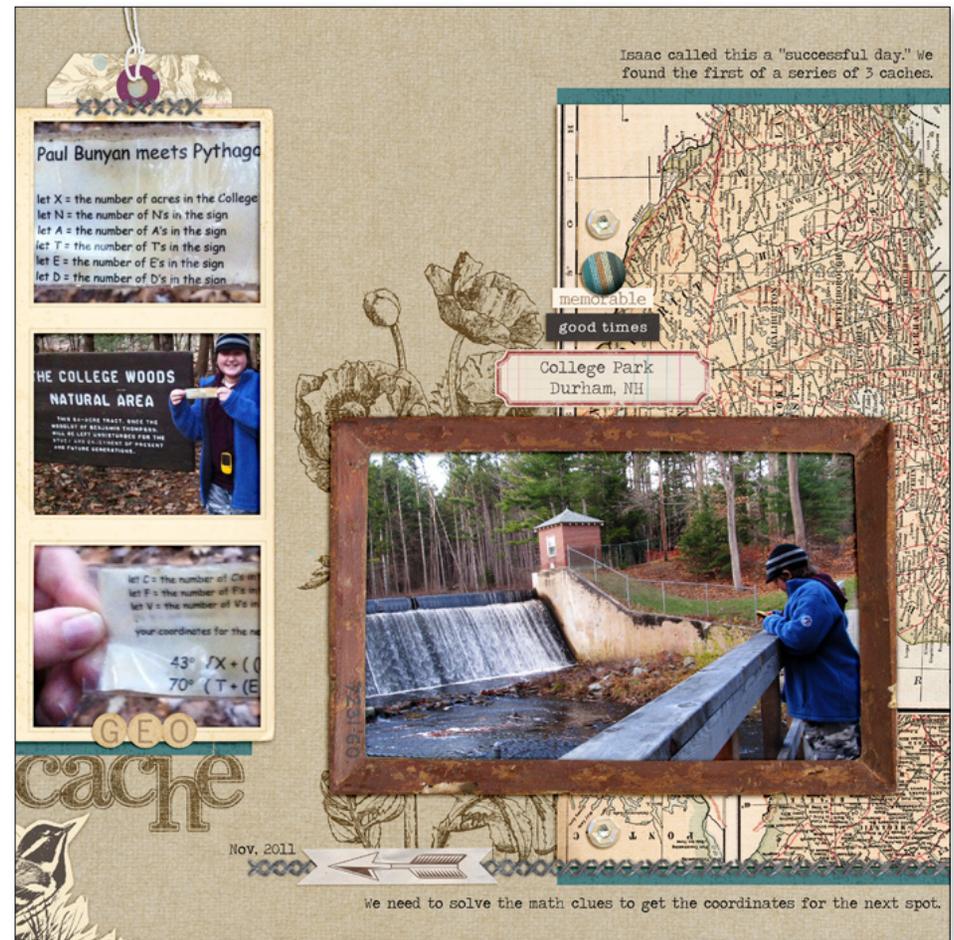
There should be obvious visual differences between the elements on your page. Contrast will draw the viewer's eye and add interest and variety.

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. The flow will begin with the element that has the most emphasis. 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 "Merry Friends" the flow is a visual triangle that begins the larger photo and the cluster embellishing it. The pop of pink on the "Merry" bingo card is the next stop, and the pink alphas spelling friends come next. The eye may well circle back over to the journaling spot now and keep moving around and through the page.

Page Parts

The "branches" of your scrapbook page are parts that you combine (using the trunk to guide your choices and placement of them on the page).

Not every page has every part–but most pages have most parts. Knowing this gives you a framework, touchpoints 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

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. The answers to these questions usually aren't too difficult, and I'll show you how to approach them. The key is to ask and answer the questions. These answers will get you started.

On "Heroes of the Day" I didn't have great photos BUT I really wanted to tell this story. The photo of my kids getting in the basement window and then greeting us at the door were of such poor quality I removed most of the color from them 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.
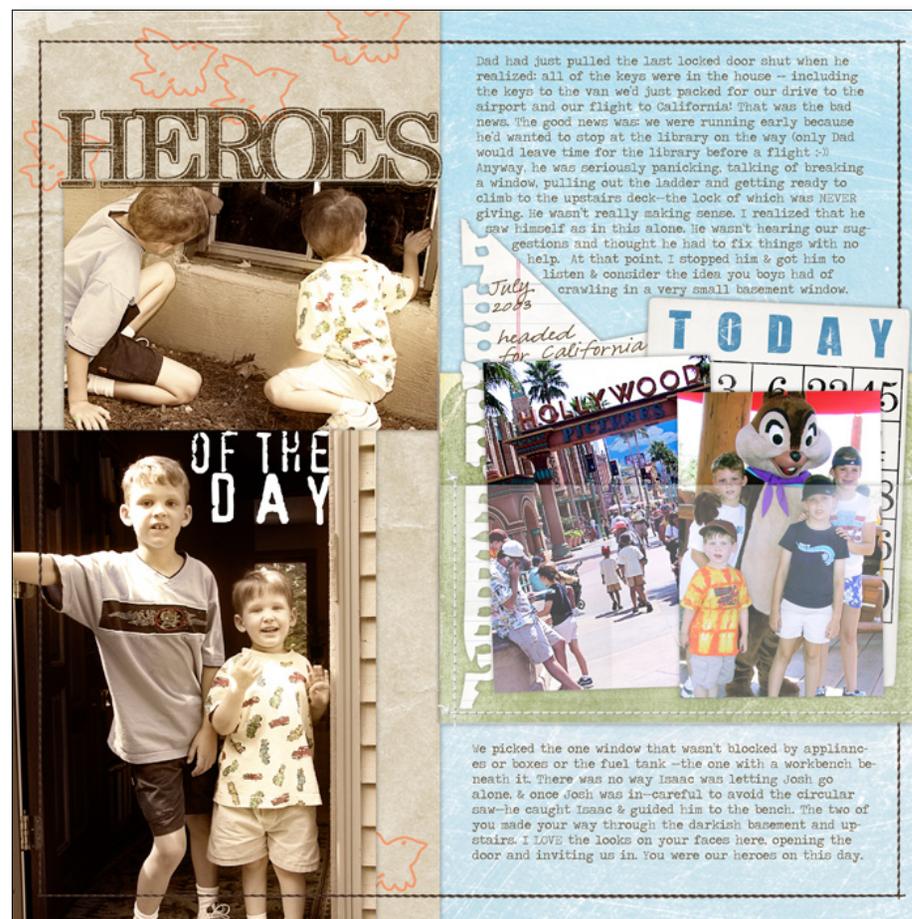
Journaling can range from a few specifics about who is in the photos and where you were and when - to a detailed story like the one in my layout "Heroes of the Day" above. Start making pages by understanding how much journaling you'll want to include - and understanding that you'll need to leave the appropriate space for it. As you move forward, this knowledge will factor into how you choose other elements, what you emphasize and how, where everything gets placed, and how you'll render your journaling (handwritten, typed, on a tag . . .).

When I made "Amblerville," I focused initially on the photo and vertical band of papers layered behind it. And then I realized that I had journaling I really wanted to include. I used a small journaling card with computer-printed journaling. To achieve balance and unity with all of the page elements, I needed the strip of paper below it with the subjects' names.

AMBLERVILLE

Sunday afternoons at Grandma Hendrickson's in Amblerville with Aunts, Uncles, & Cousins. This kitchen. Mom sitting on a stepstool. Grandma's Lucky Strikes and Lorna Doones. Meatballs & Spaghetti. The yard & gardens. The sharp curve in the road & the gas station across the street. Charmed times.

Aunt Jean, Charity, Grandma, Aunt Janet, Mom

More Reading

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

Journaling Seminar: starter bonus when you subscribe to Masterful Scrapbook Design.

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 "Here" add lots of interest to the page. More importantly, they support the story subject. The vintage kittens represent my friends' cats. A paintbrush represents Don's work while a typewriter represents Robin's work. Finally, the hot air balloon represents the new journey they're taking.

Embellishments don't have to be themed, though. 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.

Details Seminar: starter bonus when you subscribe to Masterful Scrapbook Design.

page parts | titles

Most of my pages have titles. Not all of them–but most of them do. I like how it 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.

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. Notice below that the elements on "The Punch Bowl" are arranged in a cluster, "Keepin' It Real" is a block design, and "Merry Friends" uses a band composition.

More Reading

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

Canvas Seminar: starter bonus when you subscribe to Masterful Scrapbook Design.
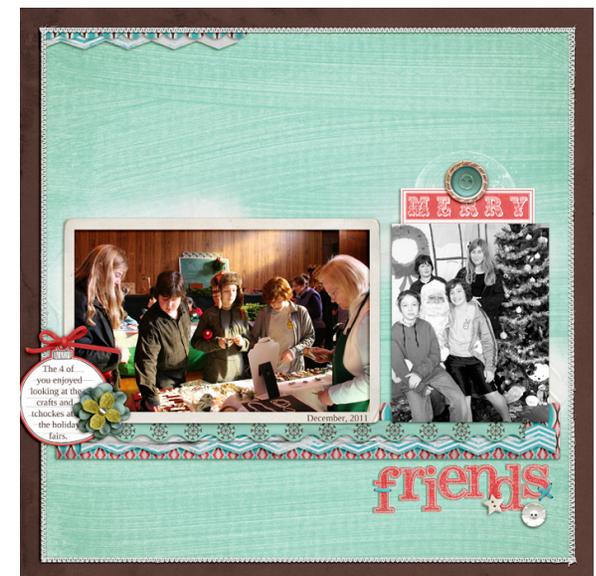
{LESSON TWO} **Design Principle of Emphasis**

Different parts of your scrapbook page should have different levels of importance. Without some variation in emphasis among the elements on your page, everything takes on the same level of importance and the viewer has to find some way into your page on their own. When emphasis exists, though, the viewer's eye is drawn to a starting point and then (with some good "flow management") knows where to continue. The result is the viewer "gets" what your page is about.

Make something stand out. Incorporate a strong focal point on your page that draws the eye first. The decision of which element will be the focal point will depend upon the subject of your page and what meaning you want to convey.

A strong focal point is also simply delightful. It's the "wow" factor for your page.

When I use a photo as my scrapbook page focal point, I usually consider the entire photo to be the focal point. On "Diamonds are a Boy's Best Friend," though, I really think of my son's face as the focal point. This is a result of the photo being so large that the blurred background becomes a part of the page background. Placing the title on the photo contributes further to this effect.
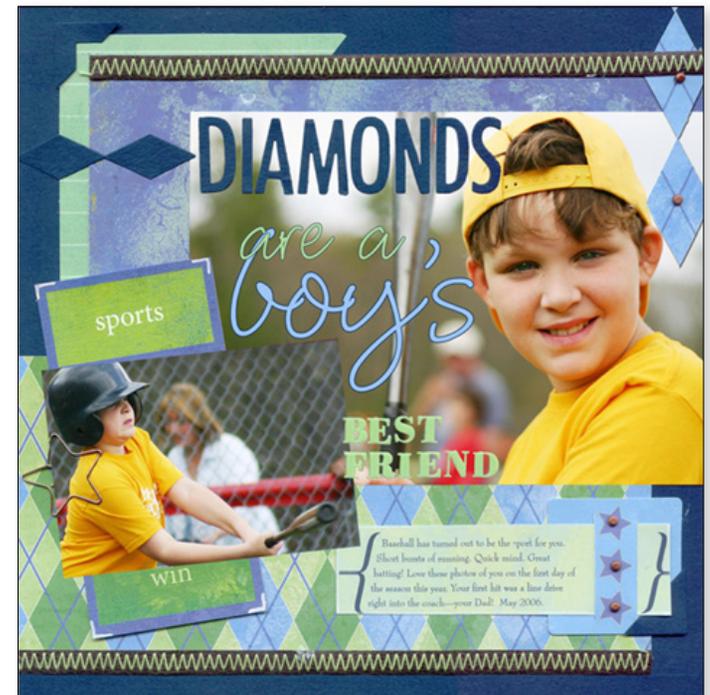
How to Create Emphasis

Differences draw the eye. When one item is clearly different from the others around it, it is attention-getting. Differences in size, color, shape, texture, and dimension all work toward this end.

how to create emphasis | emphasize with contrast

On "Ice Cream," the photo at top right stands out from the others for multiple reasons beginning with its contrast in size and shape from the other photos: it's the largest photo and it's a landscape oriented rectangle with the other two photos are squares.

Another aspect that gives it emphasis is that it's fund and engaging, with both of my sons looking into the camera.

When you decorate the mantle over the fireplace you increase its visual draw and significance. The same goes for an element on a scrapbook page. Tie a ribbon around a title letter, add a bright chipboard flourish or eye-catching frame to a photo, or fasten your journal block with eye-catching brads to strengthen their appeal and attention-getting potential on the page.

The focal point on Cookie Walk is the portrait-oriented photo on the right -- which contrasts in size and value AND which is "decorated" with the large pointsettia. The embellishment leads the eye right on over to the photo.

You can create a focal point by setting on element (or block of elements) apart from the others with white space.
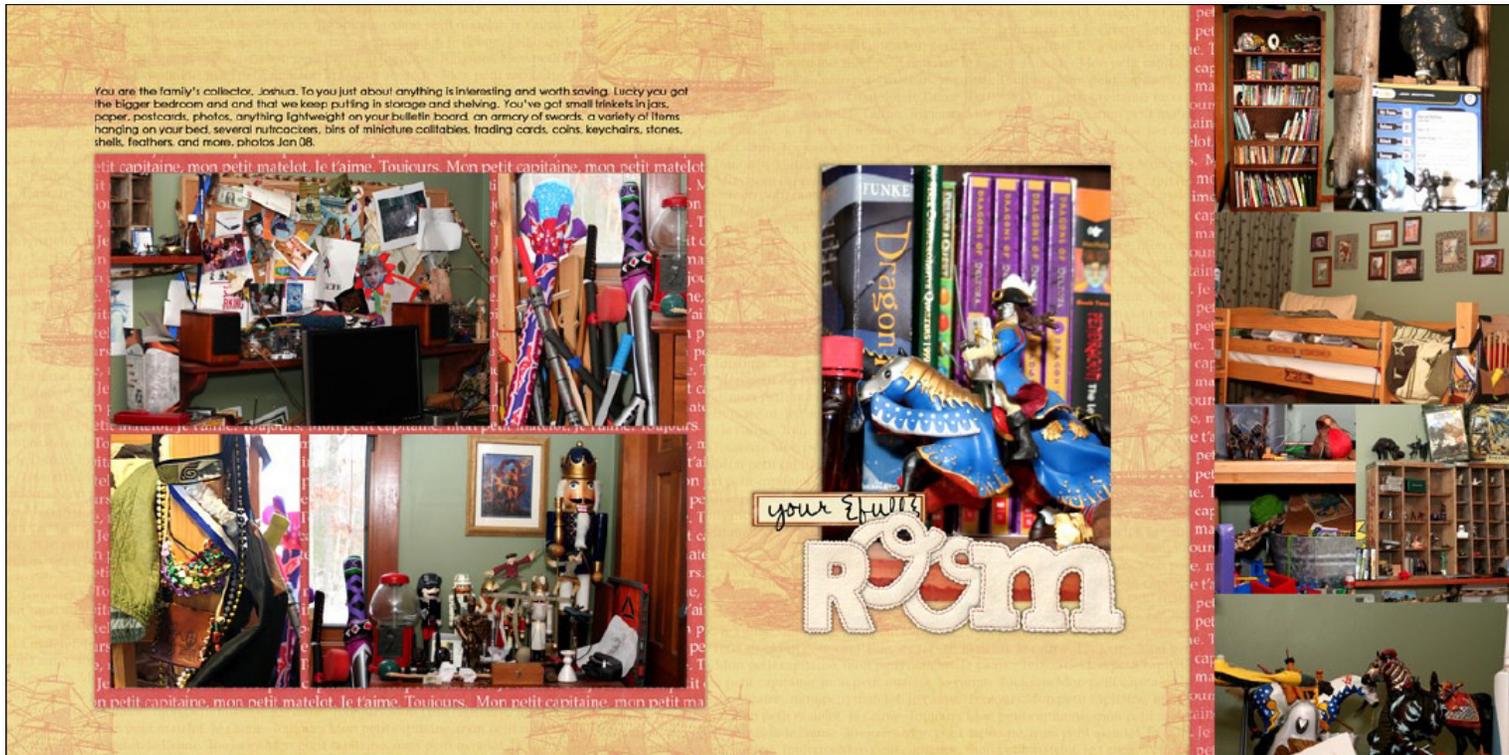

The focal point on "Your {Full} Room" is the single photo grouped with the page title. Generous margins as well as the photo's content and the design interest added by the title make it the starting spot for the viewer's eye. What's more, the entire focal block contrasts well with the background paper, thus making it "pop."

An object placed in a "sweet spot," on the page will take on importance. To find the four "sweet spots" on your page, divide it into thirds horizontally and vertically (as if drawing a tic-tac-toe board over it) and find the four spots where your dividing lines intersect.

The larger, full-color photos that is this page's focal point sits at the "sweet spot" in the upper right of the layout.

