

GO-TO designs

"Getting there" is always easier when you know where you're going.

That's not to say that spontaneous roadtrips with unplanned destinations aren't a great things to embark upon. Rather, it's to say that there will be times when you just need to get there.

Using a "go-to" composition, a familiar way or arranging elements on the page is just the vehicle to get you there efficiently.

What's more, there are plenty of ways to keep the familiar fresh.

Check out 15 favorite approaches to page layout from top scrapbook page designers.

A dozen+ Scrapbook Coach classes in the Get It Scrapped membership library show you how to "work" go-to foundations while learning design. [Click here for Scrapbook Coach.](#)

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COACH

get it *scrapped*

GRID

Tiffany Tillman's notes

The page composition is in a grid in which patterned papers and photos fill the blocks.

This type of page composition takes the guesswork out of how to make everything fit together.

I've updated the grid by strategically adding elements "off" the grid and subtracting parts of the grid for negative space.

I love the composition, but it's an updated version of the classic linear page, which is how I define my preferred page style.

I composed the page to move the viewer's eyes around using the visual triangle. Two triangles are easily identified: three photos of my daughter wearing her glasses. And three circles with nearby element groupings.

All are meant to twirl your eye around your page. This is my preferred approach to flow and I use it quite often.



"Glasses girl describes the disappointment I feel knowing my daughter inherited my horrible eyesight. She loves her glasses now, but I know eventually she'll develop a love/hate relationship — similar to my own. Terrible days await when she steps on them, breaks them, or misplaces them."

BAND

Tami Taylor's notes

I keep all of my layouts in one folder on my computer, and I can scroll through and see a layout composition appearing over and over again in my images: the horizontal band, my go-to composition.



Most often the photo is about 2/3rds of the way over on the page. The central composition is consistent but what I do from there keeps my layouts from looking all alike. Sometimes I create a vertical band to match the horizontal, other times I use torn or meandering strips of paper as the band.

I think this composition is my standard because it's easy to me. I have used it many times so it is definitely in my comfort zone. I think the key to having a 'go-to' composition is to find a composition you like and then use it – often. Work and rework that composition.



If you want to try using a band composition I have three tips:

- Play with patterned papers this brings life into this simple composition
- Keep in mind the rules of symmetry and thirds. Think of the band in three sections. Try placing your focal points on the intersections of the sections.
- Use clusters to create flow. Just because the band goes left to right doesn't mean you need to keep your viewers eye on a straight path from left to right.

RULE OF 3s

Summer Fullerton's notes

Working in 3s tends to be my go-to design approach. I generally think the main 3 elements of a layout are photos, title and journaling

On this layout

- There are 3 dominant sections from left to right: patterned paper strip, photo strip and title journaling strip.
- The composition of this layout was driven by my photos that I lined up in a row. Then I built my layout around my strip of photos.
- While my photos are lined up on this layout I like to embellish my layouts using a visual triangle.
- Here, I used 3 different orange elements to form a visual triangle.
- I love to balance out the lines of a layout with a visual triangle of embellishments.



"This layout is about the new car we bought several years ago. The whole family was super excited about all of the new features especially the sun roof."



"These iPhone photos were taken of my oldest son and his friend during a Major League Baseball camp with the Tampa Bay Rays this past summer. They absolutely loved it! It was hard to capture any photos of them on the field practicing, but I made sure to snag some quick shots of them before camp started one morning."

CENTER-FOCUSED

Kelly Noel's notes

The composition here is center focused, this is my usual go-to composition.

This type of composition is well balanced and easy on the eye. By keeping everything focused in the center of the page, it makes it easy to add different elements building off a solid base in the middle.

Start with a rectangle or square piece of paper and build out from there. The key to making this type of composition work is not keeping everything within the rectangle or square. Be sure to overlap photos and other embellishments onto the cardstock background as well. By letting some of the elements spill over onto the background, you're creating more interest for your page.

While keeping everything within the center focus, it's still important to allow some elements to wander into the white space on the page. This allows your eye to travel all across the page, while still keeping the main focus in the center.

SHELF

Amy Kingsford's notes

A lot like a horizontal band, my go-to composition the shelf utilizes horizontal borders to build a strong base for showcasing photos and other key elements. The shelf doesn't span the full width of the page like a band often does.

I like the shelf because it automatically makes my photo the center of attention. I also like that it allows me to group key elements together in a way that connects them and creates a sense of unity.

I usually float my shelf to one side of the page or the other creating an asymmetrical design, but, every once in a while, I'll place my shelf smack dab in the middle of the page.

