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Page Rules

Design is a visual language. With each scrapbook page, you tell a story. You want to guide your viewers' eyes to what you want them to see and feel. Everything you put on that page, where you place the items, and where you leave open areas, all help evoke the memory of an event. Furthermore, the design of one page can also direct the reader to the following pages, which may be a continuation of the story. In this chapter, you'll explore the four basic page rules. Use them as guidelines to help you create visually pleasing and emotionally powerful pages. Just remember, they all work together, and they work with the elements and principles of design, described in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

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- The Rule of Balance
- The Rule of Visual Center
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The Rule of Balance

Balance is probably the most obvious rule of page design. The placement of the elements on a page affects the emotions of the viewer. A lopsided page, or one in which the elements and photos are placed in an unbalanced way, may make the viewer want to turn the page quickly.

Balance doesn't mean that everything is perfectly even. A balanced page may be divided in half, it may be divided in thirds, it may be divided into one third and two thirds, it may be divided into four even or uneven pieces. A balanced page may have one center of focus or several. The whole idea is that you can look at a balanced page for a long time and feel the story that it tells.

You can create balance in a page in many different ways. Balance can be *symmetrical*, where the design is centered or mirrored. Figure 1.1 shows some page designs that have symmetrical balance. Something is said to be *symmetrical* if you draw a centerline through it from top to bottom, dividing it in half, and it results in equal masses on both sides.

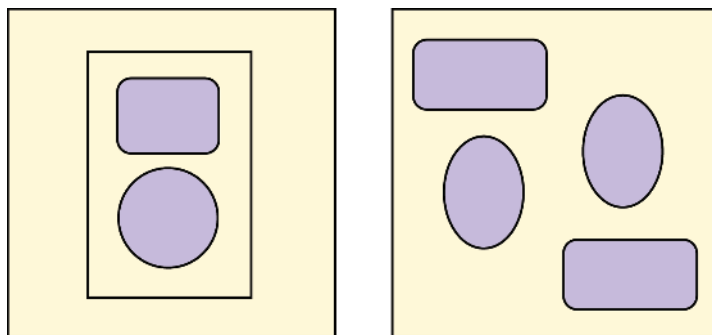


Figure 1.1
Symmetrical balance

Balance can also be *asymmetrical*, where the design is off-center; in other words, it includes uneven elements. Asymmetrical designs can lead the eye and create a sense of movement, as in Figure 1.2.

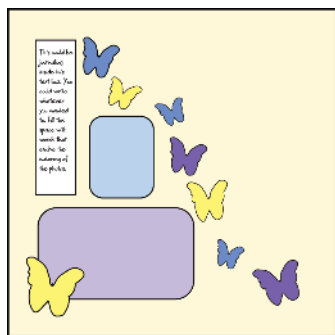


Figure 1.2
Asymmetrical balance

Balance may be *radial*, where the parts of the design actually radiate from a center or even swirl around the page, as in Figure 1.3.

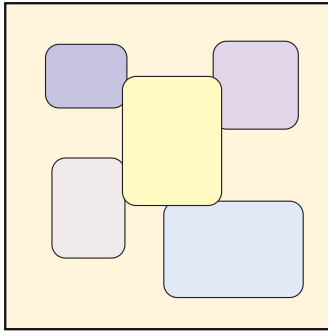


Figure 1.3
Radial balance

Radial balance can also exist without an object in the center of the page, as in Figure 1.4.

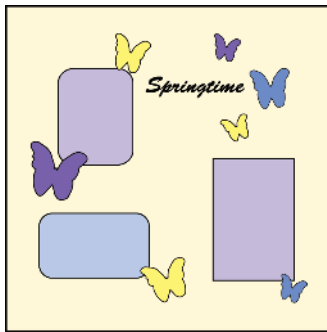


Figure 1.4
Radial balance without a
centered object

Do you see how the layout of the images in the sample scrapbook page in Figure 1.5 makes your eyes follow the story around the page clockwise?



Figure 1.5
Radial balance scrap-
book page

The Rule of Visual Center

The Rule of Visual Center is one often used by painters. This rule states that the most natural direction of eyes when looking at a page is to focus first on an area on the page or the canvas that's slightly to the right of and just above the actual center of the page, as in Figure 1.6.