Note, though that this is not the only thing making this the starting point for the viewer's eye. It's a combination of techniques for emphasis that give it this honor: placement PLUS contrast in photo color and size, framing, and an engaging subject looking straight into the camera all add to the strength of this scrapbook page focal point.
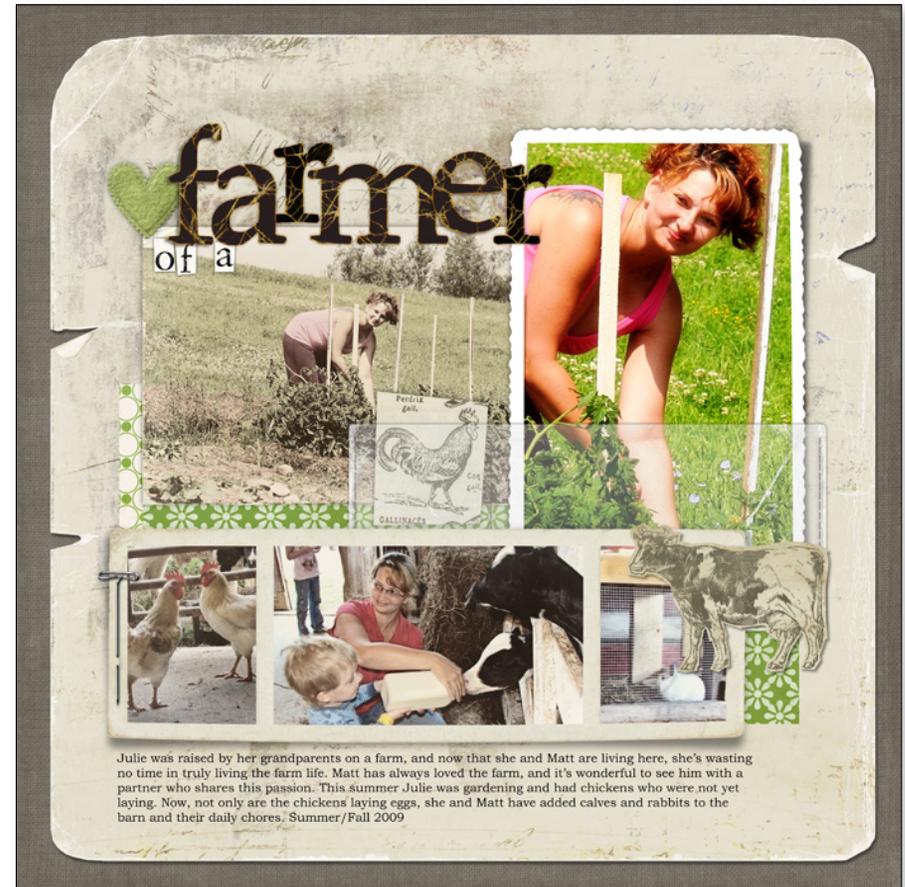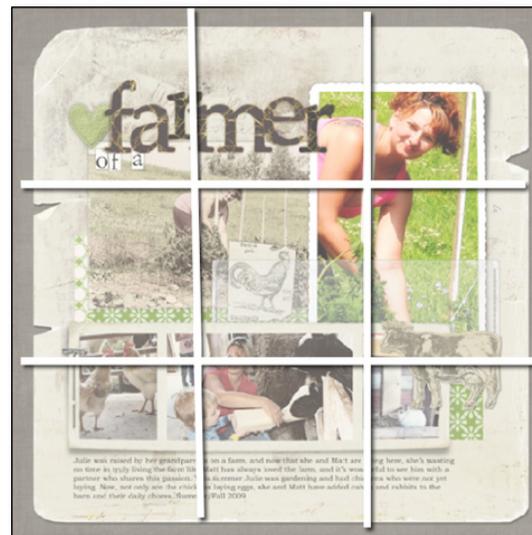
A compelling photo - one with a strong image or with people looking into the camera or engaged in an interesting activity– will draw the eye and make a great focal point. You can use cropping to oomph the photo's draw.

"Memorial Day" includes 4 photos. In addition to the photo at bottom right being the largest, it is also the most engaging. The three subjects are snuggled close and happily (or goofily) looking into the camera. The close-in crop of this shot (compare it to the smaller similar photo which shows lots of yard around the subjects) adds to its appeal.

More Reading

Focal Points issue of Masterful Scrapbook Design.

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

Emphasizing Page Parts | emphasize titles

Scrapbook page focal points are not always photos.

Emphasize your title when you've got a point to make, and words do it best. The point doesn't have to be a serious one–it can be something light. Lots of times we come up with clever titles and showing them off by amping up their design is fun–for you as you scrapbook and for the viewer later.

Emphasize your titles with all of the things we talked about above. This means you could:

- give it lots of real estate on the page
- use a typeface that contrasts with your journaling OR use multiple faces that contrast with one another in the title
- decorate your letters with ties, gems, rub-ons, paint, ink –whatever you think works!

The title on "Women who Love Wool too Much" plays with the title of a book called "Women who Love Men too Much." It seemed perfect for these photos from my knitting group–which we call "Wild and Wooly Night." I gave the title a good chunk of space on the page and used two different fonts for my die-cut letters. "Wool" used a chunk font and irregularly sized letters. What's more, "wool" is punched out of bright orange cardstock layered on punched chipboard to give it more dimension than anything else on the page.

Photos are often the reason for the layout - and they are what most frequently gets emphasized.

Some ways to emphasize them include with photo editing, cropping, matting, framing, embellishing, and contrasts in size, shape, color, and value.

See more concrete ideas for doing this in Creating A Focal Point on Scrapbook Pages.

On "What's the Story," a strip of photos running across the page is the focal point. The portraits of my crazy friends placed on either side look back into the center photo to the photo of one of them making a fun-filled toast. The curved paper laid over the photo bottoms adds to the sense of connection and fun.

While a single photo is the focal point on "Memorial Day," it's a strip of photos that are the focal point on "What's the Story."

When the story is the most important part of the page, you might choose to make the journaling your focal point. Think about the ways there are to create emphasis and then how they could be applied to emphasizing journaling on a page. Here's a few ideas:

- give the journaling lots of space on the page proportional to the rest of the elements
- isolate it with a white space
- put it on an interesting background (challenge yourself to figure out a compelling background)
- print it over a faded photo
- embellish it
- play with the type in the words.

Here are three examples of ways to dress up your journaling so that it packs some punch on your pages if you'd like to emphasize your story.
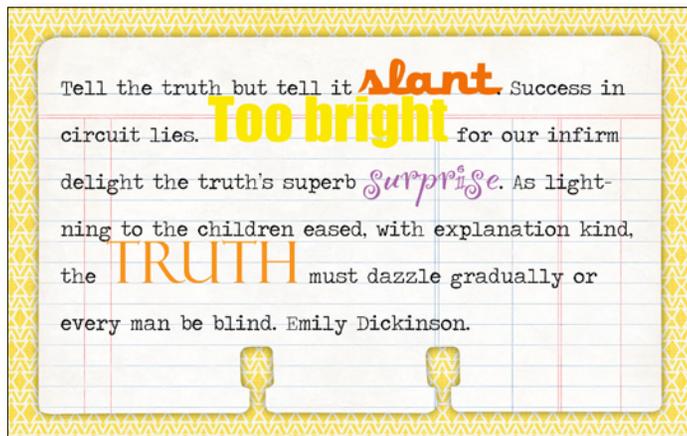
Selected words are rendered in large fun and colorful type.
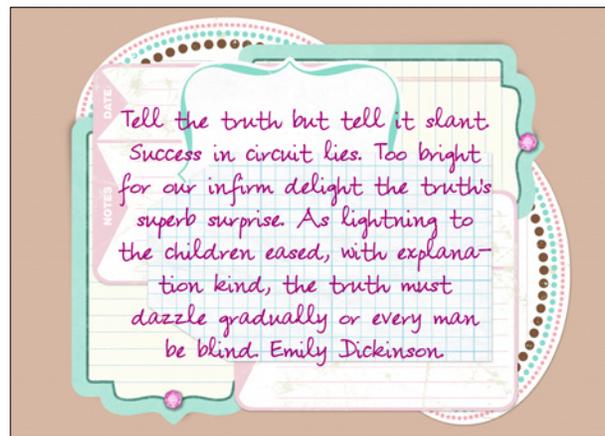
Handwrite your journaling across multiple layered labels and journaling spots.
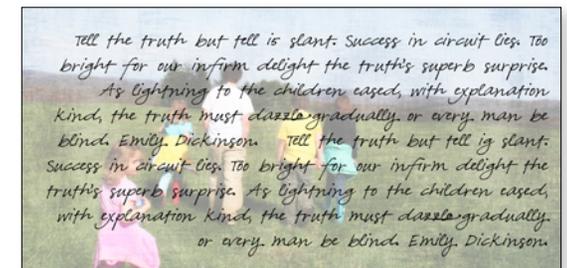
Journaling is printed (or hand-written) on a faded photo.

Once again–you decide what you want to be your focal point and then use a combination of the techniques we're talking about in this lesson to make it stand out.

On "The Challenges of Today," I decided to emphasize the image of a bull looking straight out. The emphasis is a result of its large size, the surrounding white space, and its "bleeding" off the edge of the page.

When a known image or shape bleeds off the side of your canvas, it actually takes up space that doesn't exist. The viewer's mind completes the missing part of the image and, thus, it ends up thinking of your page as being on a bigger canvas than it really is.

The pointsettia embel-lishment on "Cookie Walk" works with the photo beneath to cap-ture the eye.
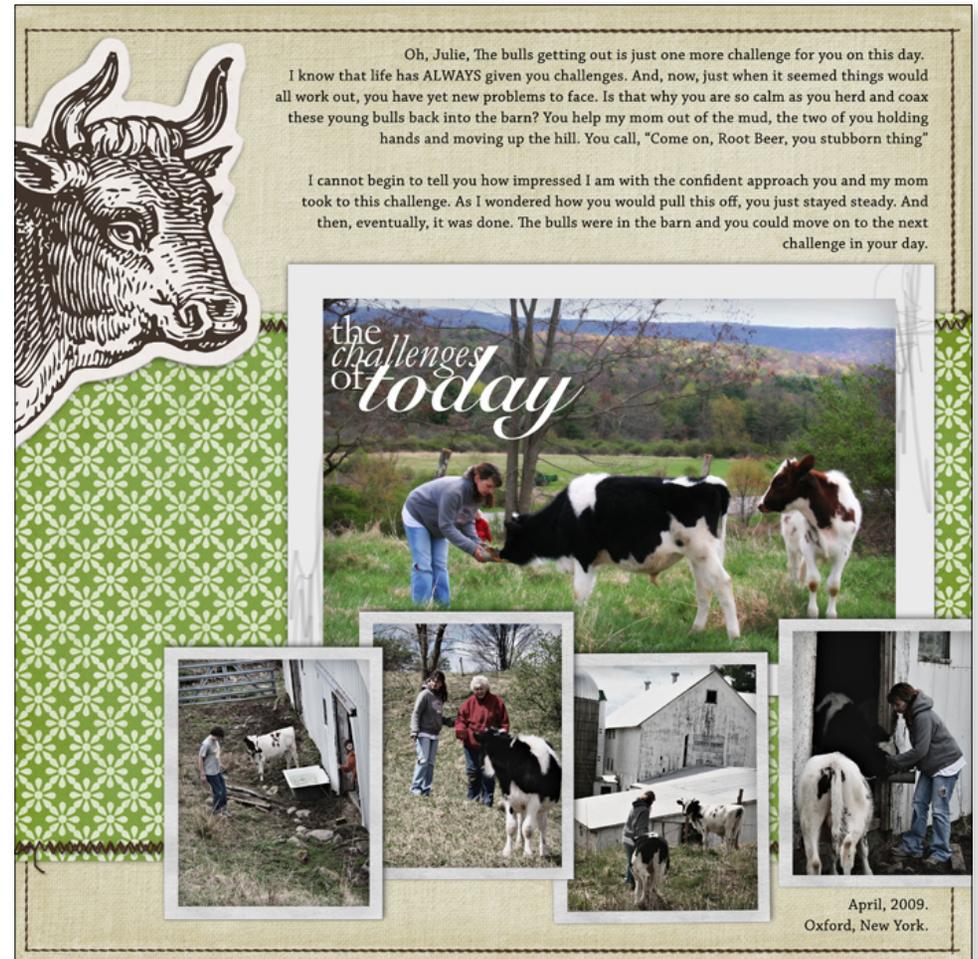
{LESSON THREE} Design Principle of Repetition

Unity refers to how the parts of a design come together as a whole. If the elements on a scrapbook page look like they belong together (as opposed to having been collected and placed randomly) you have unity. In the quest for a design with unity, the WHOLE design is more important than any element or grouping in it.

Including repetitions is a good way to work toward achieving unity on a page.

Repetition is an awesome tool for creating unity on a page–or in any work of art. Think about the recurrences of stormy weather in Wuthering Heights, of debt in the novels of Charles Dickens, and of smoke (from pipes, cigars, gas lamps, and, finally, of the fire) in Citizen Kane.

Think about that thrill you get when watching a movie or reading a book - and some image or key behavior reappears - and you say: "Oh, yes! I knew that was going to happen-"? BUT you didn't totally know, you just knew when you saw it that it was right. It was surprising but not unexpected.
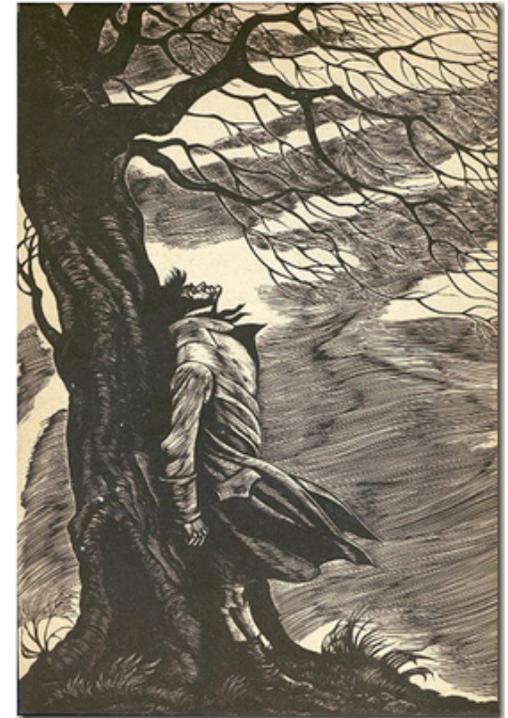
Cover Illustration by Fritz Eichenberg for 1943 edition of Wuthering Heights shows Heathcliff with his stormy soul out in the stormyweather. (Source: Flickr / Joules-Vintage)

Repetitions with Variety are the Key

Repetition without some variety can (and probably will) be dull. The design challenge, then, is to think about how to change something while keeping it the same. For example, Charlotte Bronte put that storm in both the weather and in Heathcliff's soul. Ways to get repetition with variety on the scrapbook page include:

- repeating an image or shape in different colors.

- repeating an image or shape in different sizes.

- repeating a color in different elements (i.e., alphas, ribbon, mats).

- using a variety of tones of the same color

- repeating a motif in different styles

The color red is just one of the repetitions in "Amblerville." It's repeated in the text, the flowers, and the photo. Other repetitions are of curved lines, horizontal lines, flowers, and text.

Creating Repetitions With Variety | color repetitions

Color is the primary repetition on "Jolly Hike," with lots of green showing up in several different kinds of elements - beginning with the grass in the photos. I created a visual triangle of 3 very strong spots of green in:

1) the title,

2) the leaves bleeding off the right side of the page, and

3) the chicken down at bottom left.

There are also minor repetitions of pinks and yellows, but I made sure the points of green were bigger and more interesting than those bits of pink and yellow so that the viewer's eye wasn't confused and led through the page by them instead.

We have never come to Oxford in the spring--we make the trip in Nov or Dec and then in Feb and then the summer. So it's winter and bare or summer and full-out green. It was really neat to be here in a new season. The weather was awesome & the girls had this same week off. On our 2nd afternoon we went on a "jolly hike" to what was always called "over back" when I lived here. We call the hike "jolly" because you all moan that you don't want to go, and then I tell you it'll be fun. And it was fun, and you can't convince me that you didn't   all actually want to take this hike.   April, 2010.

Emma, Isaac, Hannah, Joshua, Sara

On **"A Boy and a Kite,"** I've repeated paint strokes in a variety of colors and in variety of forms.

- There are blue blocks backing up the photos and acting as a foundation layer.

- There are pink strokes edging the white mat, especially at the corners.

- There are multi-colored flower-shaped strokes moving diagonally through the page from top left to top right.

- While the distressed edges on the blue canvas are not **"strokes,"** their line and feel is yet another repetition of the textures here.

creating repetitions with variety | shape repetitions (in embellishments)

On "Rabbit Rabbit Hare Hare," I've included rings and circles :

- chipboard rings (painted brown) and circling: 1) my son's initial; and 2) the "1" that represents the first day of the month

- a punched tag that says "Good Memories" (notice how this is backed up with a slightly larger brown circle which ends up looking like a ring and creating the third point in a visual triangle of brown rings)

- on three different strips of patterned paper which border the page at top and bottom (and even the circles in these patterned papers are surrounded by or include dots)

- the brad alphas spelling "July"

Notice the repetitions of "scallops" on "Change of Plans."

- there is scalloped-edged paper backing up the block of green paper

- the pompom ribbon has a scalloped shape at the bottom

- the pieces of lace are scalloped along the bottom

- the postage-stamp frame includes a reverse scallop edging

On "Fortunate," the page layout is based upon a grid design with repetitions:

- There are narrow strips of patterned paper at top and bottom.

- There are three equally-sized columns for organizing photos and journaling.

- Within each column there are three rectangles containing journaling and photos.

Sometimes your repetitions will be around a concept–for example when you're making a themed page, you might find yourself collecting different images that are related by subject.

On "Happy Halloween," I included words, images, and colors that all connote Halloween: the bat, the monster, the word "boo," and the blacks, golds, and purples.

Isaac, The trick-or-treating started off a little differently this year — with Josh planning to do a quick run-thru of our neighborhood with his friends and you and I thinking we'd follow them after Cold Spring. They gathered at our house & then started for the Hackenburg's encouraging you to come along—you looked at me & I think that's when you realized you wanted to be right here. We had a great time with the Wilsons, Kings, Hackenburgs, Montgomerys & even the Luchsingers! You really enjoyed the company of Hannah & Brian. We covered more ground around here than ever before — and while you didn't get as much candy as Josh, you had a great time (& were exhausted at the end). Halloween 2009. (Oh, and you're dressed as a "Triceratops-Griffin Dude."

