



Class by Jen White

Cluster Queen

Lesson 10 Part 1: Dependent Vertical Cluster



Why These Five Elements?

Each of the elements provided comes from my personal stash. The element set is not specific to any particular designer or kit.

- **Style.** Because I am creating a vertical cluster, I chose several linear style elements to give my cluster vertical length. I also needed a couple elements to give the cluster bulkiness near the center.
- **Variety.** The ribbon, ricrac and glitter dots are all very linear, but they each have a completely different appearance to bring variety to the cluster. The round flower and grungy overlay add additional variety in shape and texture.
- **Color.** The one bright color in my cluster will be orange. The rest of the colors are earthy tones—green, brown, and gold. You can love color and still keep the color of your clusters under control. Less is more.

Step One: Create a Cluster

- Create a dependent vertical cluster using the photo masks and six elements provided.
- Keep the photo masks in the arrangement provided.

TIP: In order to focus on cluster creation, do not add photos to the photo masks in Step One, Two, or Three.

What is a cluster?

- A cluster is a group of elements positioned close together.

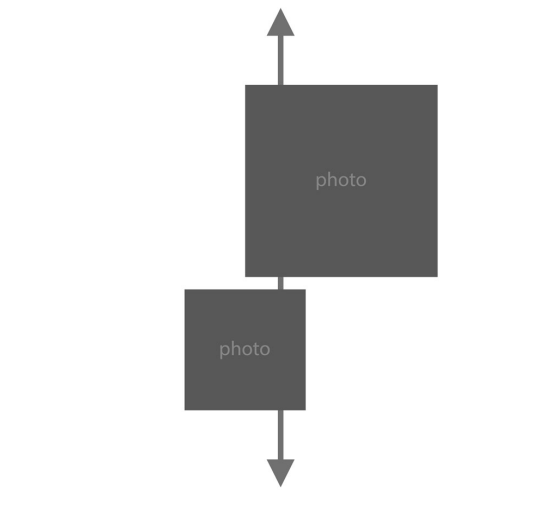
What is a vertical cluster?

- A vertical cluster is a cluster that has an obvious orientation of going from top to bottom. Think of it as a thin rectangle in a vertical orientation.



What is a dependent vertical cluster?

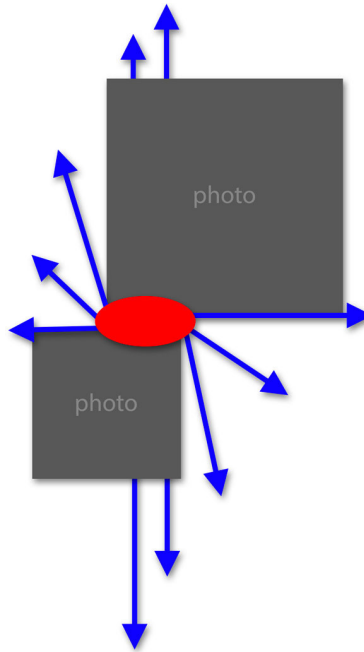
- A dependent vertical cluster is one that is completely dependent upon the photos it supports. If you were to take away the photos, the cluster would feel incomplete.
- The cluster will be partly represented above the photos, between the photos and below the photos.



Determine the Focus

All good clusters contain focus. Without focus, all you have is cluttering, not clustering.

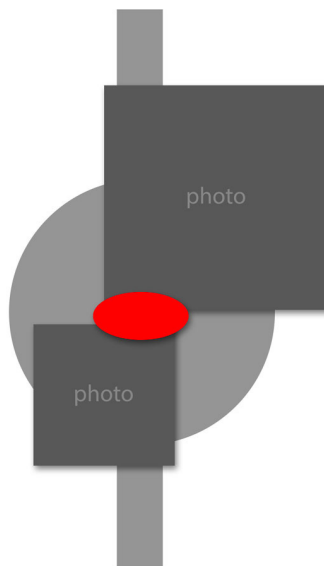
- A dependent vertical cluster contains one focal point.
- The focal point should reside between the two photos.
- All elements should stem from or pass through the focal point.



- In all clustering methods (Top Down, Bottoms Up, or Shape Starter), start the cluster by placing the photo masks in the center of a document. The photo masks should be in close proximity to each other but slightly offset vertically.

Note: The PSD document provided already contains the placement needed for the photo masks. You can use that file for your document and turn on the Background layer.

- If using the Top Down Method, add a prominent element next. A prominent element is one that is the most showy.
- If using the Bottoms Up Method, add an anchor or linear element next.
- If using the Shape Starter Method, begin with a long, skinny rectangle in a vertical orientation. Then, add a circle shape that encircles the focal point.



Tips, Tricks, and Inspiration

- Having trouble getting started? Cannot seem to think outside the box? Here's a little help from a friend.
- When creating a cluster that contains photo masks, place the photo masks on your document first.
- Follow the arrow test. All elements should stem from or pass through the focal point. See the blue arrows above.
- The linear elements should extend above and below the photo masks. You may need to duplicate them in order for them to span the long distance. Do not stretch elements.
- To maintain the linear feel of this type of cluster, do not extend elements much wider than the photo masks. You may need to delete (or mask away) parts of an element so it does not extend too far beyond the side of the cluster.
- Place anchor and linear style elements behind the photo masks.
- Anchor elements do not have to be highly visible in order to be effective. Sometimes just a little bit of an anchor goes a long way for creating beauty.
- Place some elements behind the photo mask and some in front. But, be sure leave plenty of area for the subject of the photo to shine through.
- Try flipping or slightly rotating an element for interesting looks and combinations.
- Always resize elements as you add them to your cluster. The more variety of size, the better your cluster will look.
- Vary the vertical and horizontal position of each of the elements to give the cluster an uneven perimeter.



Is your confidence growing?

Do you remember your confidence level when you first signed up for Cluster Queen? A ONE was a big hot mess and a TEN was a Cluster Queen. Where were you on the scale?

As you begin lesson ten, where would you now rate your confidence for creating a medium-sized cluster founded on solid design principles?

- Are things more in focus for you?
- Do you look at clusters with a different eye now that you've journeyed through the lessons of this class?
- Have you come to appreciate the value of scrap lifting?

Additional Challenges

You will find some lessons easier than others. If you feel like you breezed through Step One, here are some prompts and ideas to get you thinking like a Cluster Queen and challenge you to take it to the next level.

- Create several different dependent vertical clusters using the same five elements. Here are some ideas:
 - Try flipping the photo masks so they are offset in the other direction.
 - Try rearranging the linear elements.
 - Try creating a fuller cluster by duplicating elements.
 - See how many tiny clusters you can make by using only two or three of the provided elements along with the photo masks.
- Which of your dependent vertical clusters do you like the best?
- Which do you like least? Do you know why you don't like it?

CAUTION: Don't rush to Step Two; take time to experiment and find your own solution.