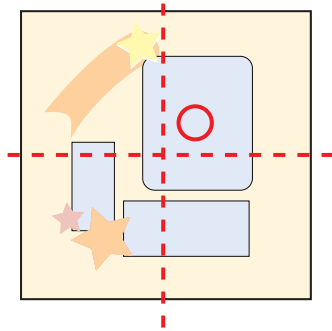


Figure 1.6
Visual center



Figure 1.7
Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*. Where do your eyes meet her eyes? The original is in the Louvre Museum in Paris.

In Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, people often say that her eyes follow the observer around the room. The reason is that Leonardo, a master from the Renaissance, used perspective to draw the way people see. In doing so he learned a number of tricks. He painted her pupils unevenly in her irises and then used the Rule of Visual Center. *Mona Lisa*'s eyes are looking at an area to the right and just above the center of the painting, and that's where viewers are looking. As viewers walk around, they're actually still staring at that same spot, so they think *Mona Lisa* is looking at them. Placing an item exactly in the center of a page makes a demand upon the viewers' eyes to stay at that point, resulting in a dull and uninteresting page. However, placing the most important information slightly off-center arouses interest and inclines the viewers' eyes toward continuous movement about the page (see Figure 1.7).

By placing the most important element or photo at this visual center, you're directing all the attention to this part of the page and saying, "Here's where the story begins." What's the first place your eye is drawn to on the scrapbook page shown in Figure 1.8? Notice how the diagonal red forms also lead you to the same spot.



Figure 1.8
On this wedding memory page, your eye is drawn just to the right and above the center of the page.

The Rule of Thirds

The Rule of Thirds is not only used by graphic designers but also by photographers. Remember this one when you take your photos as well as when you design a page. This rule states that designs are more interesting when the page is visually divided into thirds vertically, horizontally, or both and the most important elements are at the intersection of those thirds (see Figure 1.9).

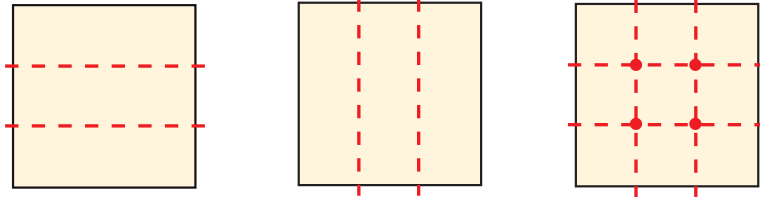


Figure 1.9 The Rule of Thirds

Photographers often use this rule by visually dividing their composition in both directions and centering the main object at one of the intersecting points. In Figure 1.10, notice where your eye lands, and look for the intersection of the thirds. See how the main subject, the Cathedral of Notre Dame, is centered at the top-right intersection? Notice also the direction of the Seine River as it curves up and around the cathedral? As the river narrows, it almost points to the cathedral in the upper-right third of the photo.

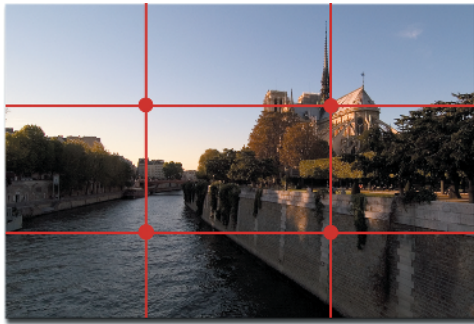


Figure 1.10

Even the bend in the river forces the eye to follow around to the right-top intersection of the thirds and toward the cathedral.

Using the Rule of Thirds, photographers often emphasize a beautiful sky or an expanse of land. The photo becomes more interesting by having the horizon line somewhere other than centered on the page. The evening sky in Figure 1.11 tells the story of a beautiful sunset.