BOO

happy halloween

Combining images of the same thing but in different styles and formats is a great idea for getting repetitions with variety onto your scrapbook pages–and creating unity along the way.

"Awesome Sight" is a page about my Dad, who loves the outdoors but who can no longer move freely to enjoy it. He does, though, love his birdfeeders and looking at his birds! There's a little sticker bird, a larger die-cut bird, and a collaged bird.

{LESSON FOUR} # Design Principle of Alignment

The principle of alignment tells us to consciously place each element on the page–and, what's more, to place each element in relation to some other element on the page. In this way you create visual connections between the elements - even if they are not next to one another.

While the landscape photo at the top of "Carry a Big Stick" is separated from the block of four photos below by a wide gutter, alignments connect it to them nonetheless. The left edge of the photo lines up with the left edges of the two photos below on the left–and the same is true for the right side. To use alignments well, look for a strong line and make it stronger with clear alignments.

The title block and the journaling block also share side edge alignments. By right justifying the journaling, the gutter between journaling and photos is made clear–adding to the strength of this vertical line.

Alignment and Unity

In Lesson #3, I talked about unity - about the idea that the whole design is more important than any individual element or grouping. Alignments are a great tool for unifying and organizing the material on your page so that the viewer can take it in and understand and enjoy it.

The elements on "After Our Seder" are organized into two columns. The column to the left is created with edge alignments - alignments of the left and right edges of each paper strip, photo, and piece of ric rac.

There are also center alignments in this piece. The brad and the center of the bracketed paper above the series of photos are centered. Additionally, the journaling and smaller photo to the right are all "center" aligned.
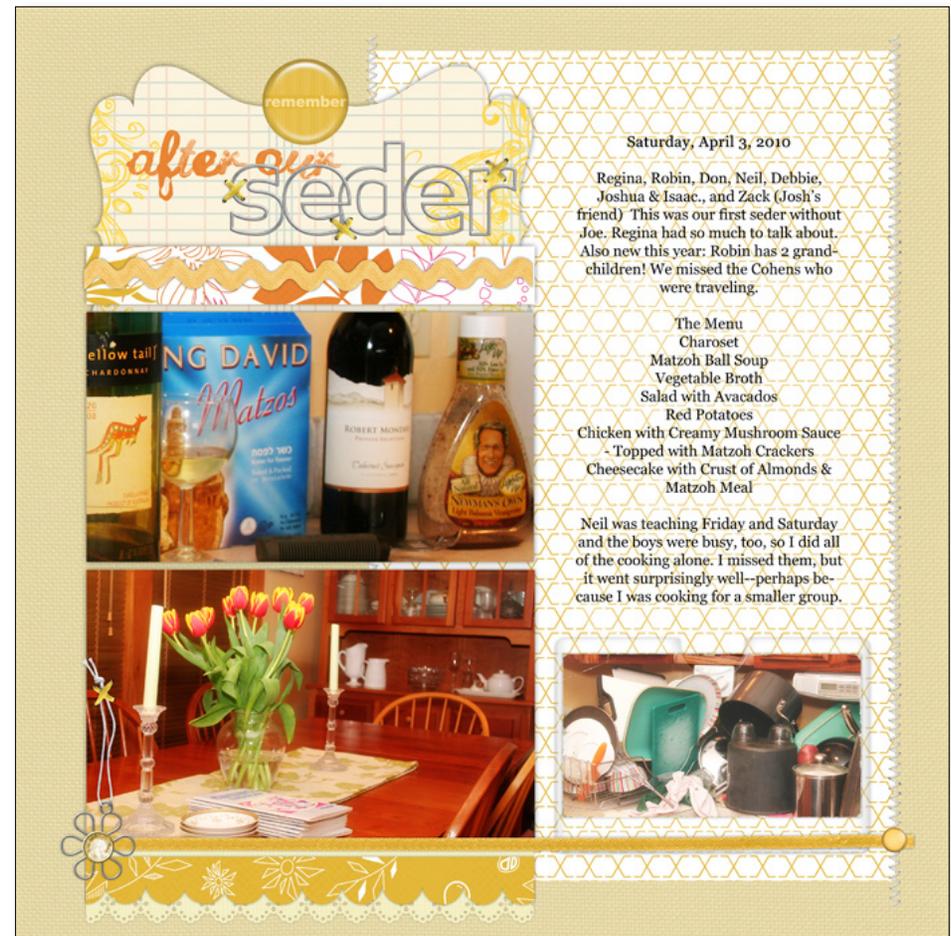
Alignment and White Space

White space refers to the areas of your page that are not filled with elements. White space not only gives the eye a resting point, it provides contrast and helps elements stand out. It's a great tool for grouping elements– and it helps you establish a hierarchy. (Think back to Lesson #2 on Emphasis to remember why this is important).

Now here's the important part about white space and alignments: alignments can define the white space on your page.

"Joshua is Twelve" is a controlled and linear layout with

all photo and journaling block edges aligned. Even the left and right edges of the title and decorative bars align with the photo edges. The effect of these alignments is to create page margins and gutters- which are the white space on this page. See how powerful alignments are?
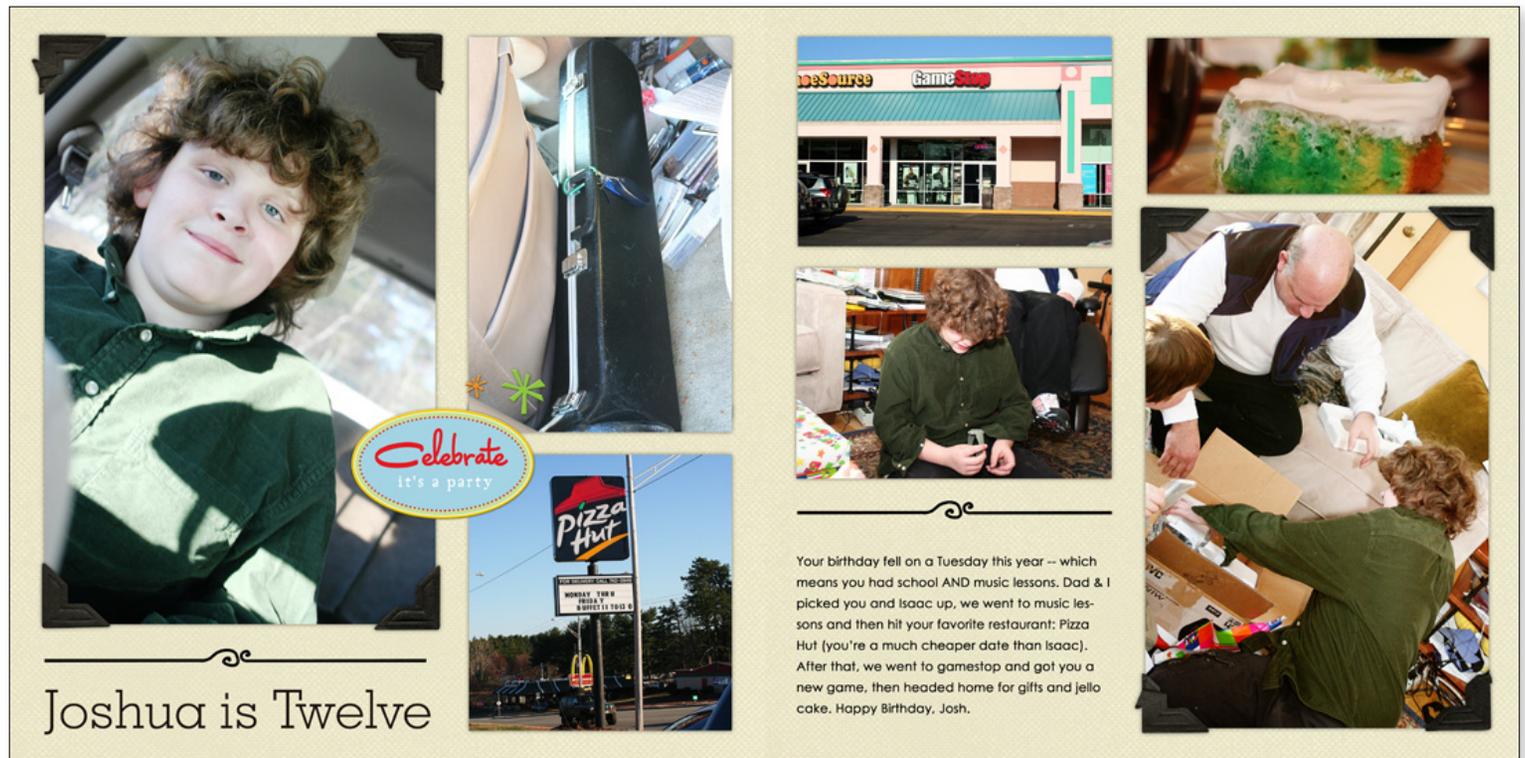
Creating Alignments

To create alignments, find a strong line and use it - emphasize it - make it stronger. Place each element in relation to another element. And then . . . once you have a strong line, break out purposefully to keep things interesting.

creating alignments | centered alignment

Aligning elements upon their center points (either vertically or horizontally) is often discouraged in design because it can be dull. The reasons for this have to do with asymmetry being more interesting than symmetry and you can read more about that in Scrapbook Page Design: Asymmetrical Balance. Symmetrical or center-aligned designs are often used for formal design pieces like wedding invitations. Setting yourself the task to make a center-aligned design that has pizzazz is a great way to push yourself to designing in a new way.

"Stuffteds" is a page in which the elements are center aligned - except for the embellishments at top right and bottom left of the photo. While this is a center-aligned design, I really like it. Perhaps it's the curves and whimsical elements that save it from feeling overly formal and give it a bit of energy.
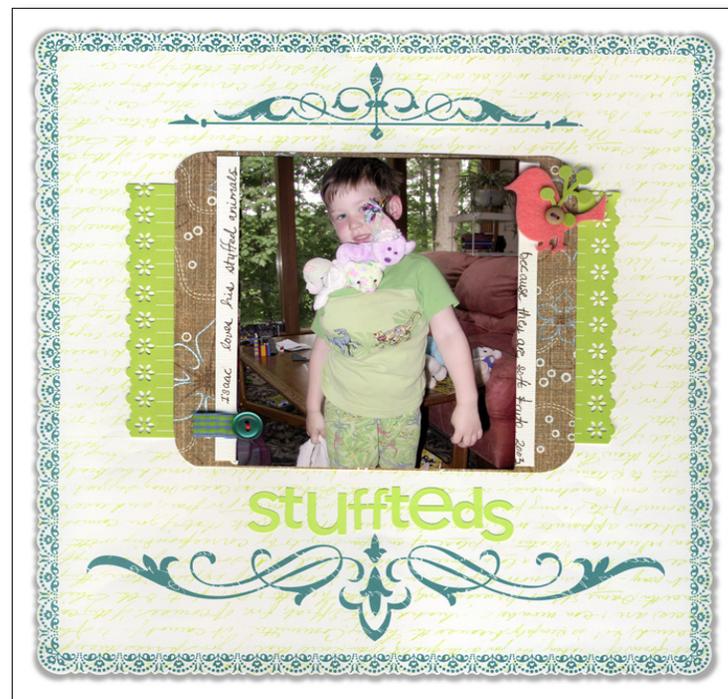
Photos, blocks of journaling, and mats (all typically rectangular shapes) lend themselves to edge alignment. It is these kinds of alignments that create the organizing white space of margins and gutters.

Note: once you've purposefully incorporated alignments (and, thus, defined white space), it's ok to purposefully break those alignments for design interest.

On "My Inheritance" the edges of each title line, each photo, each strip of paper, and the journaling block all align with other elements to organize the elements. The embellishment cluster at right then breaks out of those lines to add interest and break into the white space and keep it from being totally symmetrical (and, perhaps, uninteresting).

"Mast Way Goodbye" uses edge alignments to organize 10 busy photos onto one 2-page spread. The block of photos to the left is from the "graduation" ceremony. The strip through the middle is from the party afterward. The two remaining photos (which are not aligned) are details of my son and the decorations.

Notice how the right and left title edges are aligned with the photo block. It's attention to these kinds of details that will give you a strong page design.

You may align your elements along an axis. "Fast Forward" aligns the page elements along a vertical axis that runs between the two photos and the journaling. It's emphasized with strips of ribbon and stitching. Notice how the journaling on the right is left justified and the journaling on the left is right justified (remember: find a line and make it stronger).

Alignments Overview

Arrange your elements to create lines that make sense, that organize your page, and that just LOOK GOOD! Look for opportunities to create lines. And if you're going to make a line – make it a strong one. Don't go half-way with it.

See how photos, paper strips, brushwork, journaling blocks and title work all align on "Pool Days."

There are many big and small ways to incorporate alignments. If you'd like to think some more on this, take a look at these two articles to get you thinking about more approaches.

- [Strengthen your scrapbook page design with alignments](#)

- [Justification that strengthens scrapbook page design](#)

{LESSON FIVE} Design Principle of Contrast

When one element is different from another, there is contrast. The bigger the differences, the greater the contrast. Greater (i.e., obvious) contrast is what you're after to make better page designs.

We all routinely scan our surroundings - even when we focus on a spot, we eventually change our field of vision. As we make this change, we do a quick scan of the environment, unconsciously looking for elements that stand out–elements that contrast. Think of the hunting lion looking for that movement or bit color that identifies prey.

On "It's a Train" the word "train" is the most dominant image. Its large size, dark value, and bold color all contribute to its ability to catch the eye. Two more spots of this same color and value (though of smaller size) also stand out. Combined, those three points draw the eye around the page. This is a "visual triangle." We'll talk more about "flow" in a future lesson.

Contrast

A good way to see what stands out on a page is to look at a small version of it, and squint your eyes. If you're working with a paper page, put it on the floor and stand on a chair above it. If you're working with a digital page, zoom out so that you've got a small version on screen. What stands out? What catches your eye?

The first contrast I establish on all of my scrapbook pages is one that makes the photos "pop." On "Airborne" the white of the snow contrasts strongly with the dark blue page canvas. The canvas recedes while the photos come forward, and are, thus, emphasized.
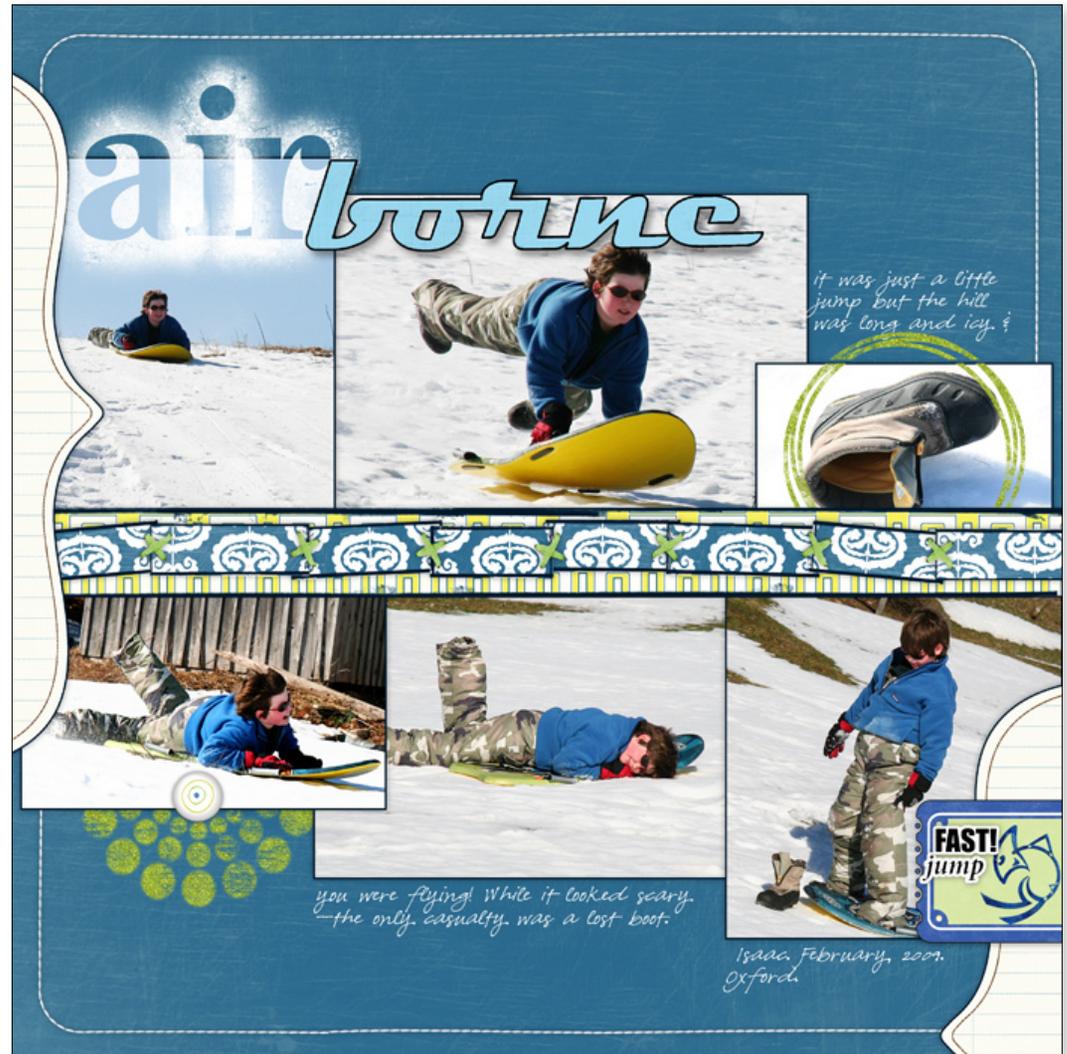
Contrast Strengthens Page Design

Incorporating contrast strengthens your page design

- It adds visual interest (especially if you use big, eye-catching contrasts).