I often start by selecting one large landscape photo or a few square or vertical photos that I can group together. I choose a couple of eye-catching borders to layer together or sometimes even just bits and pieces that I can combine to create a strong visual barrier, and I layer them across my page. I use this barrier to underscore my photos and other key elements.



"This is a photo I took of my mother's grandchildren down at the train depot. My nephew—the oldest is 10 and my youngest is almost 2 and I just love this photo of all of them together."

I usually don't do too much with the surrounding white space because I don't want to distract attention away from the focal point that I've now created by isolating the shelf on my page.

REPEATING SHAPES

Lynnette Penacho's notes

Grid-based designs of repeating shapes like this are one of my favorite go-to compositions.

Not only does the design play to my love of clean lines, symmetry and repetition but the repeating shapes give me an easy "home" for all my favorite papers and embellishments.

The composition for "2012 Goals" started out as another finished layout that featured 8 repeating rounded rectangles.

Being a digital scrapbooker, I simply opened up my old layout, re-saved and

deleted out the papers and elements and then used the design as a template for my new layout. Why reinvent the wheel when you don't have to?

I did want to add variety to the design so I switched it up a bit by adding a longer journaling strip spanning across both rows of a rectangle and swapped out one of the rounded rectangles for two smaller ones.

If you're a digital scrapbooker and want to get this same look, a really easy way to use this is by turning on your Document Grid and using the Snap To Grid feature - it'll automatically align your shapes to the grid which makes lining and spacing your shapes really quick and easy.



Lynnette often looks both forward and backward on her pages, recording past favorites and future goals as on this page.

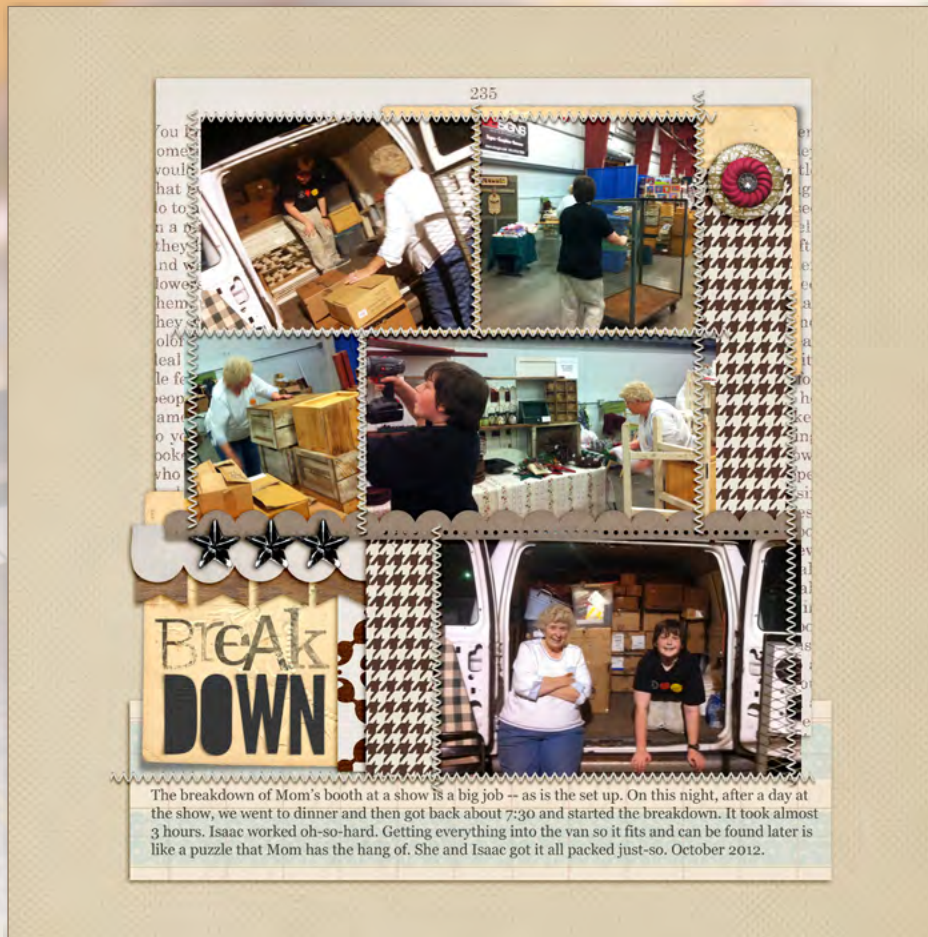
CASUAL BLOCKED

Debbie Hodge's notes

I often want to include many photos on a one page layout. What's more, these photos are often not of the greatest quality. I love the context they can add, though. I want these details in the "permanent record" of my scrapbooks.

