

Design Beautiful Pages— Compelling Clusters

Test Your Skills Cluster Challenge 3

by Linda Sattgast

Let's take a look at a cluster page and see how we can improve it. I'm using template 03 from the photo cluster templates. I did adjust some of the clipping masks a little, but otherwise it's pretty close to the original template.

Take a look at this page and answer some questions:

- Which photo is the focal photo? How do you know?
- What is the flow?
- Is every part of the page in good proximity with another part of the page?
- Do you see any trapped space?
- What is good on this page?
- Can you find any No-no's?
- Any Suggestions?

Credits

Page by Linda Sattgast

Photos from Pixabay.com

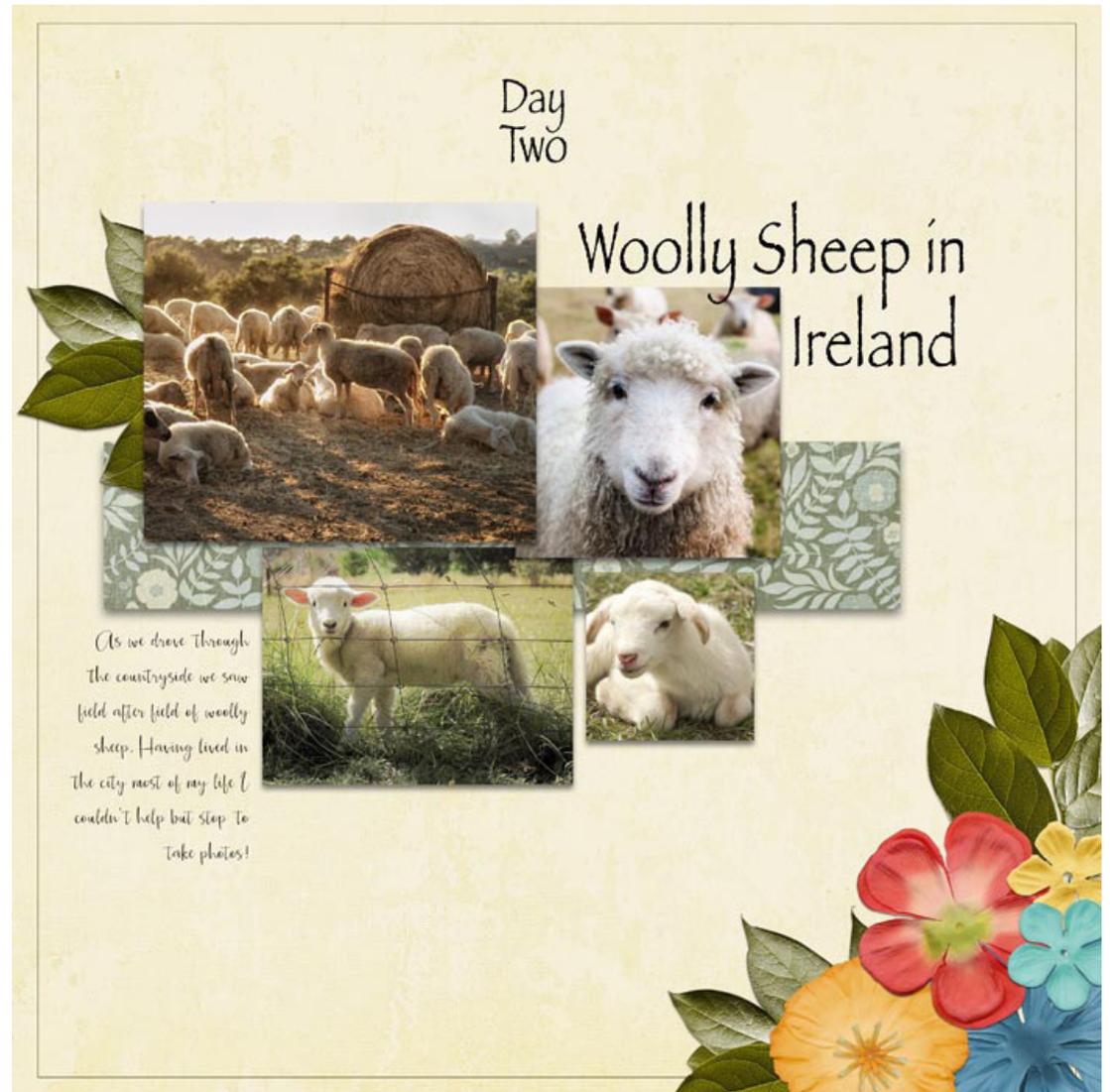
Template: Design Beautiful Pages

Paper: Farmhouse Style by Melissa Renfro

Flowers: Celebrate by Julie Billingsley

Leaves: Waiting For The Sun by Stephani Ogren

Fonts: Papyrus and Caleigh



Focal Photo

Normally the top photo is the focal photo, but in this case the top photo was taken at a distance and is a general photo of many sheep with none standing out as a focal point. The top right photo is highly focused on a single adorable sheep and next to this photo is the title, so I consider that the focal photo.