- It's how you get variety (think back to Lesson #3: Repetitions (with variety)). Be careful, though, not to add so much contrast that the page becomes confusing.

- It gives the eye a starting point by providing emphasis (think back to Lesson #2: Emphasis).

- It lets you establish relative importance between elements. Use it to make smaller or lighter elements recede while helping other elements take center stage.

- It gives you a way to guide the viewer's eye through the page (from one eye-catching point to the next). Be sure that all of the contrasts you include are in support of one another and exist in a hierarchy, themselves.

The red trim and titlework on "Friends" pops and guides the eye across the page.

Creating Contrast

When you begin laying out a scrapbook page, the following are the easiest contrasts to think about incorporating.

creating contrast | size

When one element is an OBVIOUSLY different size from the others, it stands one. Two things two note:

1. It's not always about being BIGGER . . . it's about being DIFFERENT. Thus, an element smaller than the rest can stand out as much as an element that's bigger.

2. Make the difference OBVIOUS. Don't go just part way.

The photo on "Roots" is small relative to the 12"x12" canvas upon which it sits - especially given the generous white space surrounding it. It, thus, becomes a strong focal point.

The image of the bull coming into the top left corner or "The Challenges of Today" is eye-catching for several reasons. The top left corner of any page is a key location for any of us who read books starting in that spot and moving left to right and down the page. The bull is a compelling image, and it is sized large. Other contrasts include: the variety of fonts and sizes in the title; the juxtaposition of patterned paper next to solids; the landscape orientation of the focal point photo next to several portrait-oriented supporting photos; the larger size of the focal point photo as well as its rendering in color while the supporting photos have very little color.

Differences in in lightness and darkness will draw the eye. Take a look at "It's a Train," above. The papers and photo frame are light blues, while all of the gold elements are very dark. Color and value combine to make the contrast.
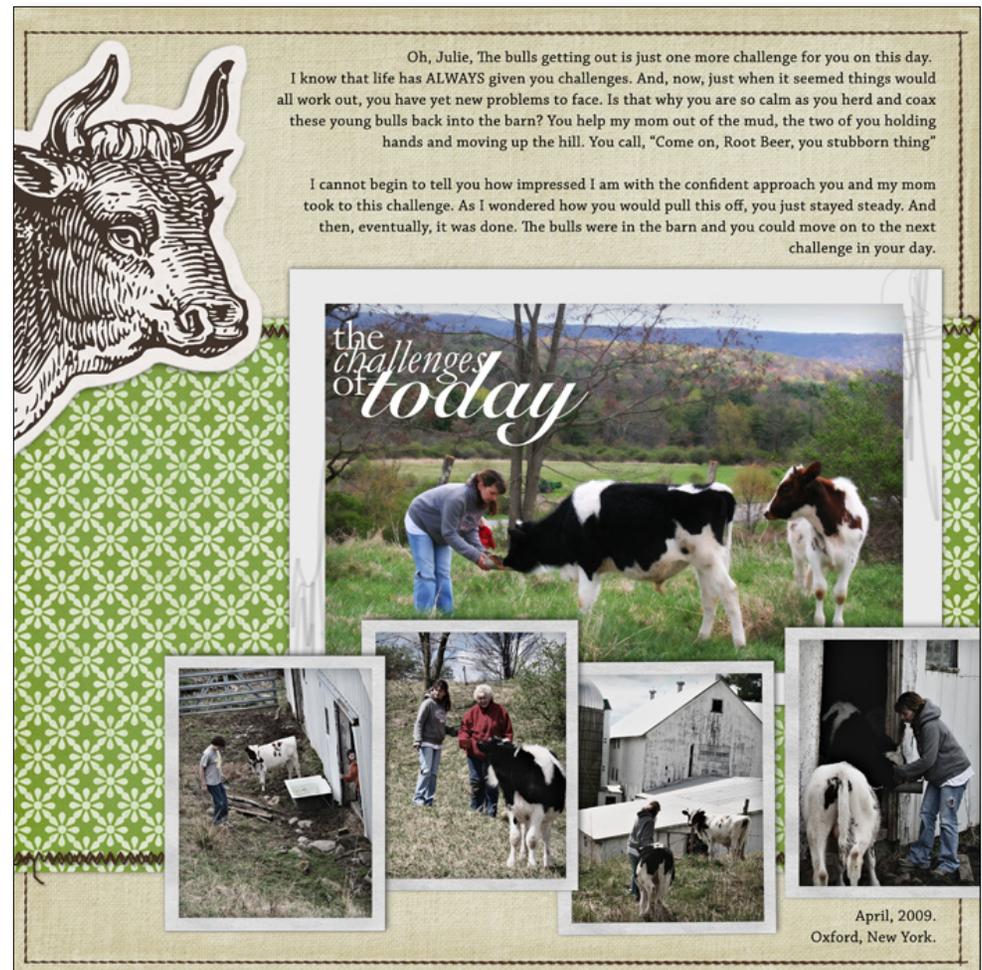
There are a variety of peach-colors on "You Use Too Many Dishes" and their value differences create the contrast that gives the page pizzazz. The dark title stands out agains the pale canvas and grey patterned papers. The dishes in the photo stand out, as do the very dark-almost red-embellishments of a crocheted flower and tag at top left.

Some color schemes have more inherent contrast than others. Complementary colors (those that sit directly across from one another on the color wheel) will contrast more strongly than "analogous" colors (those that sit next to one another on the color wheel). Again, take a look at "It's a Train!" above - blue and gold are complementary, and, thus, contrast strongly. Note, though, that you can take advantage of "value" differences to make shades of the same color contrast (take a look at "Airborne" above and how the light blue sky in the top right photo contrasts with the dark blue canvas).

In a triadic color scheme, three colors sit equidistant from one another on a color wheel– like the orange, green, and blue in "Fiords"–and there is contrast between them. The value differences will affect the amount of contrast. Here I used primarily pale values that keep the paper contrasts from overwhelming the photos – which really have the darkest values, and, thus, pop.
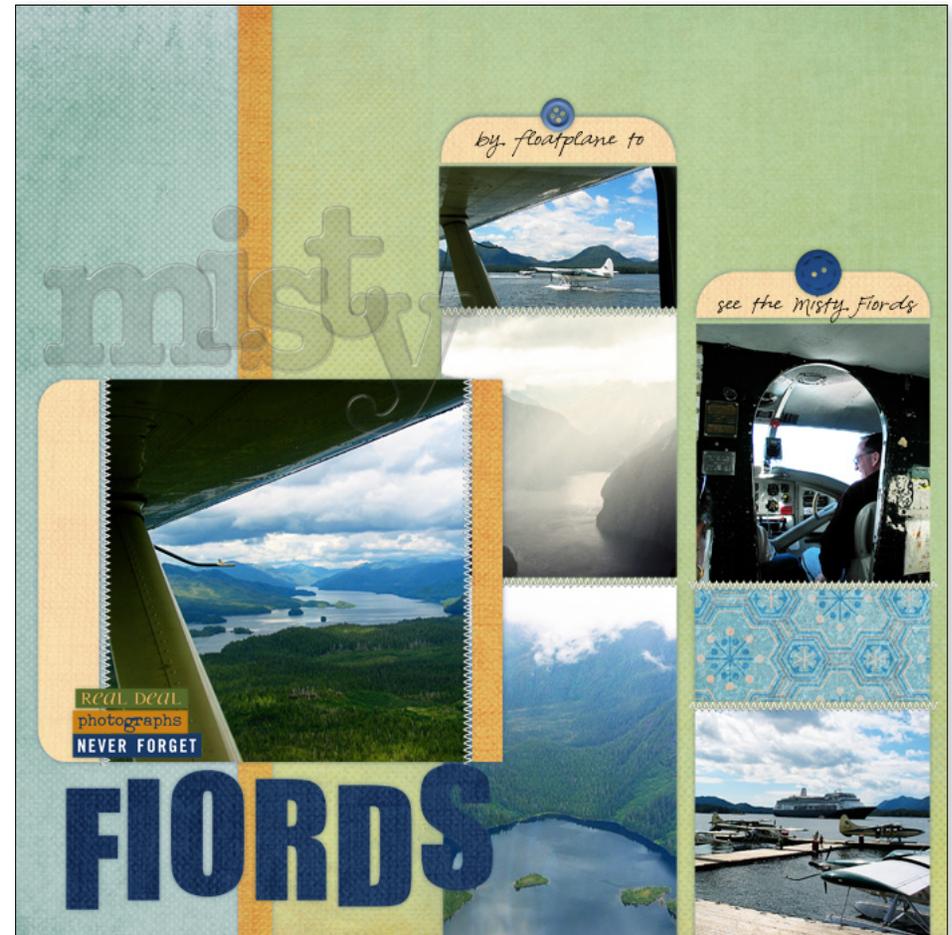
Incorporating differences in type is an easy way to get contrast onto the page–especially when you combine differences in type with differences in color, value, and size.

The titlework on "Whimsical Procrastinator" combines large script with a sketched and outlined typeface, and it is the focal point of the page.

Contrasts are at the heart of what makes a page "pop" and draw the eye. Take a look at your pages - surely you've been incorporating contrasts. What are you go-to techniques?

{LESSON SIX} **Design Principle of Balance**

What are the balancing acts in your life right now?

Are you trying to get enough exercise to feel good about that big ice cream cone you had last night? Maybe you're balancing saving and spending money. Perhaps you're getting up a little earlier so that you'll be done with work in time to spend time with family or friends.

Balance is about mixing and matching, giving and taking. It's about placing two small stones on one side of the scale to balance the single large stone.

When the different parts of your life are in balance with one another, your days are easier to navigate. When the parts of a scrapbook page are in balance with one another, you've got a page that's pleasing to look at and that tells your story well.
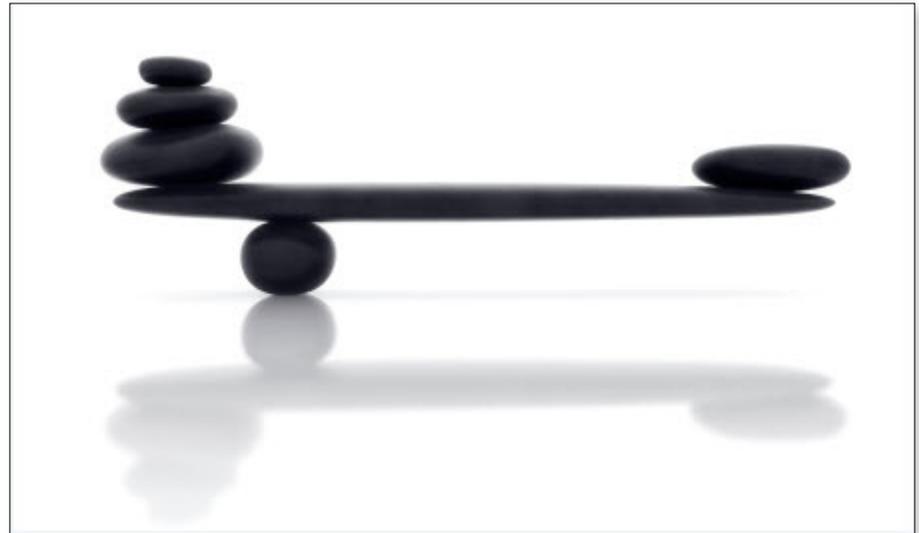
Balance on Scrapbook Pages

Physical balance in our surroundings is something we're used to. We understand that if all the kids sit at one end of a narrow bench, it's going to tip, whereas distributing the weight means everything will be stable. Achieving balance on a scrapbook page isn't quite as clear cut: there isn't any actual physical weight to work with.

Successfully incorporating balance into a scrapbook page design is actually creating an illusion of balance. While you might not always be sure that you've been successful, what you can be sure about is when you have NOT been successful. You'll sense it.

Refining your ability to "see" visual weights and how they play off one another will help you design well-balanced pages.

Read on to understand how it is that the small butterfly and fleur de lis in the bottom left corner of "Guy Lessons" balance the large grouping of photos mats, title, and journaling.

Simple Machines and Balance

There's a formula you might have learned about in science class that uses weights and distances from a fulcrum for figuring out how to get balance. I'm going to simplify it with a couple of cats and a dog.

If two cats of the same weight were sitting on a board with a fulcrum smack dab in the middle, the board would balance.

However . . . if there were a dog a lot bigger than the cat on one side of the board, we'd need to move the dog closer to the fulcrum in order to get that board to balance. The point you should take from this is that balance takes into account a fulcrum (or in page design this could be thought of as an axis) and weights. We'll take a look at three fulcrum possibilities for scrapbook page design and then several ways that an element gains or loses weight.
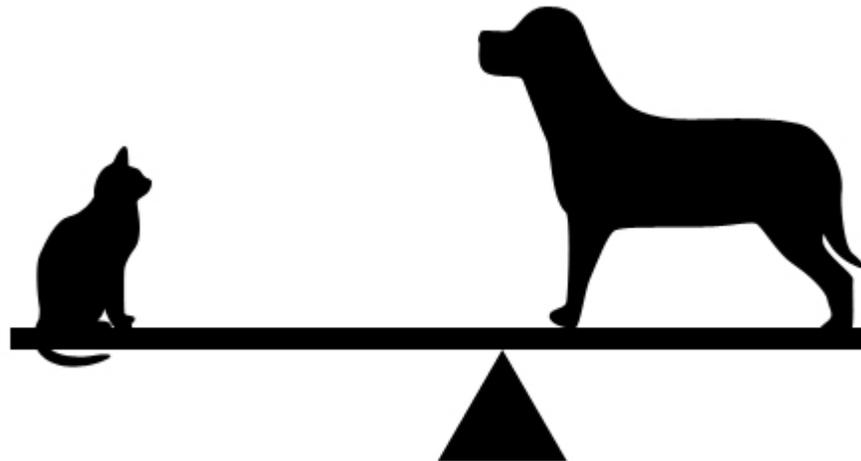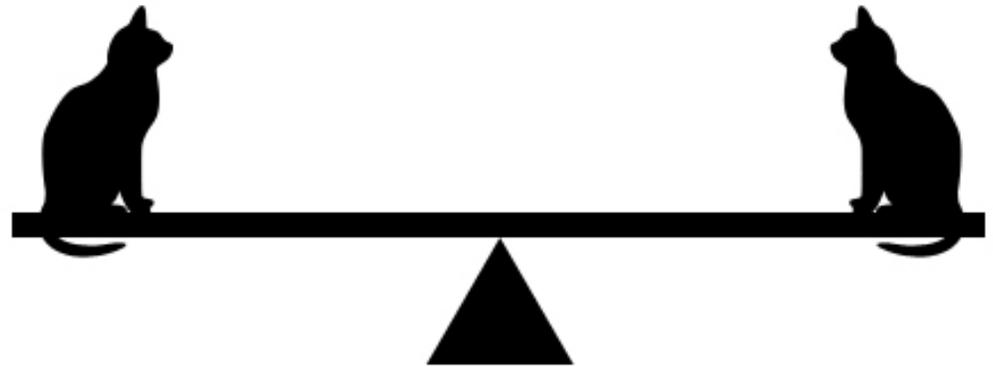
# The Fulcrum (or Axis)

When you're designing your scrapbook pages and thinking about balance there are three possible ways to incorporate a fulcrum--or "axis."

horizontal balance

On **"Semester End"** the elements on my page are balanced to the right and left of an axis that sits at horizontal center. The elements on each side aren't exactly mirrored but they have similar visual weights.
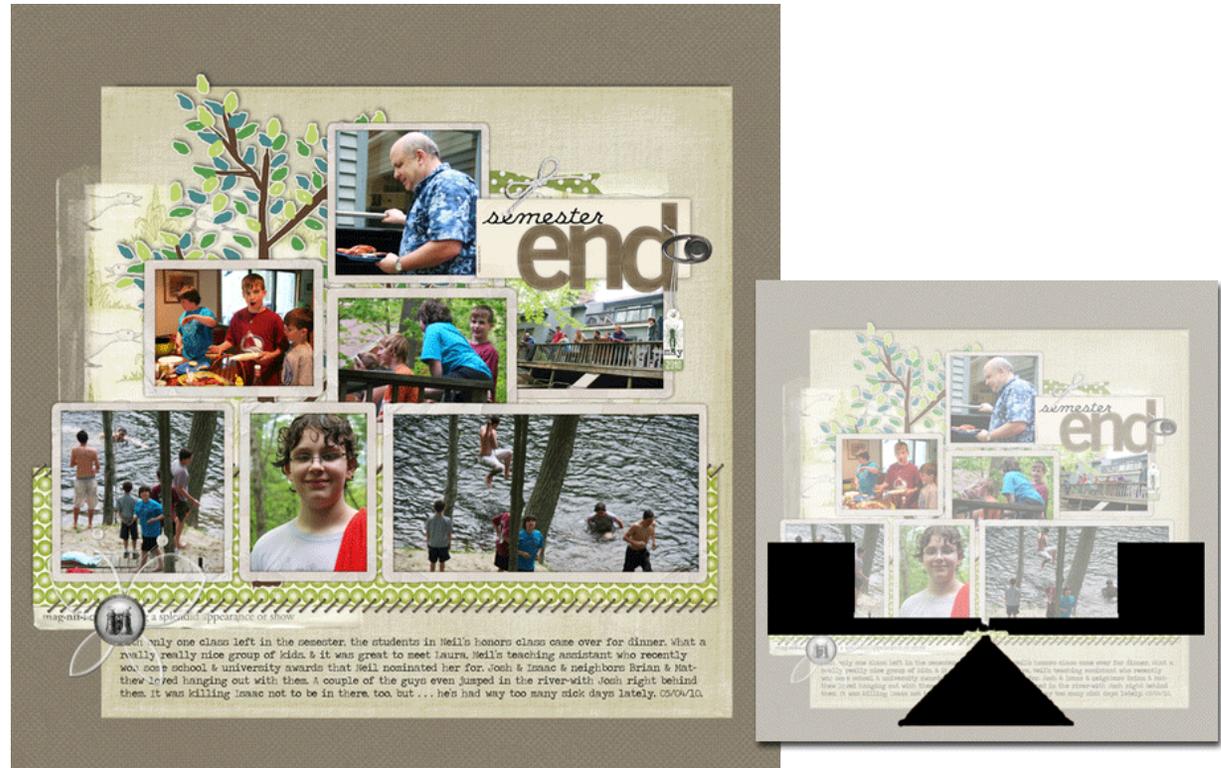
The elements on "Cattle Crossing" are arranged around a vertical axis. Take a look at the inset diagram to get a sense of how weight from top to bottom is arranged so that the piece looks "right"–i.e., it doesn't look like it's going to topple over from any imbalanced weight.