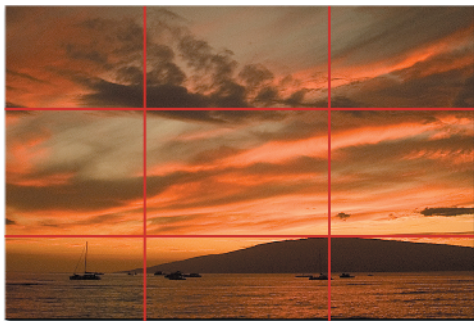


Figure 1.11 The sky is the best part of this photograph, a view from Lahaina on Maui. The horizon line is in the center of the bottom third, allowing the two top thirds to show off the sunset and the mood.

Scrapbook pages often follow the Rule of Thirds either in one direction or in a combination. On the page in Figure 1.12, although you see only two photographs, the Rule of Thirds works well with the French flag as the background. The sketch of the Eiffel Tower balances the central section. Even without journaling, you know what happened on this trip.

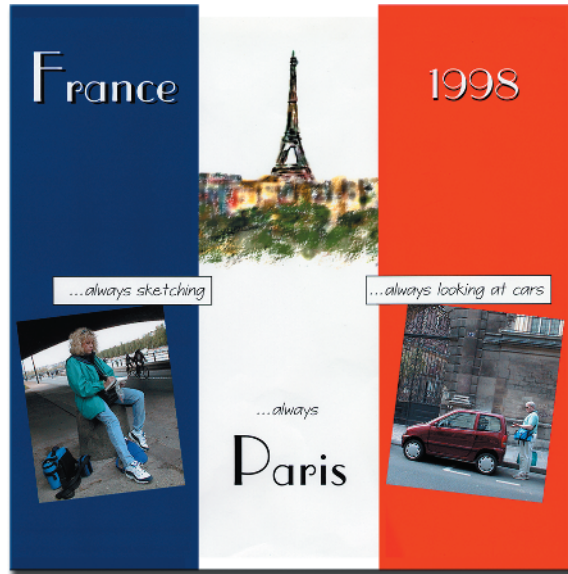


Figure 1.12

In this scrapbook page, the blue, white, and red colors of the French flag are echoed in the thirds of this simple page, as are the three words—*Paris, France, and 1998*—used to describe it.

The Rule of Negative Space

The Rule of Negative Space is so important to good design that it has two easy-to-remember nicknames: *Less Is More* and *White Space Is Your Friend*.

Negative space, also known as *white space*, is simply an area on your page that isn't filled with different elements. Negative space doesn't have to be white or black, but it should be free of distracting elements and should most often be only one color or value. Negative space helps the balance of the page and focuses the viewers' imaginations. Providing "less," or including fewer elements on the page, enables the viewer to experience "more" of the memory. Look at the two vacation scrapbook samples in Figure 1.13 and Figure 1.14. The first one is very busy with photos and many different type styles. The second page gives a calmer feeling. In the second vacation example, your eyes are drawn around the page, and you're able to focus on each photo and the journaling. Which page tells you more about the mood of the vacation?



Figure 1.13
Sunset on a wonderful vacation with a busy feeling

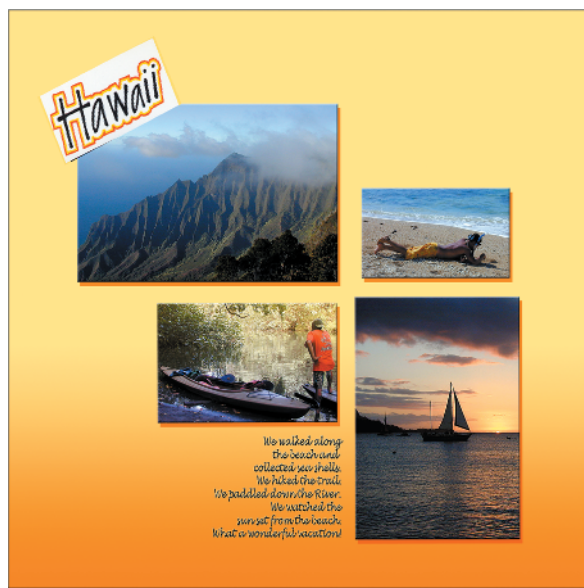


Figure 1.14
Sunset on a wonderful vacation, using the concept of "less is more"

One Last Thought...

Rules are often broken. Designers sometimes break the rules to achieve special effects or to emphasize something. Once you know the rules, you too can break them with purpose and design great scrapbook pages.