This "casual blocked" composition is my best tool for making such pages. I crop the photos small but don't worry about proportions or if any photos are of the same size, height or width.

I arrange the photos on the canvas to build a block, and wherever there's space not filled, I put in a piece of paper, or embellishment. I find a place to tuck in the title, and I often put the journaling on a strip of paper that spans the width of the block and mount it just below.



"My son and I worked at a wholesale show with my Mom right before Hurricane Sandy. To get her on the road before the storm, we did a late night breakdown of her booth. Getting everything into the van is like solving a puzzle and she and Isaac solved that puzzle well." -

FREEFORM CLUSTER

Emily Pitt's notes

When you have a bunch of elements on the page and they are all clustered together, it's almost as fun as looking for Waldo!

I am a fan of white space and the clustering of elements allows me to have as much or as little of it as I like.

The first layer on "Boy at 13" is a wide strip of patterned paper, but, really, the foundation for the page is the idea of a cluster and the subsequent shape of that grouping. As important as the shape of the cluster is the white space surrounding it.



Emily recorded concrete details of her son at the age of 13 as well as how she feels about him growing up.



Lynnette Penacho's "Small Moments"

Lynnette Penacho used a blocked design for her journaling-heavy page "Small Moments."

BLOCKED

Blocking out the entire canvas and placing elements within those blocks was a popular approach several years ago, and it's still a great way to make a well organized page efficiently.

Debbie Hodge's "Play"



Debbie Hodge blocked out "Play" with card-stock and patterned paper. One photo spreads out of its blocks softening the linear look.

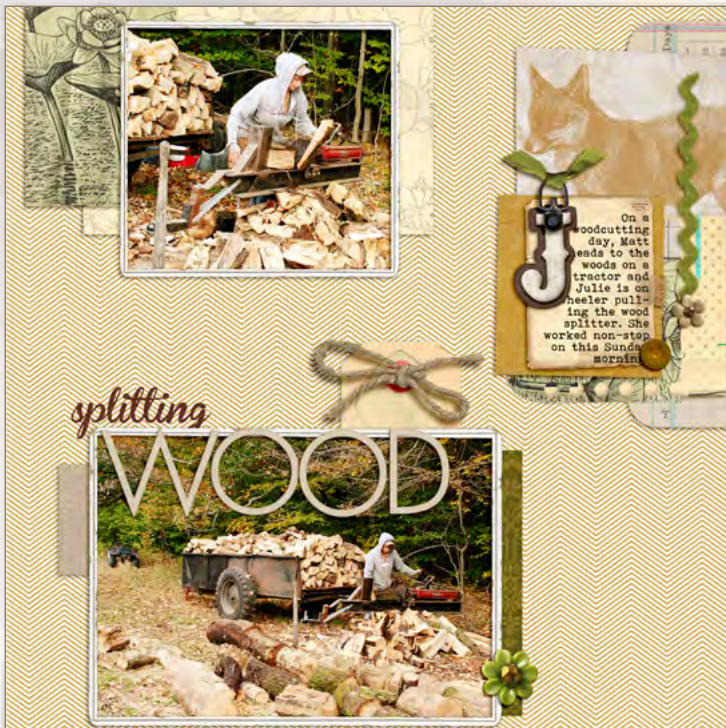
MULTI CLUSTER

If you love playing with design, and want a new challenge, step away from the grid and the block, and try working with multiple clusters.

As you make a page with multiple clusters, consider:

- does each cluster look good on its own?
- does each cluster work with the piece as a whole?

For it to work with the whole, create unity by using repetitions with variety and by attending to flow.



Doris Sander's "Happy Birdie"

Doris arranged elements in 3 clusters with each bleeding off one edge of her canvas. The white space, thus, runs between her elements rather than around them.



Debbie Hodge's "Splitting Wood"

Debbie Hodge's "Splitting Wood" uses a very similar approach, with 3 clusters and each bleeding off one edge of the canvas. She says, "When I do this I design each cluster as its own composition and then the clusters together as another composition."

ASYMMETRICAL CROSS

Dina Wakley's notes

One of my favorite compositions is the asymmetrical cross. I will start with a strong horizontal element. Then I will cross it at either the right or the left side with a strong vertical element.

I have noticed that I turn to this design again and again. It's simple and it works. It's a great framework on which you can be creative and add many or just a few photos and embellishments. I love the flexibility of it.

To keep the design fresh, I change my mediums. Sometimes I create an element with patterned paper, sometimes with ink, sometimes with fabrics (as I did in this layout). Sometimes I have page elements spray out from the framework, sometimes I stick to the framework closely.



On "bad hair curse," the inky blots are my strong horizontal element. The blots transverse the entire width of the cardstock. Then I arranged my three photos, the cheesecloth, the canvas, and the burlap vertically on the right side.