You can balance around a center point by having your elements all radiate out from the center. When you implement this kind of balance, the viewer's eye should always be coming back into the center - as it does on this page.

Visual Weight

Achieving visual balance is the act of equalizing visual weights around a fulcrum or axis. This isn't something you can calculate precisely–but, rather, something that you'll "feel." Think about the following when you're balancing dissimilar elements.

Dark colors have more weight than lighter colors.

Bright colors have more weight than neutrals–in fact some colors just are weightier than others. Red tends to be heavy, and yellow tends to be light.

Warm colors tend to expand (and, thus, thus, have more weight) than cooler colors.

Regular (and known) shapes (rectangles, circles, triangles) are weightier than irregular shapes.

Larger elements are heavier than smaller ones.

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.

Large flat areas without much detail can be balanced by smaller irregularly shaped objects since the eye is led towards the more intricate shape.

Filled space has more weight than empty (or white) space.

Elements on the right side of the layout have more weight than the very same elements on the left side.

Elements at the top of your layout have more weight than the very same elements on the bottom.

Elements surrounded (or isolated) by white space take on weight.

Interesting elements (this could be due to many things including interesting texture, image, dimension, color, or shape) have more weight than less interesting elements.

Symmetry | symmetrical balance

When you have elements mirrored horizontally or vertically (or both) they are in symmetry. Symmetrical designs are familiar and good for evoking a formal, elegant, or tranquil tone. This kind of design is like putting the fulcrum right in the middle of your board and setting two equally-weighted cats on either side. Though, you really don't have to have "perfect" symmetry. You could have a dog that's about the same weight as the cat on one of the sides.

Without the embellishments, "First Solo" would be a symmetrical page. The photos, title, and journaling all create a rectangle that is centered horizontally and contains same-sized blocks on each side. It's the embellishments that keep it from complete symmetry. They are placed at three spots creating an asymmetrical visual triangle.

symmetry | asymmetrical balance

Asymmetry in scrapbook page design means that none of your page elements are mirrored on the opposite side. There is no symmetry. That does not, however, mean there is no balance. Making a page with asymmetrical balance is more difficult than making a page with symmetrical balance. Why do it then? These pages often have more energy and are a delight to the viewer's eye

Take a look at a couple of asymmetrical pages and notice the fulcrum/axis as well as the elements and their respective weights to see why these pages work.

Snow Sculpture balances three smaller, square, framed photos on the left side with two landscape-oriented photos, title, and journaling on the right side.

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, and 2) placement on the right side.

The strips get weight from: 1) greater overall combined size, and 2) unexpected narrow shapes bleeding off page edge.

testing 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)?

More Reading

Scrapbook Page Design: Aymmetrical Balance - article at Get It Scrapped.

{LESSON SEVEN} Design Principle of Flow

visual flow

When you can incorporate visual flow into your scrapbook page design, you'll guide the viewer's eye through it, revealing what's important along the tour.

take a step back

In order to talk about the sixth design principle in this class–flow–we need to step back.

Let's go back to contrast - to that idea that we all routinely scan our surroundings looking for things to put together, for patterns that help us make sense of what we're seeing. Our eyes are drawn to the things that stand out.

Source: stock.xchng / chingtc

Combine Design Principles to Make Flow

Let's go back to <u>repetitions</u> - to how repeating things like colors, images, and materials connects the elements of the page to one another and contributes to design unity.

Let's go back to <u>emphasis</u> - to how you cue the viewer to what's important depending upon what you emphasize. Remember that when one item is emphasized above all others, the viewer knows where to start taking in the story of your page.

Let's go back to <u>alignments</u> - to the idea that when two elements are aligned they are connected - even if they're not next to one another.

It's all intertwined. Using these design principles as you put together a scrapbook page will enable you to create a flow. By that I mean it will enable you to guide the viewer's eye on a path around your page.

Why do this? So you can show the viewer what's important.

When visitors come to my home, I really don't want them seeing into the bathroom that's next to my front door. I want them to look straight in to my home–to the big windows overlooking the river. So . . . I keep the bathroom door shut (or at least I try to) and I have spots of color leading the eye right over to those window. Right now it's a series of yellows–a large planter, a yellow vase, and a wide bowl.

Tools for Creating Flow | natural tendencies

The human eye (and mind) will follow the natural order of things. The eye will follow:

- a sequential pattern
- the eyes of the people in your photos
- a line of perspective
- implied motion in your photo

A downward diagonal line of flow is present in both of the pages here: "Holiday Shopping" and "For Love."

On "Holiday Shopping," that flow is started with the direction in which the girl holding the shirt looks.

On "For Love," that line is created by the tilted horizon in the larger focal point photo.

while that's unclear, we do know it's wetter.

You can set up a sequence as simply as by arranging similar shapes in a pattern. On "Is the Shortcut Shorter?" six identically-sized photos are lined up across the page and draw the eye through their story. This horizontal flow is amplified by the title placement. The beginning is at top left and the end is at bottom right. To read it, the eye will move across the page. One more thing to think about (in the natural

tendency category) is that those who read left-to-write and top-to-bottom are prepared to move their eye in this pattern.

On "Cause and Effect" there are several ways in which a sequence is set up:

- a series of aligned photos moving horizontally across the page
- a sequence of numbers
- arrows pointing the way

Combine an understanding of these natural tendencies with good use of design principles and you'll be offering guided tours of your pages with no problem.

Repetitions and contrasts are the design tools most frequently used to create eye-catching spots that move the eye around the page.

Whatever stands out will draw the eye. When multiple spots draw the eye, you create implied lines

Three big and colorful cluster complement the photos on "Fun AND Crafty," catching the eye and guiding it around the page.

Visual Triangle

When you have three spots on your page that stand out, you create a visual triangle that catches the eye and takes it on a tour around the page. In design, odd numbers of objects are more interesting to the eye than even numbers of objects. An odd number of objects can be arranged both symmetrically and asymmetrically. Three is the odd number that is most frequently used in all kinds of design. Just for a start, look for it in architecture, home decor, and floral design.
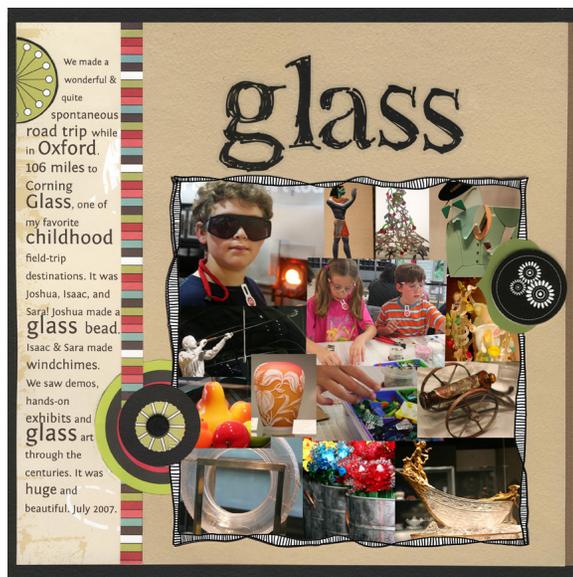
Repetitions of green (which contrast with the background) create a visual triangle on "Tender Boy" that moves from title to bottom right to low on the left edge of the page.

On "Glass," three repetitions of circles (and the color green) create a visual triangle that moves from top left to side right to side left.

Diagonal Draw

Composing a photograph so that your subject is at a diagonal almost always makes a more compelling shot. The same principle can be applied to page design. Note: the diagonal line does not need to be literal. Rather, you just need to set up at least two points along your diagonal that stand out.

A diagonal moving from top left to bottom right is created on "Connected" by the diagonal brush strokes backing up the photos. Additionally the bold graphics on the photo create diagonal flow across the photo.

Z-Flow

If you read a language that's written left-to-right, your eye is used to moving in a z-pattern: it begins at the left, proceeds to the right, and then comes back again to the left. Since the brain already looks for patterns that flow this way, you can place items on your scrapbook page on a z-path to successfully guide the viewer's eye through it.

In "1st Fine Day," the "1" in the title is emphasized by its bold red color and its size and by the fact that it contains the page journaling. The eye moves across the three photos at page top and then comes back over to the beginning of the bottom strip of photos - and then across (left-to-right) again.

Circular Flow

When you arrange your page elements (and the points that stand out and draw the eye) in a circular flow, you keep the viewer cycling through the page. On "We Love the Sunny Days," the photos are the dominant elements on the page. Their arrangement along with a triangel of white spots draws the eye clockwise around the page–and around again, and again.

We've now made it through six principles of design you can use for making great looking scrapbook pages! And we wrapped up with a great principle– flow–because it calls upon you to put everything you've learned so far to work. In the next lesson we'll begin focusing on the key parts of a scrapbook page.

{LESSON EIGHT} Page Parts

Fresh ideas for scrapbook page design come easily when you've got: 1) a facility with the basics of page design, and 2) an understanding of what role the essential parts of a scrapbook page can play.

design principles

We've spent the last 6 lessons looking at the design principles of:

- emphasis
- repetition
- alignment
- contrast
- balance
- flow

These are the roots for making scrapbook pages. When you've got this "root" knowledge in your mind (or ready to reference), you'll be able to combine all the page parts that go into a scrapbook page efficiently and beautifully.

page parts

The key parts of a scrapbook page are: photos, journaling, title, embellishments, canvas.

Not every page has every part–but most pages have most parts.

Approach each new scrapbook page by
1. taking inventory of how these parts will need to be incorporated, and
2. considering how best to combine them given the six basic design principles we've covered.

Take a look at the layout here and the labeled page parts. Can you now go through and find the design principles at work. As you find them, note which page parts are involved. For example: emphasis is incorporated with a focal point photo; alignments exist across multiple page parts with the left edge of the title block, journaling, and supporting photo all lined up. What else do you see? Can you find repetitions and contrasts?

Read on for an approach to making scrapbook pages that begins with thinking about page parts and how to include them using design principles. NOTE: In the next four lessons this process will be expanded, and you'll get lots more information about all of the page parts.
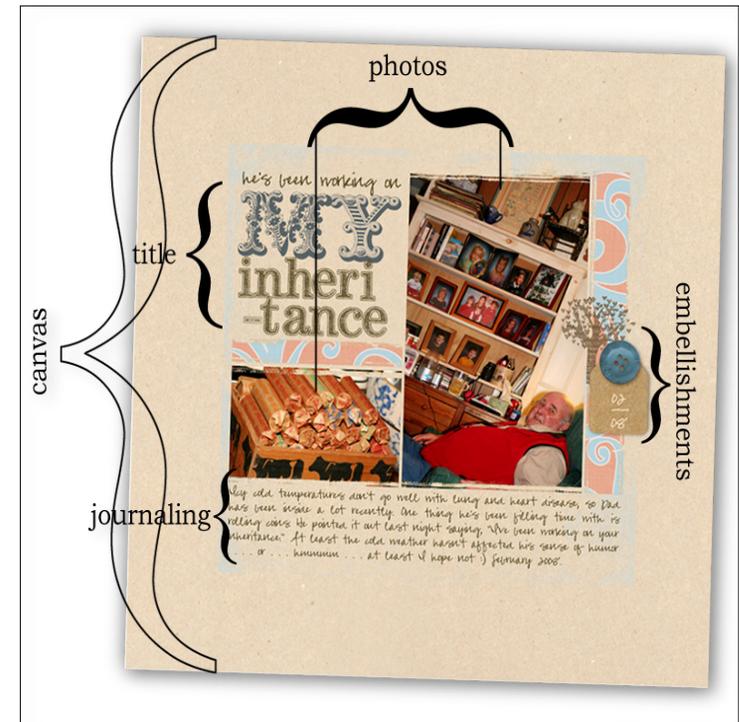
# Q1: What's the point of the page? What is its purpose?

Knowing the answer to this will drive your page-parts choices.

There's a good chance your purpose in creating any page will be one of the following:

- for your creative expression
- to provide an opportunity to experiment and/or play with product and/or design
- to explore a topic and better understand it
- to create a record of a something that happened (anything from a brief moment to a big event)
- to express how you feel about a specific subject and/or person
- to convey a message to whoever you plan to share this page with
- . . . or it may be something else . . . just figure that out and hold it in your mind as you move forward

My purpose with "New Spot" was to play with the design principle of balance and to make something really pretty to present this moment that I was primarily recording for myself.
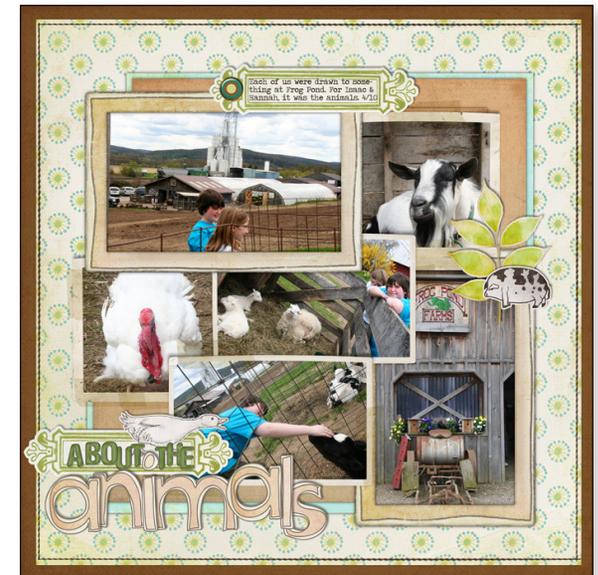
"About the Animals" needed to hold LOTS of photos and record an outing we made with extended family to a farm. It's part of an album from a week-long visit and I wanted to get a sense of the place and the animals onto a one-page layout.

Q2: Based upon the answer to Q1, consider the role of photos and journaling.

Begin your consideration of photos and journaling by asking questions that give you an idea of how much space photos and journaling will require.

ask yourself about photos

* what photo do you have?
* which do you want to include?
* which do you need to include to achieve the purpose of your page from Q1?

When I got ready to scrapbook the photos on "Sawmill" my purpose was to celebrate my brother and his new piece of equipment and weekend work. I didn't need to include much journaling and from the beginning I knew that the one large photo would be enough. I included more, though because I love the context they add (and because I didn't need much room for journaling). I got a shot of his tractor and of him with my son and dogs -- to remember that we were there with him on this winter afternoon on which it was too windy to actually do any sawing.

These articles cover some of the basics of making photo selections and organizing photos

* How to Select Events Photos for Scrapbooking
* Organizing Events Photos
* Organizing Everyday Life Photos
* Scrapbooking Stories on Two-Page Layouts

ask yourself about journaling

Consider the journaling requirements now?
- how much journaling do you need in order to tell the story of your page require?
- how much space (relative to other parts) will you need for the journaling?

On "Playing Solitaire," two photos would have sufficed, but I loved all of these photos, and I liked how together they conveyed that this play went on for a while. I also loved how they showed the interaction between my son and husband.

I needed space for more than just basic descriptive journaling–but not tons of space. By using a linear/blocked design I was able to get everything on the page.

Everything becomes more intertwined. You'll start to think about these page parts - and how you should choose for good design. You'll circle around, revisiting these pieces in your mind - not for a long time, but as you begin moving things around on the page. It will be a bit of an iterative process.

If you want to see more examples and ideas for scrapbook page journaling check out this article -- it has links to 20 free lessons on scrapbok page journaling: 20 Lessons on Scrapbook Page Journaling

Q3. Based upon the answers to Q1 and Q2, consider the role of title, embellishments, and canvas while keeping design principles in mind.

consider title

- do you need a title?
- would you like to use a clever title or would a simple label work?
- how much space does it seem you have for your title given the photo and journaling requirements?
- would you like your title to be a strong part of the design?
- would you like to use it to create flow?

I like including titles on my pages as much for the cues to subject they provide as for the design roles they play.

The title on "Spring Fever" tells the viewer that this winter biking was in the spring and not in the late fall. further, it has a spot of red that repeats the red in the brad and my husband's coat. It creates a point on the downward diagonal flow that leads the eye through the page.

