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DESIGN PRINCIPLES for the SCRAPBOOK PAGE

{LESSON FIVE} Design Principle of Contrast

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.



When one element is different from another, there is contrast. The bigger the differences, the greater the contrast, and the more likely the scanning eye will stop. Purposeful use of contrast is a key element in solid page designs.

On “For Real Neighbors” the whole cluster contrasts strongly with the base and results in a page with interestingly shaped white space that grabs the eye and moves it through the page.

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?

On "Learn to Crochet," the red heart at the center stands out most. Usually my photos are the focal points of my pages, but these photos are quite busy.

Thus, to draw the eye into the busy photos and my story, I used an oversized and boldly colored element to catch the eye. Not only does it grab the eye and get the viewer started looking at the page, it connects this larger cluster to the cluster with the title and journaling because there is a smaller but same-colored button there.

Notice how there are three clusters on the page, each isolated with white space. Because the background is a light neutral, each cluster stands out quite clearly as a separate entity. With purposeful contrast you get appeal and clarity.



contrast strengthens page design

Incorporating contrast strengthens your page design

- It adds visual interest (especially if you use strong, eye-catching contrasts).
- It gives the eye a starting point by providing 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--probably with repetitions).

Be sure that all of the contrasts you include are in support of one another and exist in a hierarchy, themselves.



The title on “It’s a Train!” stands out because of contrasts in size and color.

creating contrast

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

- size
- color
- value
- type

creating contrast | size

Create contrast with size.

When one element is an **OBVIOUSLY** different size from the others, it stands out. Two things to 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 “Halloween” is obviously larger than all other elements and immediately engages the viewer. It also emphasizes my son’s costume and demeanor this Halloween.

creating contrast | color

Create contrast with color. 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).

Note that along with color differences, you should pay attention to opportunities to vary values (relative lightness and darkness) also.

“Done That” is a high-energy story that I told with strongly contrasting green (from the photos) and orange (in the patterned paper foundation). It’s a good match for my story.

The right column is about photos and dominated by green. The left column is about the story and presented on a foundation of orange. The orange embellishment on the mostly-green photo stands out because of contrast and it contributes to the flow through the page.



creating contrast | value

Create contrast with value.

Differences in lightness and darkness are another way to draw the eye.

Here, on “We Love the Sunny Days of Summer,” the photo is the darkest piece on the page and it sits at page center.

Behind it is a blue patterned paper with a slightly lighter blue made even lighter by its mix with white. And then below that is a piece of torn paper with strips showing above and below in paler blue.

These value differences help drive the eye right into the photo in the center with its deep blue sky and water.



creating contrast | type

Create contrast with type.

Incorporating differences in type is an easy way to get contrast onto the page—especially when you combine differences in typeface with differences in the alpha and font colors, values, and sizes.

The title work on “Whimsical Procrastinator” combines large script with a sketched and outlined typeface, and it is the focal point of the page.



summary

Contrasts are at the heart of what makes a page “pop” and draw the eye. Take a look at “Without Spiders” here. Not only are there several contrasts within the title and type treatment (color, size, typeface style, and value), there are contrasts on the page as a whole: of value, color, shape, and size.

Take a look at your pages – surely you’ve been incorporating contrasts. What are your go-to techniques? And what techniques do you need to start using?