ARTSY BLENDED + FRAMES

Anna Aspnes' notes

I like to select an Artsy paper for an ArtPlay Palette as my layout foundation, onto which I blend 1-3 photos. I look for solid areas on the Artsy background to accommodate them. I then add one or more frames which enables me to include more images to my layout without it looking cluttered. The page is then embellished lightly with brushes and/or a simple button or brad before adding the title/journaling.

I have noticed that I turn to this design again and again. It's simple and it works. It's a great framework on which you can be creative and add many or just a few photos and embellishments. I love the flexibility of it.

The combination of papers, elements and supplies that I work with in each layout is always different, yielding varying results each time. The basic technique guides me through the layout design and provides ample scope for creativity as the layout comes together.



The majority of the art runs across the top half of the Artsy paper into which I blended 2 black and white plus one color photo. A fourth photo was clipped to a mask in the frame and placed to create a bridge between the black, white and color photos leading the eye from one side of the page to the other. This motion is supported by the ArtStroke and a grouping of elements that provide demarcation and balance to the journaling side of the page.

TILTED

Lisa Dickinson's notes

Currently I have been doing lots of tilted designs - angling all the elements at a slight diagonal on the page.

This composition gives the page a clear visual line to follow along the diagonal. I like that the slight tilt gives a sense of action and motion to the page. The arrangement is also a bit more whimsical than a horizontally-aligned design. And bonus - it doesn't require exact measuring of borders and placement, which I love!

I'm finding that just about any design can be tilted slightly to give it a fresh spin. I've used many of my past go-to designs (grids, photo rows, etc) and added this diagonal tilt to create a new page.

Make sure all your elements follow the same diagonal line when you adhere them. On most designs, keep the tilt less than 45 degrees. If you tilt more than that, the design might appear a bit unstable. To create even more energy on the page, add in contrasting shapes, like circles and squares. On my layout, the large circular doily adds curves to help balance out all the straight lines.



When I began this page, I printed one 4x6 photo and a smaller photo strip of 3 photos. I had planned to overlap the photo strip with the larger print. When I tried to arrange them horizontally, they looked cramped on the page. So I tilted everything slightly upward which gave me a bit more room to play with.

DIAGONAL FLOW

Amanda Jones' notes

I frequently use a diagonal flow in my layout design. I tend to place my photo and main design elements in the centre or slightly off-center, surrounded by white space. As I arrange the other elements on my page I usually situate them to flow from top left to bottom right on my page.

I like to play with embellishments and this design allows me to add a few extra bits and pieces without detracting from the focal point. I like my layouts to have breathing space and for the items on the page to serve a purpose and complement the design.

By making my white space “interesting” it allows me to reuse the design time and time again without becoming stale. By varying the positions, shapes and arrangements of the elements it thus changes the shape of the white space and makes it an active part of the page.



On “Together” I placed my photo and some embellishments towards the middle of the page. I maintained my typical white space and then added a small cluster of embellishments at the top left corner to guide the eye into the layout and down toward the photo and journaling. Finally, I added a further grouping down at the bottom right to guide the eye down from the focal point and out of the page.

STACKED PHOTOS + PAPER STRIPS

Krista Sahlin's notes

Most of my scrapbook pages have three photos. I don't know how this happens... maybe I subconsciously, I think three photos are enough to tell the story?

Whatever the reason is, most of my layouts use the same basic compositional approach: Stacked Photos and Paper Strips.

A good tip to help with your page composition is to 'design' your page before you begin your scrapbooking. If you know the number of photos you want to use, then start by creating a template of sorts before you begin. I personally don't add ANY papers or embellishments until this design structure of the page is completed. That way, I know exactly where the photos will go, and where the papers will go. Designing the composition first will also help you to achieve good balance on your page.



On "S'mores," I designed a three-photo cluster, and brought in color with two strips of papers elongate the page to give balance.

GET MORE *ideas*

**Set aside sketches and templates,
and use foundations.**

The Scrapbook Coach video series teaches you to start with a common page foundation and then shake it up to make great looking scrapbook pages efficiently. In every lesson you scrapbook alongside Debbie Hodge as she guides you in photo crops, paper choices, title treatments and embellishing.

You'll work one page shape multiple times, with variations in product and patterned paper choices, number of photos, and title and embellishment treatments. You become skilled — and fast — at designing pages that tell your stories and pack a visual punch. You learn to select and combine patterned papers skillfully and you get starter recipes you can turn to knowing you'll get a solid design that looks new each time you use it.

**Working with starter foundations is a great way
to get inspired and master layout design.**

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