MARCH 7, 2012. Busy as you are lately, on this first warm day, you got home and pulled out your bike and Isaac's, pumped up the tires, and took a ride. The next day you rode to work, and then two days later we got another 6 inches of snow--but this coming week, you're on break and it supposed to be warm & sunny.
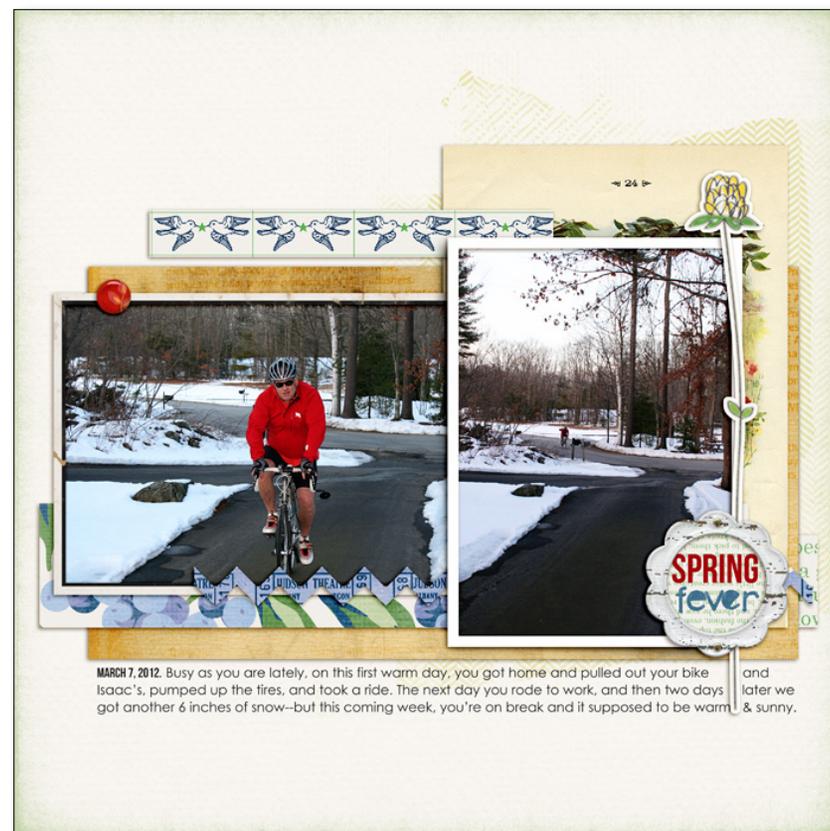
We've got lots of lessons and ideas for scrapbook page titles at Get It Scrapped all linked up here:
- Roundup of Ideas for Scrapbook Page Titles

consider canvas

The last page part to consider is the page canvas: given the amount of space it appears your photos, journaling and title will need, what kind of a design will work well?

For example, will you need to fill the entire page or could you create a design with generous white space.

Given your page purpose what kind of tone do you want to set? A linear or blocked design will evoke different feelings than that of a freestyle design with flourishes and layers and unusually-shaped white space.

On "I Am a Schlepper," the title is probably the most important page part. It sets a fun, confessional tone and, along with the photo, cues the viewer to the topic. One revealing photo is all that's needed and the result is lots of white space and a layered approach to the canvas. A cute bird and a row of aligned (but different) buttons are the embellishments.

Here are articles to get you thinking about the many aspects there are to your canvas:
- Get Started Scrapbooking | 6 Ways to Make the Page Canvas
- Get Started Scrapbooking | Why Canvas Shape and Size Matter

consider embellishments

As you start to understand how things are coming together, think about the tone you want to set, and, thus, the type and number of embellishments to include. Think about meaning and what kinds of motifs support your meaning. Think about all of the design principles and how embellishments can help you achieve strong use of them.

"In Your Room" is embellished with an eclectic mix of pieces that remind me of the treasures on my son's shelves. These pieces not only support page meaning, they also add repetitions of color and texture that move the eye through the page.

Check out these articles to get an idea of just a few of the things to keep in mind when embellishing pages.

- Place Embellishments to Support Scrapbook Page Flow
- Choosing Embellishments for the Scrapbook Page

In your room

Isaac. March, 2012. 12 years old.
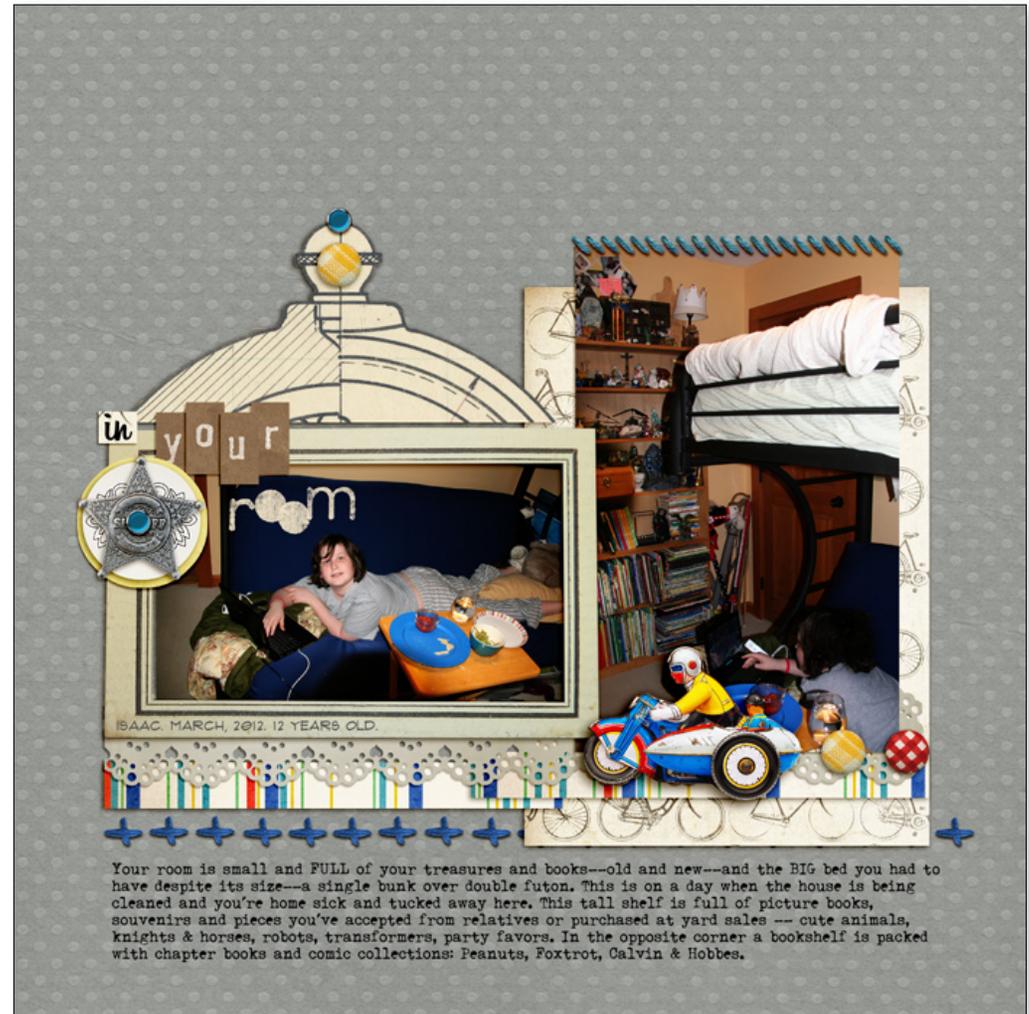
Your room is small and FULL of your treasures and books---old and new---and the BIG bed you had to have despite its size---a single bunk over double futon. This is on a day when the house is being cleaned and you're home sick and tucked away here. This tall shelf is full of picture books, souvenirs and pieces you've accepted from relatives or purchased at yard sales -- cute animals, knights & horses, robots, transformers, party favors. In the opposite corner a bookshelf is packed with chapter books and comic collections: Peanuts, Foxtrot, Calvin & Hobbes.

4. Start moving things around on the page

As you get these considerations about page parts in your mind, start moving things around on the page, working to integrate all of the parts using design principles and seeking a page with unity.

This has been a roadmap of how we'll proceed with the 5 page parts over the final four lessons of the class. I've given you some reading links for each page part, but-don't worry!–I'll be addressing each of them in greater detail beginning with the very next lesson.

{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. Let's get started by walking through the process for getting started with the photo part of your page.

1. Consider page purpose

2. Select photos

3. Crop photos and consider placement options

4. Place photos in combination with other page parts

1. Consider Page Purpose

Knowing what you want to achieve on the page will drive your page parts choices.

2. Select photos

Decide:

- how many photos you will include

- which photos you will include

- if a photo, photo grouping, or different page part will be your focal point

Your purpose might be one the following or even something else:

- for your creative expression.
- to provide an opportunity to experiment and/or play with product and/or design.
- to explore a topic and better understand it.
- to create a record of a something that happened (anything from a brief moment to a big event).
- to express how you feel about a specific subject and/or person.
- to convey a message to whoever you plan to share this page with.
- . . . or it may be something else . . . just figure that out and hold it in your mind as you move forward.

On "Fishing After School" I've included two photos. It's the smaller photo that ends up being the focal point because of: closer-in cropping on the subject, layering (it sits on the top), and positioning in the sweet spot at top left. The larger photo ends up functioning to some extent like background. It provides the larger context for the focal photo; it's layered behind most of the other elements; and it houses the title.

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 emphasize it. Revisit the Emphasis Lesson from this class for a refresher on ways to achieve emphasis. These include: placement (in a sweet spot or isolated by white space), embellishment, contrast, and content. Look, too, at this article: Creating a Focal Point (Photo) on Scrapbook Pages.

To me, 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. It's cropped closer in on my face; it sits on top of everything else; and it has a fancy frame.

crop photos | design principle: contrast

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.

This is when you'll start to think about cropping your photos. Some 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 really 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 photos supporting photos are connected by their cropping within a half circle.
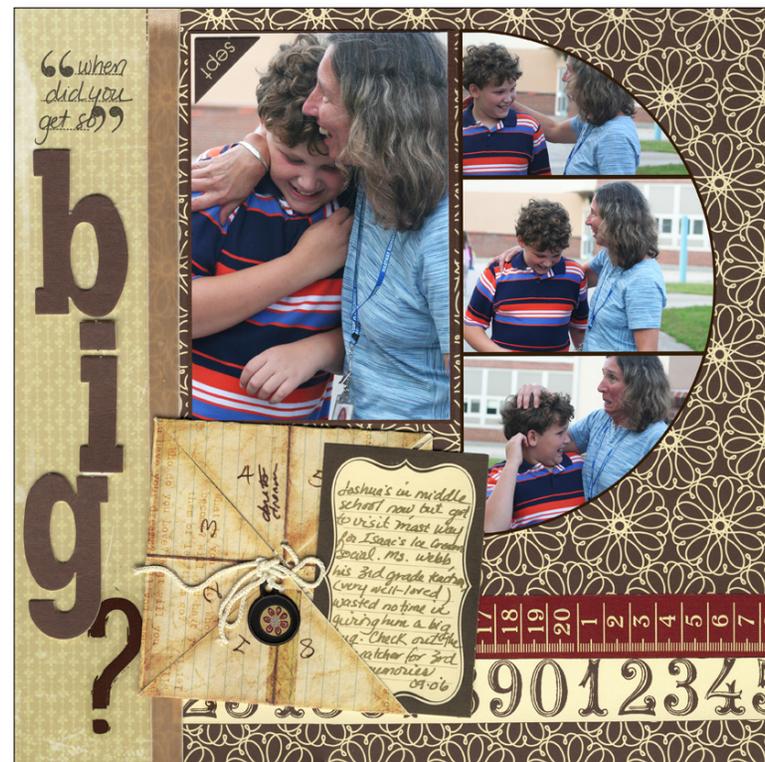
Check out these articles for more details on cropping and editing photos.

- 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 (photos, journaling, and title) are the three page parts that usually determine space needs (though if you're including large embellishment(s) consider them, too).

As you make these decisions and select product and begin to crop photos, you should 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).

Consider the relative size of the page parts and how they will play off one another. Revisit the Balance Lesson of this class if you need a refresher on approaches to achieving visual balance.

Look to your photo content for colors, motifs, patterns, textures, lines (or anything else!) you could repeat in other page parts.
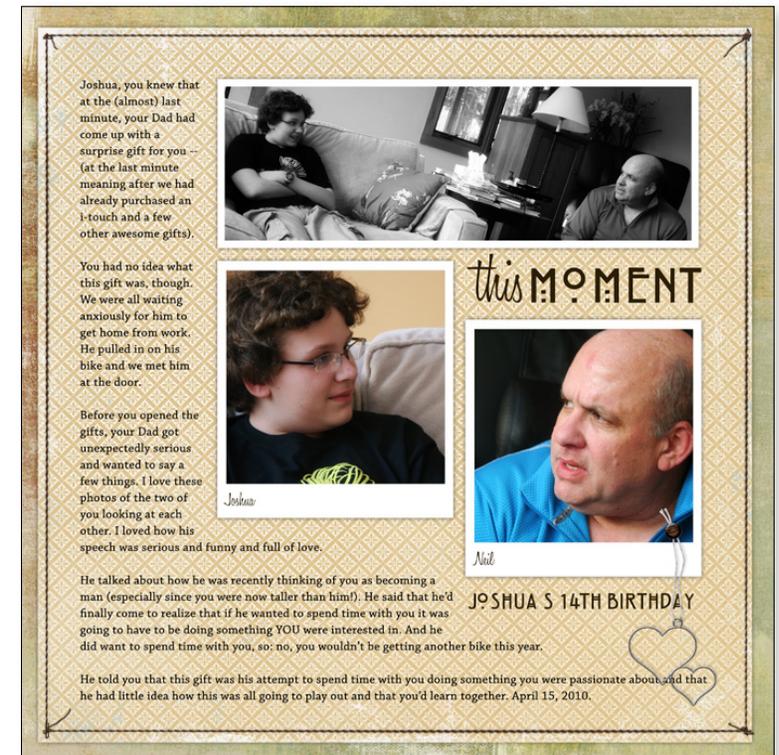
"This Moment" is a full page with 3 photos, substantial journaling, and a title. The challenge was to achieve balance with the photos and the lengthy journaling - which I really wanted to keep all together. At first, I had the square photo of my husband aligned with the square photo of my son, but things 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.

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 latched onto 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.

On the way to Grandma & Grandpa's for spring break, I found a cat's cradle book on the clearance table at Borders & grabbed it. Our first night there, you settled in & began figuring it out. It took Grandma & me a while to recall things, but we finally got it -- even discovering one we'd never known of--sleeping bear. You figured out several other configurations to do on your own. I recall playing this with Mark and with my cousins, esp. at my Grandma's on holidays.

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. Revisit the Alignment Lesson for reminders for incorporating alignments.

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 titlework and the journaling. See how the ends of the journaling and titles align with the photo edges. Now that I'm looking at this page after a couple of years, I see changes I could make to tighten up the design. I would use full-justification on the journaling if I were doing this again, and, along the bottom, I would make the title as wide as the photo above it and force the journaling to fit below the other two smaller photos.

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.
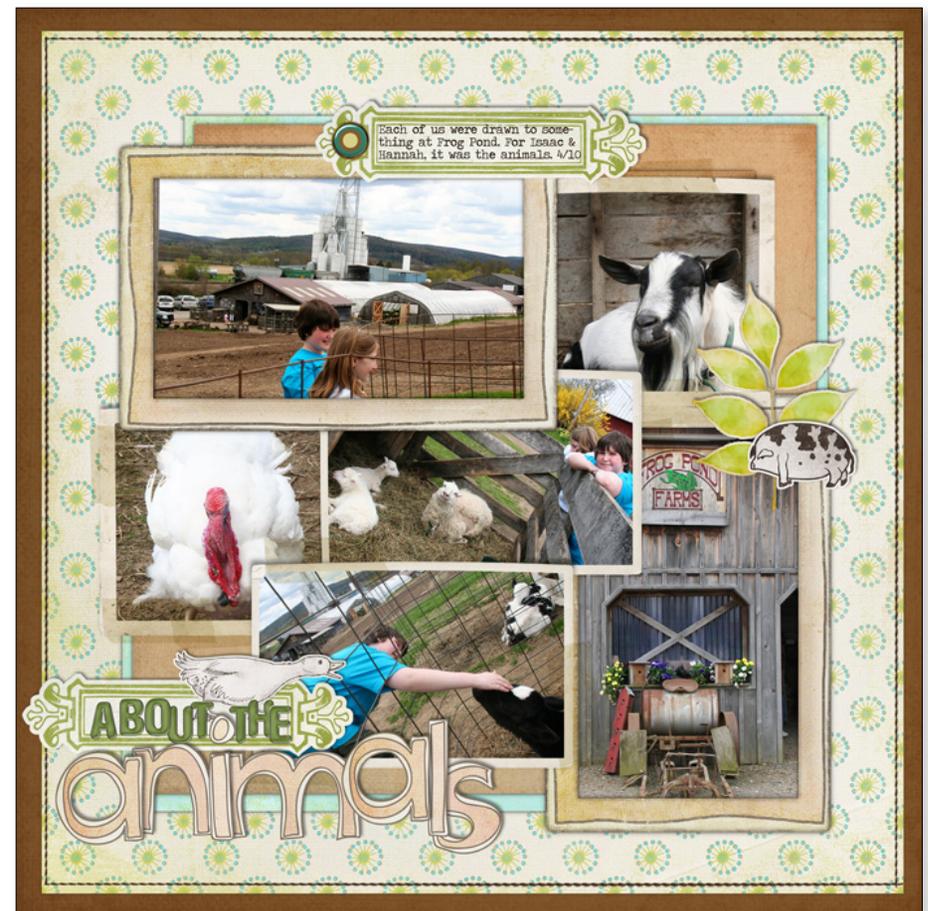
"About the Animals" is a page with a circular flow. The photos have been arranged to flow circularly, beginning with the focal photo at top left (its framing, positioning, and layering give it this distinction). On top of the photo's circular flow, is a visual triangle of embellishments and title which serves to reinforce the eye's movement around the circle of photos.

{LESSON TEN} # Journaling and Design Principles

When your family and friends open your albums, it's the photos that grab their attention first, and it's the journaling they look for next. Here's a process for making sure you thinking about journaling as you create layouts.

In this lesson we're looking at an approach to planning for and including journaling that incorporates an understanding of layout design principles.

1. How much space do you need for your journaling?
2. How will you render your journaling?
3. Where will you place your journaling?

1. How much space do you need for your journaling?

Having a general idea of how much space your journaling will need on the page is a good way to start thinking about a composition that will incorporate all of your elements in an appealing design.

