

TEST YOUR Skills

Design Beautiful Pages— Compelling Clusters

Test Your Skills Cluster Challenge 4

by Linda Sattgast

I invite you to walk through my thought process as I create a cluster page from scratch. After each step I'll ask you to think about what you would do next. Then click to see what I did.

The purpose of this challenge is not for you to do exactly what I do but to examine the thinking process that goes into creating a cluster page, or any page, for that matter.

My first step: Choose my photos. Here are the photos I chose as possibilities. Some of the photos were similar, so I knew I wouldn't be using all of them, but this gave me options depending on which design I chose.

The occasion was my daughter's 30th birthday. We didn't have a big party, but we tried to make her feel special and loved on this landmark day. Most of these photos were taken at Starbucks.

Once you choose your photos, what do you do next?



I edited my photos so they would look their best. These photos were taken with my iPhone under less than ideal lighting and background, but I was able to improve them significantly.

What would you do next?



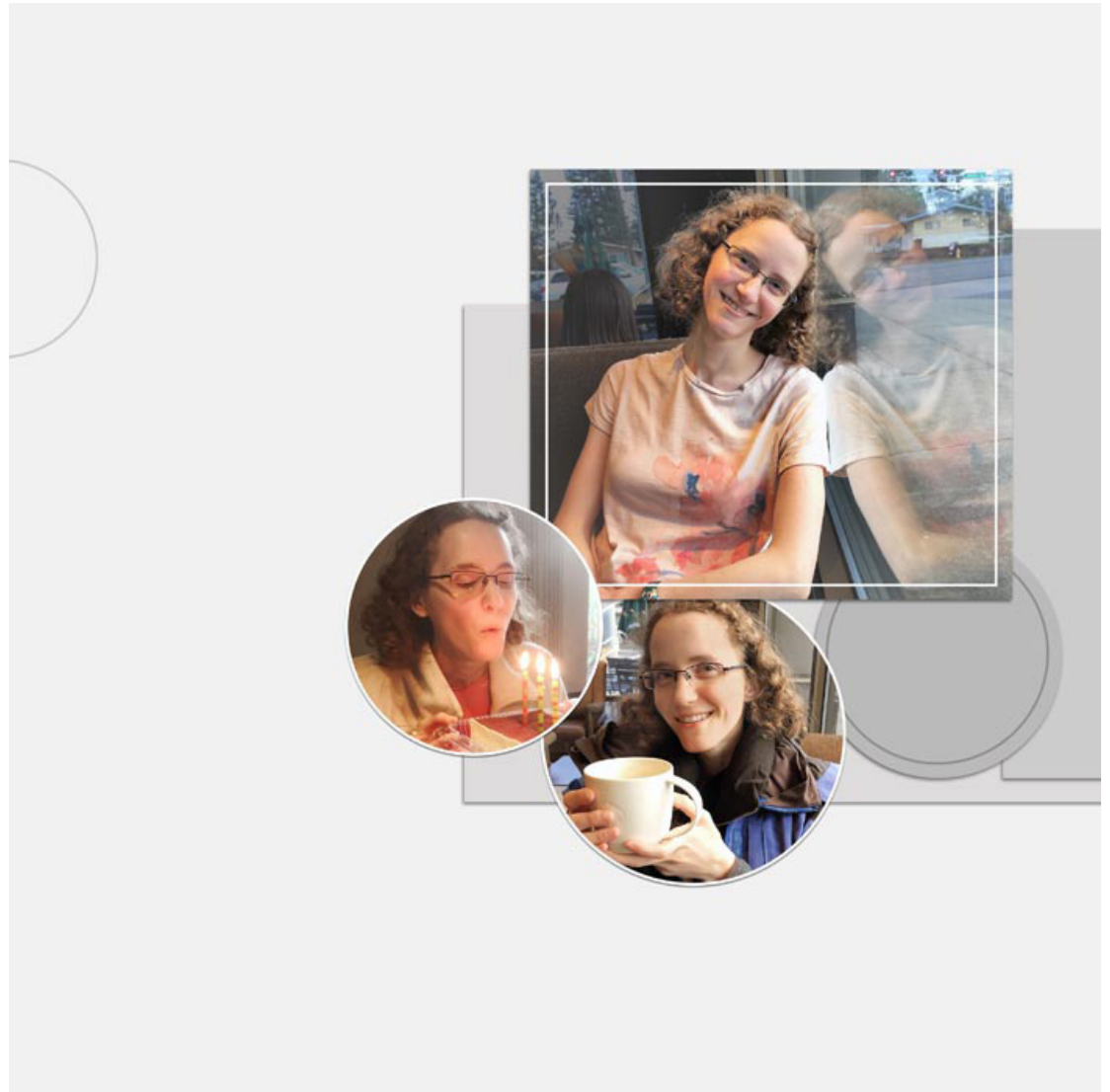
I chose a template. I could have simply arranged my photos into a cluster myself, but I like to first check to see if there's a template especially well suited for my photos or that could be easily altered to fit my photos. I take into account the number of photos I want, how well the photos would fit the shapes, and whether or not the orientation works well.