The Flow

The flow is diagonal going from the bright cluster of flowers in the lower right corner through the photos to the cluster of leaves in the upper left. It could also possibly be a triangle if you made the title one of the focal points, but the title is pretty blah.

Proximity

Almost everything is in proximity with either the cluster or with the edge of the page. Only the words “Day Two” at the top are hanging out by themselves. Ideally these should be in proximity as well.

Trapped Space

The area to the left of and below the title looks trapped. Ideally there shouldn't be a space that attracts your attention because it's boxed in.

What's Good

- The photos are great!
- The background paper is nice and goes well with the pretty patterned paper strip.
- The thin stroke outline is a great way to anchor the page and make it feel finished.
- The element clusters are nicely arranged and help create a diagonal flow.

No-No's

- The outdated and overused font “Papyrus” should be updated.
- The title (composed of type, a flat object) is over a photo (a 3-D object).
- The journaling font is too ornate. It should be a more readable font.
- The photo and paper strip drop shadows are way too high for the kind of object they are.
- The drop shadows on the flowers and leaves are too small. They should be larger depending on the size of the element and how high each object is in the stack.

Suggestions

- The photos would stand out better with a white stroke outline.
- The flower and leaf clusters are a little too big. Not much, but if they were a little smaller I think they would look better.
- I feel like there are too many flower colors. I would choose two colors—probably the salmon colored flower and the small yellow flower along with the leaves to create the cluster. However, I'm not sure flowers are the best kind of element for this page.
- The title could be much more interesting with a few tweaks.

Let's take some of these ideas and suggestions and modify the page.

Modifications

- I decided to cut the elements way down. I ditched all the elements I had before and found some smaller leaves and a leather bow that fit my subject matter better. The branch in the lower right corner seemed to complement my white sheep.
- One of the fallacies of cluster pages is the idea that you need a lot of elements. You do need a lot of elements if you're doing a "cluster dump," but this is the exception rather than the rule.
- The elements now form a triangular flow starting in the upper right by the title and cluster, down to the lower right corner, over to the leaves on the left and through the photos back to the starting point.
- I added a white stroke outline to the photos and lowered the drop shadows quite a bit. Paper doesn't stand up off the page. It should seldom have a large drop shadow.
- I changed the journaling font to Myriad Pro Light, which is much more readable.
- I changed the title quite a bit. Rather than having a long unwieldy title, try breaking the title up into two fonts, most of it in smaller letters and then one or two larger words in a fancier font. Don't be afraid to change the title to make it fit better, as I did here.
- The word SHEEP sticks out further than the mat, but in a cluster you want an irregular outer shape, so that actually works great. Notice I also made the journaling go below the edge of the bottom photo for the same reason.
- When you have a phrase like "Day Two" that isn't in proximity with anything, one option is always to simply move it! I put it on a ticket in the lower right corner, which also served the purpose of filling out my understated corner cluster.
- And finally, I used scatter paint to fill in around the clusters a wee bit so there's no feeling of trapped space.



What Else Did I Do?

One thing I do almost without exception is try out different papers for the background. While this pale yellow paper is very pretty and goes with my photos, I wondered if another paper would work better.

Here's the background paper I ended up using. I went with a black paper with dark brown edge because it made the photos look so amazing! I had to change all the type to white, of course, and the small green leaves on the left didn't show up well, so I removed them, but I'm happy with the result.

The flow is still a triangle but it goes from the title and cluster through the photos to the white journaling, to the lower right cluster, and back to the title and cluster.

There are so many choices you can make, but if you can keep it simple, you'll be much better off!

Credits

Photos from Pixabay.com

Page by Linda Sattgast

Template from Design Beautiful Pages

Paper from Farmhouse Style by Melissa Renfro

Branch: Christmas Wishes by Kristin Cronin-Barrow

Ticket: Winter Wonderland by Elise Hansen

Leaves: Country Cottage by Gina Miller

Bow: Natures Playground by Kim Broedelet

Scatter: Give Thanks by Anna Aspnes

Fonts: Euphorigenic, Orator Std, Myriad Pro Light