Your journaling could be:

- a brief listing of the names of the people in a group photo

- a caption addressed to your subject; for example a note to your son that when he was learning to walk he liked to carry something heavy and that's why this photo of him carrying a 2-liter soda bottle is a treasured memory

- the extensive telling of how an event unfolded

- an anecdote

- a personal message about your feelings on the scrapped topic

- a stream-of-consciousness list related to the topic

The journaling on "Glass" is not long, but I used a variety of font sizes to add to its visual interest and to maximize the space it fills. This journaling fills a 2-inch-wide border along the left side of the layout and, thus, defines a rectangular inner canvas which holds photos and title. It is, thus, an important part of the page design.

The way in which you render and place journaling on a scrapbook page affects how much visual weight it takes on--and, thus, the balance on the page.

The journaling on "These things are true" is a block made dense by several choices: the black type, the small and tightly-packed type, the amount of space the journaling takes up relative to other elements, and the block defined by strong lines around three sides of it (left, top, and bottom).

As a result of its visual weight, this journaling can balance a larger photo sitting higher up on the page.

2. How will you render your journaling?

The number of ways you can render journaling on the scrapbook page are limited only by your creativity and journaling tools.

Here's a quick list of ideas--and layouts showing them in action follow.

- type your journaling-and the font choices are huge

- handwrite your journaling

- put journaling on a tag (see "Decked" below")

- get journaling onto the canvas background (see "Celebrate the Everyday" below)

- find a spot with some free space on a photo, and put the journaling there (see this article by Ali Edwards for ideas: Creating Room to Write with Photos.)

- use journaling strips (see "Meet Me" below)

- create a border (on one or more sides of a photo or mat) with your journaling (see "It WAS About" below")

- create or complete a shape with your journaling (see "Change of Plans" below)

- hide your journaling

- include multiple, smaller chunks of journaling on your page (see "Day 3," and "Too Many Dishes" below.)

- fill a large area on your page with journaling (see "My Elusive Dreams," "Change of Plans," and "Clarissa Dalloway" moments below.

I've detailed and illustrated several ideas in 10 Ideas for Placing Scrapbook Journaling on Your Scrapbook Page.

rendering journaling | examples

The journaling on "Celebrate the Everyday" is printed to the background canvas. By right aligning the type, the block has three strong edge lines (top, right, and bottom) - all of which end up creating nice gutters between the journaling block and the photo above and the paper strip to the right. The result is a design that looks "right" - that has unity.
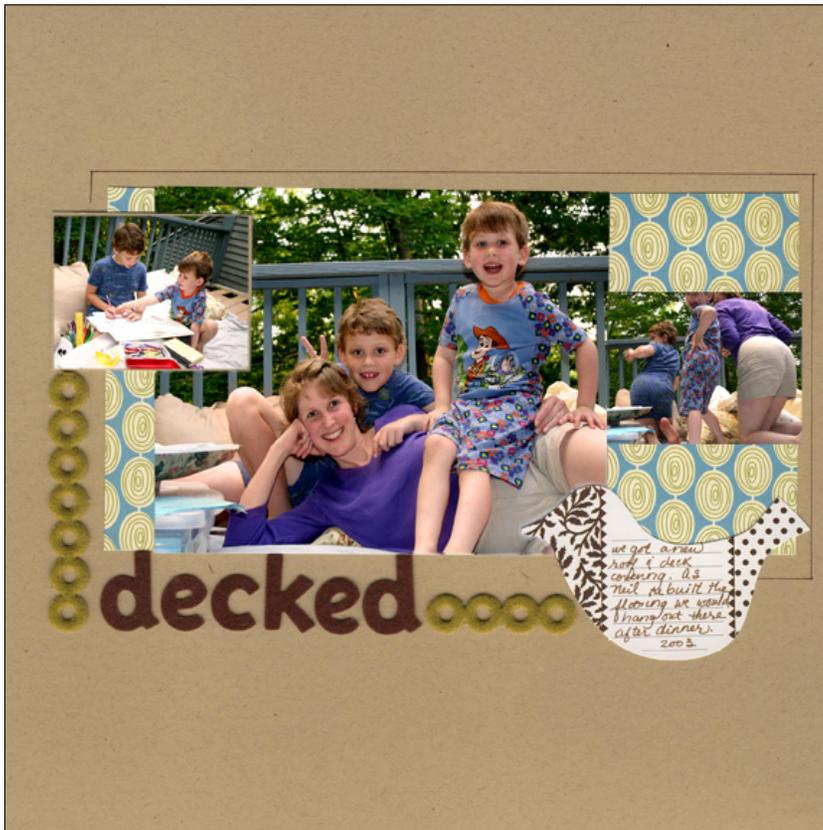
A small bit of handwritten journaling sits on a decorative (and embellishing) tag on "Decked."

The journaling on "Change of Plans" is extensive and has a shape that gives it a strong presence on the page. This shape fills all of the space remaining in a stitched square after the other elements are placed.
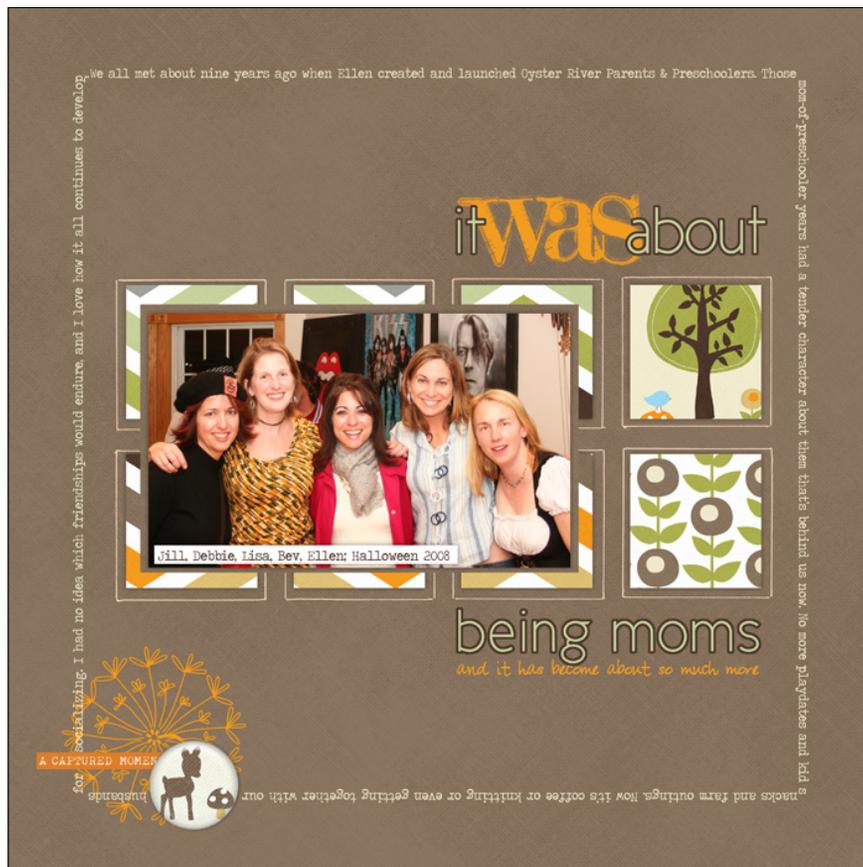
A border of journaling runs in a square around "It Was About Being Moms."

"Day 3" is another page with several bits of journaling. Each chunk of journaling here fills a block within the grid underlying this design.
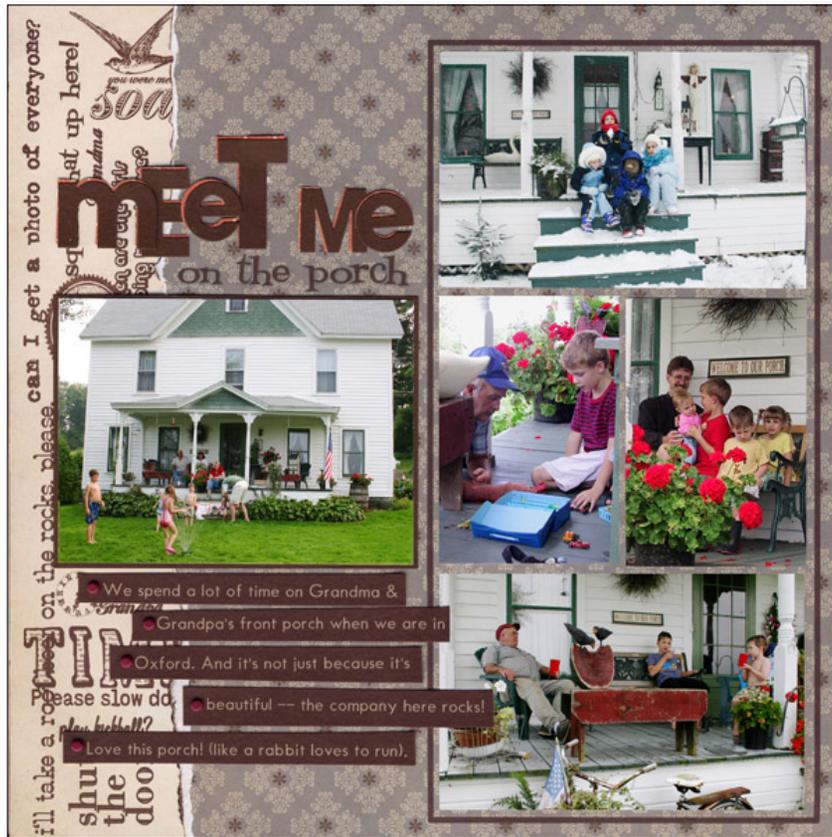
Journaling strips (like the ones on "Meet Me") are easy to make and fun to place for a casual look. Print them to a piece of cardstock, trim. You can glue them down or mount them with something visible like staples,brads, tape, or stitching.

If a photo is going to be your focal point, find a way to emphasize it. Revisit the Emphasis Lesson from this class for a refresher on ways to achieve emphasis. These include: placement (in a sweet spot or isolated by white space), embellishment, contrast, and content.

The only photo on "My Elusive Dreams" is subdued. The journaling fills a vertical strip on the right and is rendered in white type on a black background. While it is not the most dominant element on the page, it is still, a strong and important piece of the page.

If you'd like your journaling to stand out on the page, think about ways to give it not only space but an eye-catching look.

Take a look at the Contrast Lesson from this class to jumpstart your creativity and figure out new ways to make it stand out.

Shown here are a couple of ideas like journaling on a photo and using a variety of fonts, colors, and font sizes.

Every element on the scrapbook page-including the journaling-offers potential for including repetitions. Check back to the Repetition Lesson to remember the ways you can get repetitions on your page. The journaling on "Clarissa Dalloway Moments" is shaped to repeat the curve on the strip of patterned paper along the right edge of the layout.

3. Where will you place your journaling?

Journaling provides lots of opportunities for interesting page design approaches. You can vary aspects like its shape, density, styling, and color.

placing journaling | design principle: alignment

Revisit the Alignment Lesson for reminders for incorporating alignments on pages AND take a look at Scrapbook Page Journaling: Justification that Strengthens Scrapbook Page Design for more ideas.

The journaling block on "Jolly" Hike" is printed to the canvas background with edges that align with the photo below. It has a shape that echoes that of the other two smaller photos and that gives the page strong lines.

As I've said in other lessons, flow should be on your mind throughout the design of your page. Check out the Flow Lesson, and keep the techniques for achieving it in your mind.

On **"You Use Too Many Dishes"** the journaling is shaped around the other elements and contributes to the strength of the diagonal flow going from top left to bottom right.

Contrast this with the journaling on decked which takes up a very discrete spot and draws the eye to one spot in combination with the other elements on the page.
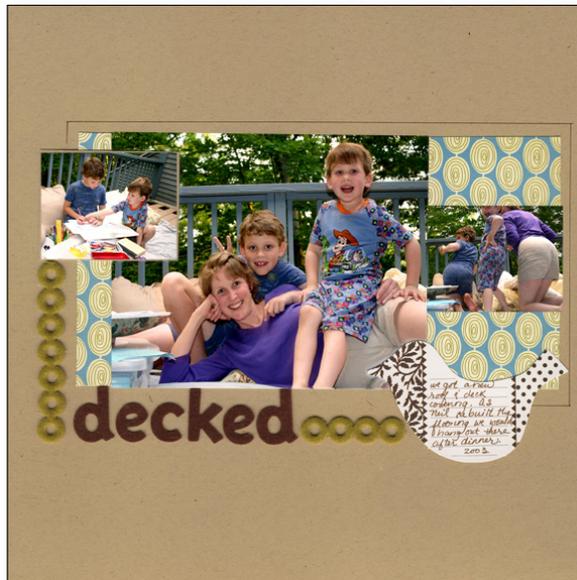
What are your typical approaches to incorporating journaling on your pages? Do you have favorite techniques for rendering and placement? Is there anything new here you might try?

{LESSON ELEVEN} Titles, Embellishments & Design Principles

We're nearing the end of learning about how design principles and their application to all the parts of a scrapbook page yields awesome and original layout ideas.

Lessons 2-7 covered design principles (emphasis, contrast, balance, alignment, repetition, flow). Lessons 8 through 12 are about putting those design principles to work as you render all the parts of a scrapbook page (photos, journaling, embellishments, title, and canvas).

In this lesson we focus on titles and embellishments. While each of these topics

The title on "We Burn Wood" is the focal element because of contrasts in size, color, value, and type as well as placement.

The eye moves from title to the embellishments at lower right which are rendered in the same oranges and greens.

The oval tag and fabric flourish provide the only dimension on the page, which helps them catch the eye.

could fill many lessons on their own, they are grouped together here because titles often work as page embellishments, and the design considerations for them can be quite similar.

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.

Ask yourself the following about your title:

- How important will the 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 (i.e., 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.

More Reading

- Scrapbook Page Titles

- 4 Formulas for Generating Scrapbook Page Titles You'll Love

- 20 Awesome Ideas for Making Scrapbook Pages Inspired by Movie Titles

- How to Come Up with Scrapbook Page Titles from Quotes, Famous Saying and Lyrics

- Big Scrapbook Page Titles that Earn the Space They Fill

- 5 Ways to Make High-Contrast Titles and Tell Your Scrapbook Page Story

- Do you need that scrapbook page title? Only if it's doing a job and doing it well

titles

I played with a line from the movie "Field of Dreams" on this layout "If You Build It." My son and the neighbors were collecting and erecting every pop-up tent they could find. The bold title is grouped with an embellished and tied tag. In fact, part of the title sits on the tag. Additional embellishments are the stamped flourishes at top left and bottom right of the photo block. Thus, title and embellishments work together to draw the eye diagonally down and through the page.
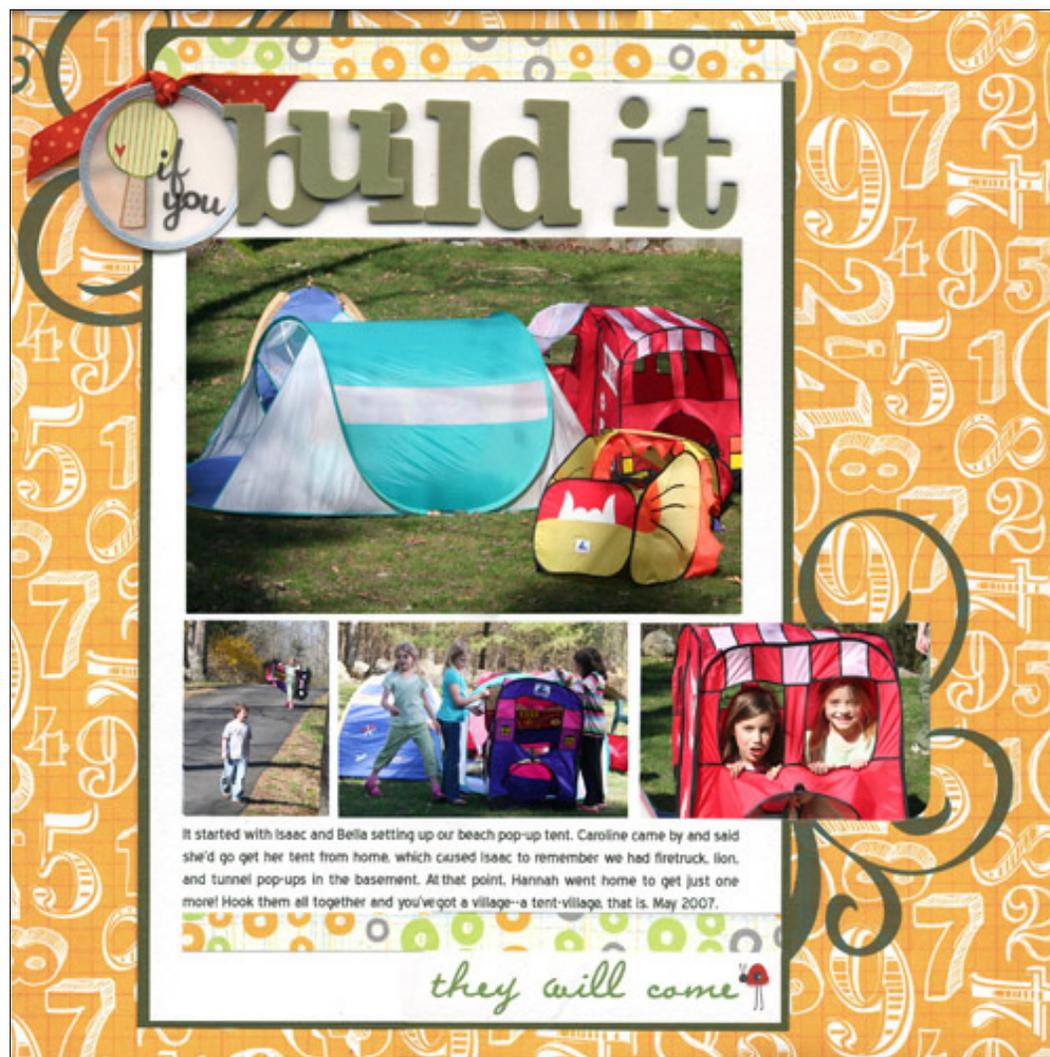
embellishments

The primary tasks when it comes to adding embellishments to your page are [choosing embellishments](#) and [placing embellishments](#).