If a template fits my photos but is oriented the wrong direction, I mentally flip and rotate the template to see if it could fit better. I ended up flipping this template horizontally, which I like much better for these particular photos. I also:

- Adjusted the size of two of the photo clipping masks
- Changed the color of the template stroke on the larger photo to white
- Added a small stroke outline and drop shadow to the circle photos

This is a major accomplishment! If you like how your photos look and how they're arranged, you're on your way to a great page.

What would you do next?



I like to do my title and journaling next because it's the next most important item on the page after the photos. I'd rather fit the elements around the title and journaling than the other way around.

The word "Birthday" is black type, but it's at 15% opacity to make it soft and less in your face.

What should I do next?



Here's My Thought Process

I was now ready to decide on a kit. Should I look for a birthday themed kit? Or go with papers that matched the color of the photos? Here's what I knew:

- Most birthday themed kits are bright with more primary colors, but my photo colors were soft peach, blue, and gray/brown.
- My daughter is a young adult and I wanted to give her a more sophisticated look for her landmark 30th birthday.
- I could use a combination of kits or mostly one kit and one or two birthday elements.
- One possibility was to turn the photos into black and white and that would allow me to use any kit.
- I wanted to keep the layout fairly spare. There was already a lot going on with the page in terms of design, so I wanted to keep the elements very simple.

What would you do?

I chose a soft, pretty, sophisticated kit that had the colors I wanted and tried different paper combinations until I was happy with the look. I started with a light background paper but ended up with a medium dark gray paper instead and kept the lighter colors under the photos to draw the attention there.

Don't be afraid to try lots of papers. I tried out 9 papers for the right vertical strip alone! The few extra minutes is worth it.

Because of the darker background color, I changed the color of the word "BIRTHDAY" to white at 10% opacity. I also changed the journaling to white so it would stand out and be easy to read.

I'm now ready to add the final elements.

How many elements would you use and where would you put them?



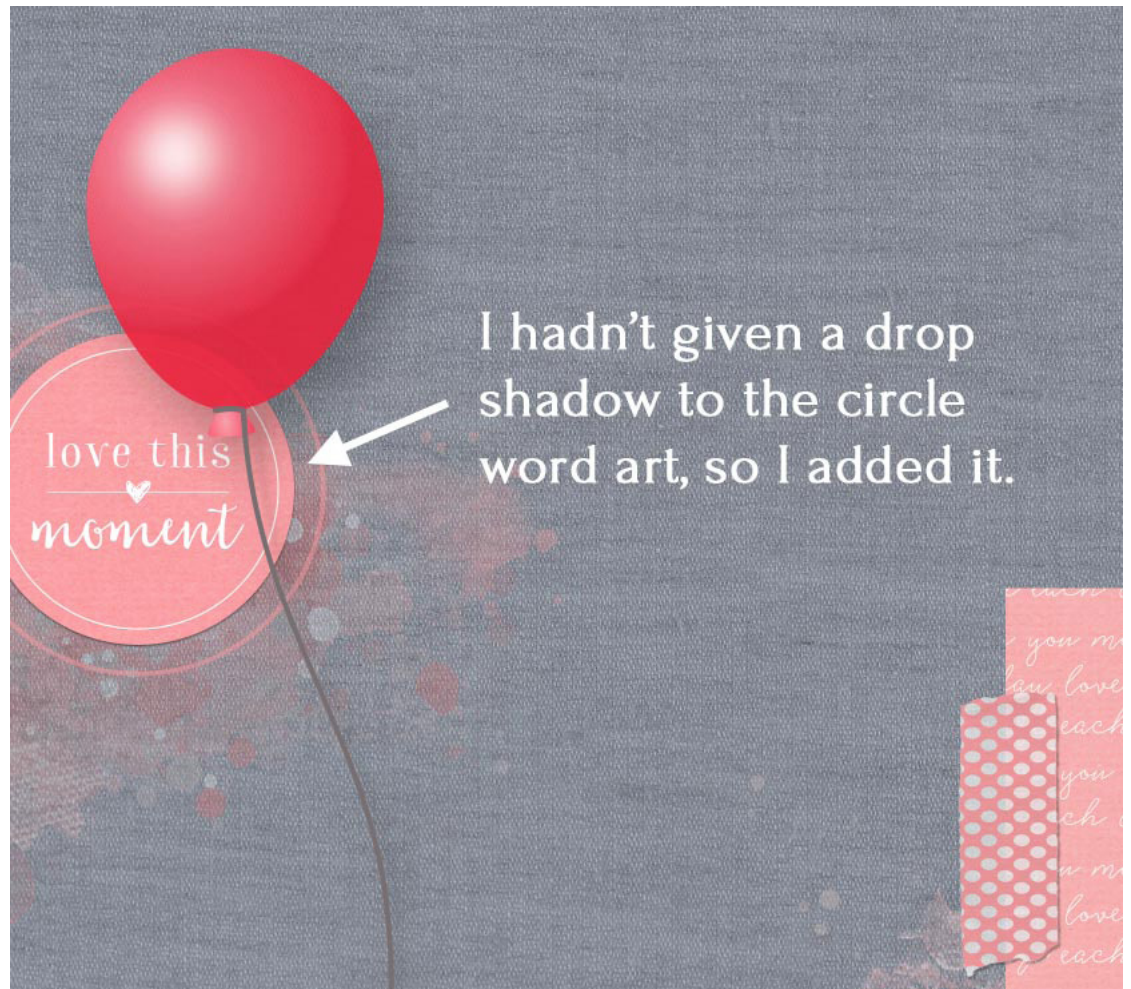
I used very few additional elements. The balloon gives just the right “birthday” vibe, but everything else stayed soft and minimal. The balloon, washi tape, and heart on a string help emphasize the diagonal flow. The flow could also be seen as a triangle because of the word BIRTHDAY.

I also added some paint scatter under the upper left cluster and under the photos and paper. I reduced the opacity of the paint scatter to make it softer and less noticeable. This added some interest and filled in one space that could have been seen as trapped space.

Is there anything left to do? If so, what is it?



YES! Always do a final checkover of your page taking special note of the drop shadows. I completely missed placing a drop shadow on the circle word art in the upper left, so here I've added it.



I also found that the paper drop shadows needed some tweaking. I don't like my shadows too high because that looks unrealistic, so I made the bottom paper shadow a lot lower and then tweaked each photo and paper layer above it, making each layer's shadow slightly larger than the shadow of the layer it overlapped.



Here's my page after making my final tweaks.

Final Thoughts

- When you design a page follow a natural progression from the most important part of the design—photos, title, and journaling—to the least important—everything else!
- If necessary, try out lots of paper combinations until you love the result.
- Don't feel the need to add lots of elements. Consider your desired flow and place a few strategic elements to emphasize the flow.
- You're not done with your page until you check your drop shadows and make adjustments as needed. This attention to detail separates advanced scrapbookers from beginners!

Credits

Photos and page by Linda Sattgast
Template from Design Beautiful Pages
Kit: Beloved by Katie Pertiet
Balloon from Make A Wish by Kim Broedelet
Fonts: Brian James Contour and Forum