As you do these things, keep in mind what embellishments can do for your page. You can use embellishments to:

- deepen meaning and set tone
- add charm and design interest
- guide the eye
- provide emphasis and contrast
- contribute to unity on the page

On "After School Fishing," the title is low key, yet still adds design interest. Three embellishments spots lead the eye through the page in a visual triangle that begins with the fishing lure on leaves, moves to the blue/green/brown brad on the journaling block and then down to the most interesting of the embellishment spots: the vintage image of a boy running which is centered on an acrylic clock and affixed with a brad. The lure, leaves, and barefoot boy all emphasize the page subject of three boys fishing.

Revisit the Emphasis Lesson from this class for a refresher on ways to achieve emphasis, and set yourself the task to make a page on which you emphasize the title or one embellishment spot above all else on a page.

The title on "Women Who Love Wool Too Much" draws the eye first because of the large amount of space it takes up, its contrast with the background and the contrast in type fonts, colors, and dimension. Oh—and the fun content of the title helps, too!
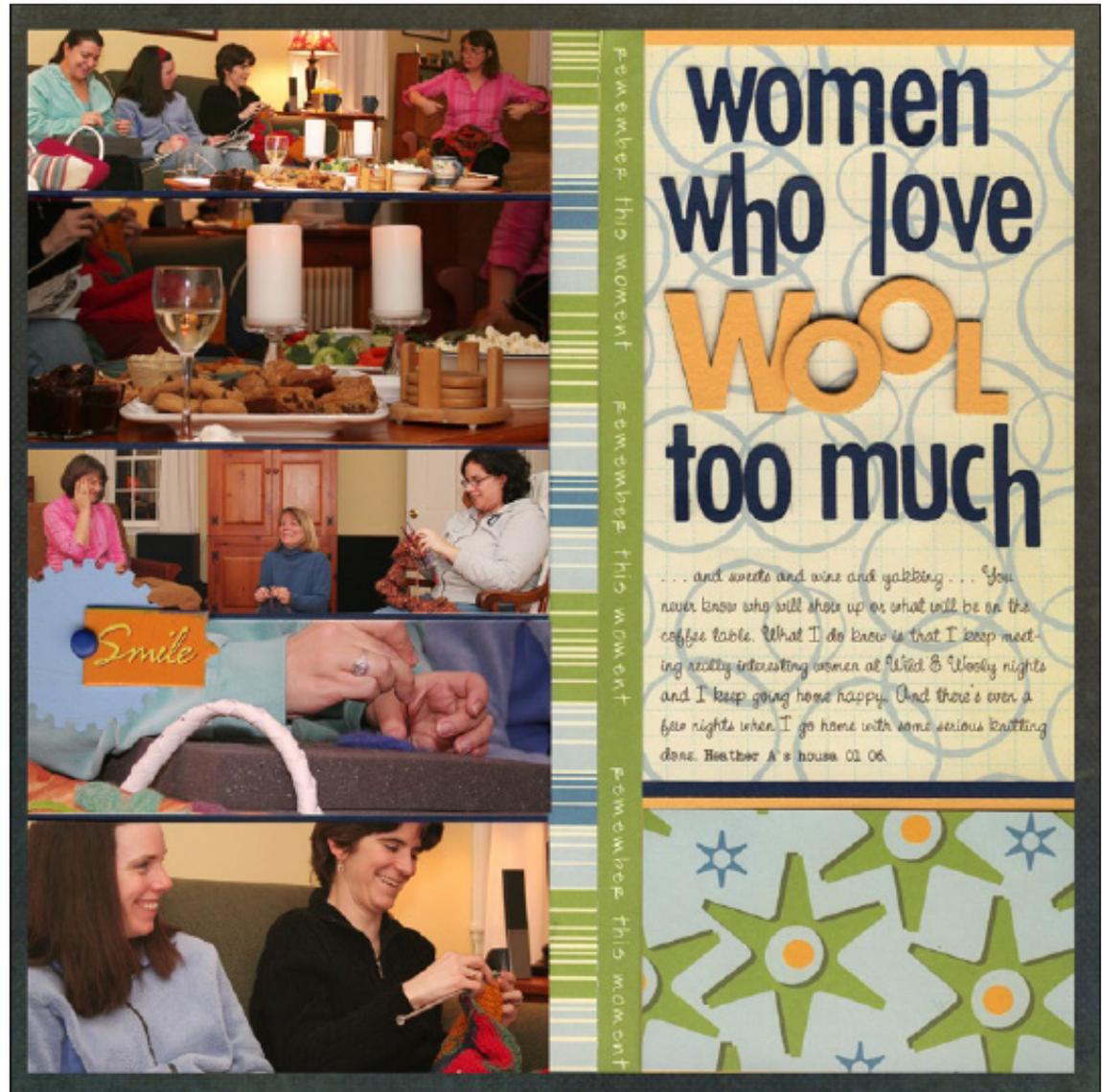
Recall from the Contrast Lesson of this class, that differences draw the eye. When you can make your title and embellishments contrast enough to stand out, they can combine to give the page design interest, unity, and flow.

Check out the Flow Lesson for a refresher on the topic. Placing embellishments includes examples of a few types of flow and shows how embellishments create flow.

On "If Your Friends Jumped Off A Bridge," the reds of the title and embellishments contrast strongly with the white and pale-blue background. Once again these contrasts draw the viewer's eye AND end up guiding it through the page.

Embellishments offer tons of opportunities for working in AND variety on the page. From your photos and papers, pick out colors, motifs, patterns, textures, lines (or anything else!) you could repeat in embellishments. Look to the first embellishment placed for your cue in selecting the next embellishment. Check back to the Repetition Lesson for a reminder of the techniques you can use.

The layout here is without title, and it's full of layers, photos, and embellishments. The word strips, trimmed flower, and vintage print of children dancing repeat the page subject - happy play in the outdoors. Three spots of orange–a button, a die-cut ornament, and a strip of rick-rack–provide needed contrast and organization on this busy page. They draw the eye around the page in a visual triangle and keep the eye moving and taking in all of the details.

you are happy

take care of your playthings

Try this: pay close attention to incorporating alignments on your page using photos, journaling, title and papers--and then use embellishments to purposefully break those alignments. Revisit the Alignment Lesson for reminders on this principle.

The edges of photos, paper pieces, and journaling blocks all combine to create strong alignments on "Your Point?" which results in a cohesive and appealing design. The embellishments then step outside of those alignments, grounding the block to the page, creating interesting white space, and keeping the page from being overly linear (and dull). The leaves, top brad and stamping, and sun brad and stamping all break out into the margins. The bookplate steps over the line within the photo/paper block.

{LESSON TWELVE} The Page Canvas and Design Principles

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. This is really my favorite part of making scrapbook pages – maybe that's why I saved it for last!

Think back to Lesson #7 Flow. That was the final design principle lesson, and it was the coming together of all 6 design principles. This lesson—about the canvas—requires a similar wholeness in approach. Once again, everything is intertwined. Page parts and design principles are all up for consideration, for juggling, for cycling through in your mind.

The big questions here are: How will you fill the page? And how will you apply design principles as you do this? (I think this is such a compelling and big topic, I've developed a big 12-lesson, 12-video, self-paced class called Building Pages on the topic.)

What will your page foundation be? Your foundation is the base that connects the parts to the page. It's the starting point for filling the canvas.

foundations: an underlying grid

Making "blocked" pages is one of the easiest ways to organize your page parts. In construction terms, "blocking" refers to the horizontal boards placed between wall studs.

Take a look at "Sledding" and its underlying grid of three columns and three rows. Photos fill several of the blocks. The title takes up another block (and even overlaps with another a bit, which keeps the page from being overly linear). Journaling fills the bottom right block. Embellishments sit in the top right block.

Using alignments is another way to create a structure for organizing and presenting your page parts.

"Making Your Acquaintance" relies upon the white space of gutters and margins to define a grid foundation that accommodates all page elements. This white space is created by strong alignments: the beginning and ends of each title word and journaling are all lined up with the left and right edges of the photos.

foundations: foundational pieces

A piece of paper (or mat) that houses most of the page elements can serve as a foundation that connects the elements to the page and keeps them from a free-floating feeling.

On "Oh Happy Day" the tan cardstock backing up the photos, title, journaling and embellishments is the page foundation.

Your foundational piece doesn't have to back up all of the page elements: a strong first layer can cover less area than your elements and still ground everything to the page. On "Get Around," the linen block with distressed edges backs up much of the inner canvas—but doesn't stretch completely to page edges. It is the foundational piece though that connects all of the pieces to the canvas.

A "foundation" piece doesn't have to be a layer of paper. It can be anything that suggests a shape and that grounds the page elements to the canvas. On "Field Day," a brushed, portrait-oriented green block is the foundation for the page.
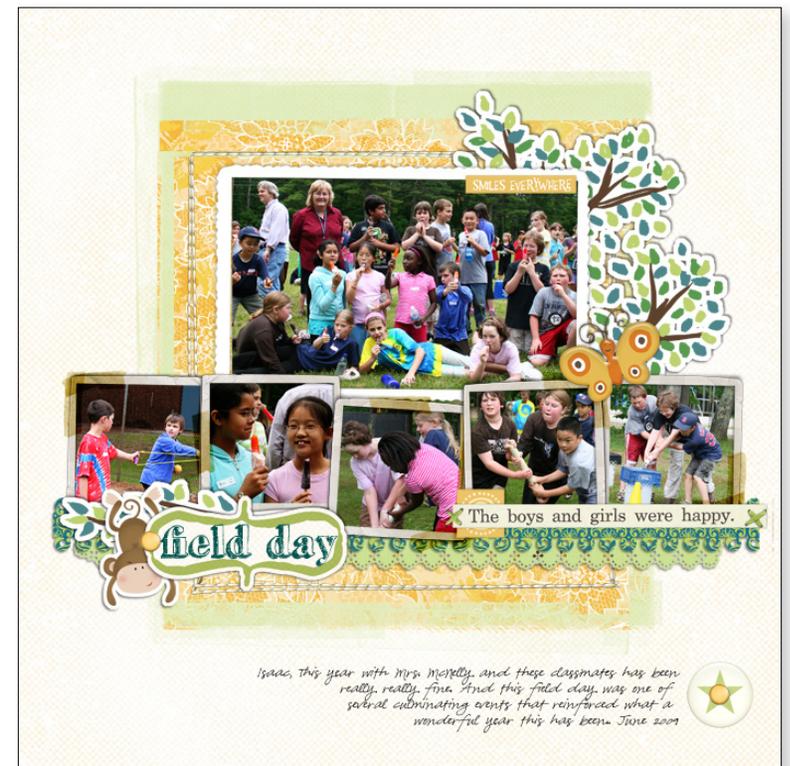
How will you use white space?

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.
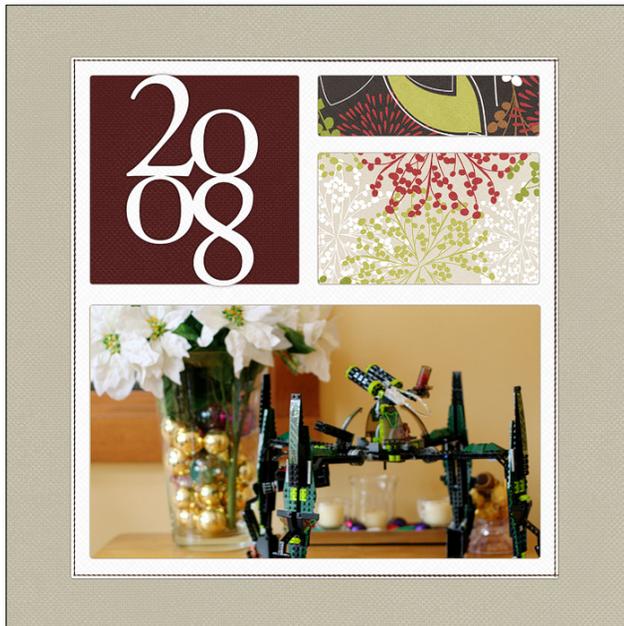
White space on scrapbook pages is not always white. It can be any color—it can even be patterned paper. The term "white space" refers to an area devoid of photos, embellishments, journaling, and title. Understand the most important thing about white space: if it's interesting and unexpected (as on "A Boy and His Kite") is has more interest than white space that is regular.

The even margins backing up "2008" result in a white space that's hardly noticed – or only noticed as backdrop.

What kind of balance would you like to achieve on your canvas?

A scrapbook page that is appealing to look at has a balance between the elements on it (including the white space). In Lesson #6 Balance, I talked about how you can balance "visual" weights just as you can take a scale and balance weights.

Snow Sculpture balances three smaller, square, framed photos on the left side with two landscape-oriented photos, title, and journaling on the right side.
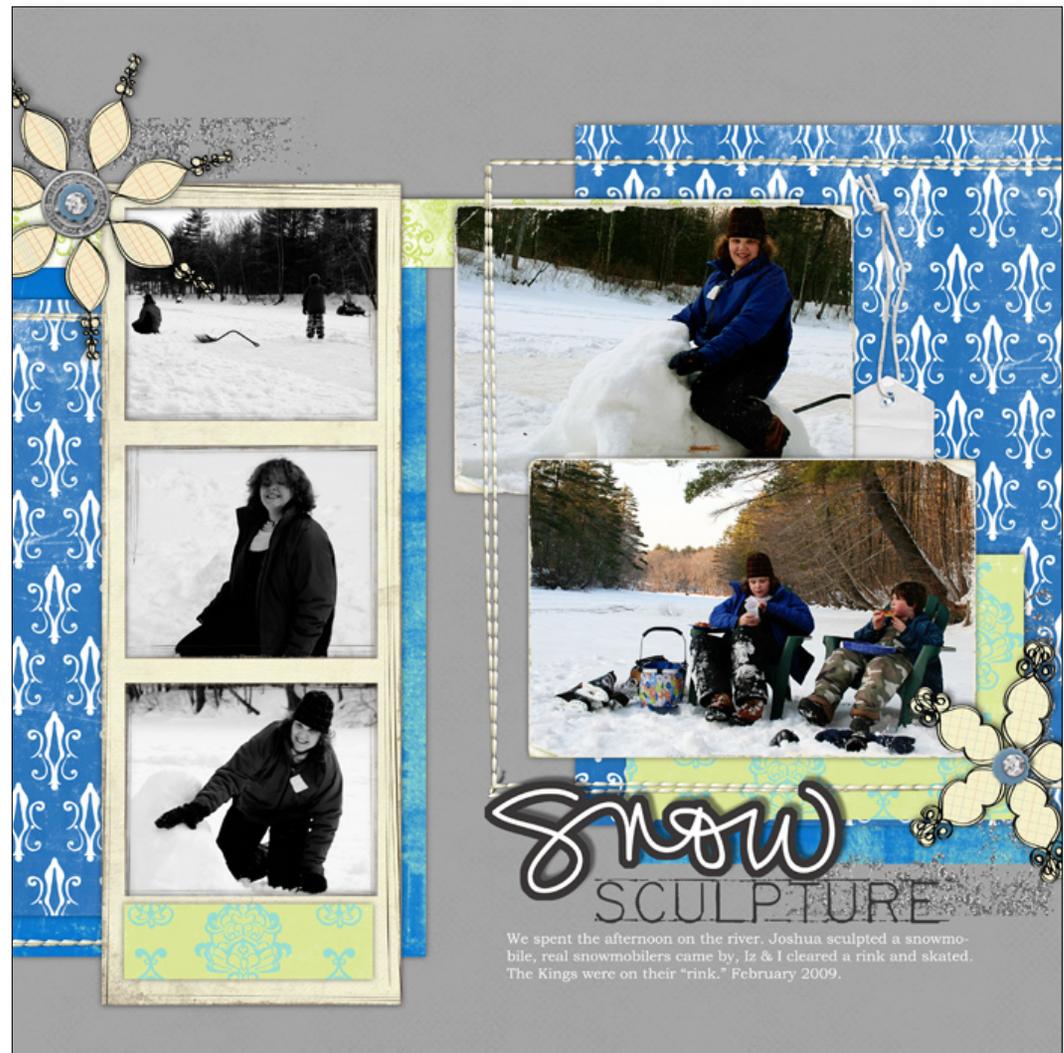
I can't tell you HOW to add layering to your pages as well as I can tell you the considerations that you should be holding and balancing in your mind as you choose, add, and place elements. It's not a science. It's creating and it's personal and it should be fun.

Ask yourself the following as you work:

- What is your desired focal point? Is it a photo? Journaling? Something else? How will you emphasize it? With size, matting, dimension, contrast, embellishments? Think back to Lesson #2 Emphasis.
- What space do you plan to fill? How will you use/include white space?
- What's your foundation piece? Choose it while keeping in mind the answers to the questions above.
- What kind of balance will you incorporate? Recall Lesson #6 Balance.
- What is the tone or mood you'd like to create? How will you use color and pattern? How much contrast will you incorporate?
- What are the meanings you'd like to explore and, perhaps, reflect with element choices?

wrap up

And that's it! We've looked at 6 design principles and 5 page parts and lots and lots of ways to put them all together. And, now: how do you feel? What are you motivated to create? Do you feel equipped to scrapbook lots of new pages?

If you've enjoyed this class, and are ready to take things a step farther, check out Building Pages, a self-paced class that shows you 12 approaches to the blank canvas, or Masterful Scrapbook Design, a monthly "magazine/membership" website where we bring on 5 guest teachers every month to focus on a particular aspect of scrapbook page design.

Thanks for spending your time on this class. Here's to lots of awesome pages.