

TEST YOUR Skills

Design Beautiful Pages— Minimal Design

Test Your Skills Challenge 4

The 4+ Cluster Recipe

by Linda Sattgast

So far we've had a series of three cluster challenges. In our fourth and final cluster challenge we're going to kick it into high gear and work with multiple elements to achieve beautiful clusters. We'll work from the concept of cluster shapes that I introduced in Challenge 3, but now we won't be hampered by the number of elements. We can use as many as we want.

Cluster Shape Quick Review

To review, here are the cluster shapes I talked about in Challenge 3:

- Ellipse
- Horizontal Line
- Vertical Line
- Rectangle
- Corner Intersecting Lines
- Triangle
- Half Circle
- Crescent

We'll build the cluster shapes using some very specific guidelines. I'll show you two examples, and then you can take it from there.



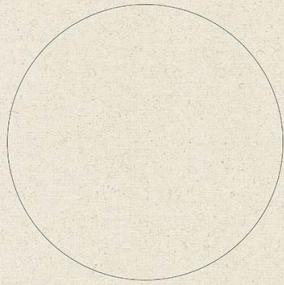
4+ Cluster Recipe

Use these five steps to create a great cluster:

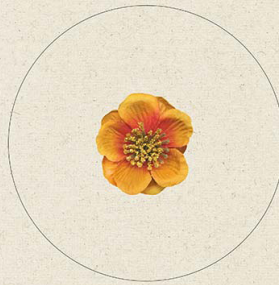
- Decide on the cluster shape.
- Choose one favorite focal element.
- Add supporting elements that provide the framework to fill in the shape.
- Apply realistic drop shadows.
- Optional: Add filler elements to round out the cluster.

Watch me go through these five steps in two examples.

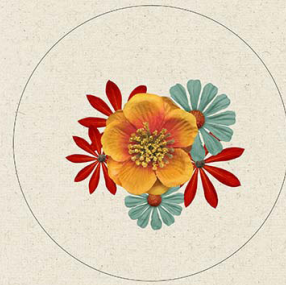
Circle Cluster



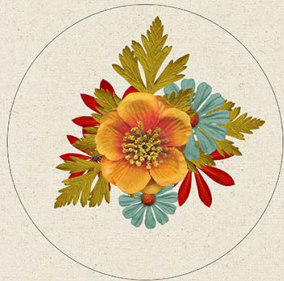
I wanted to start with a circle so I placed an actual circle on my page. If you can visualize the circle in your head that would work as well.



I chose a kit, Autumn Days by Kristin Cronin-Barrow, and actually divided the elements into focal elements, supporting elements, and filler elements. I chose this flower as my focal element. I had no final page in mind. I was just practicing.



Here is the first set of supporting elements I added to provide the framework for my cluster. I started with a group of flowers.



Then I added some green leaves—which are still considered supporting elements—as I continued to create the circle shape.



I finished up the supporting elements with another style of leaves.



You can add drop shadows anywhere along the way. I like to add them when I'm done with both the focal element and the supporting elements.



Add filler elements if desired. It's OK if some of the filler elements to go outside the circle, but the cluster as a whole should be recognizable as an ellipse, either a circle or an oval.

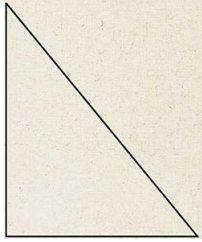


Here's my cluster without the black circle.



Here's my final cluster after creating my page. Notice that I've made some minor adjustments to make it fit my layout. If you create the layout design first you'll have fewer adjustments, but working on a cluster by itself has its merits. It can free you up to be more creative.

Triangle Cluster



For my second example I chose a triangle shape and location before I started the cluster. Again, you don't have to actually draw a shape on your page, but it can be helpful.



Here's my focal element with a drop shadow.



Here are my supporting elements.



Here I've added the filler elements.



Here it is without the triangle outline.

And here's my final page.

Now it's your turn to try the cluster recipe:

4+ Cluster Recipe

- Decide on the cluster shape.
- Choose one favorite focal element.
- Add supporting elements that provide the framework to fill in the shape.
- Apply realistic drop shadows.
- Optional: Add filler elements to round out the cluster.



One Final Thought

Even as you practice making clusters with four or more elements, keep in mind that simplicity is usually better.

So save larger clusters for an occasional page and get really good at making smaller clusters for most of your pages. You'll scrap faster and most likely your pages will look just as good or better!

Credits for All Pages

Pages by Linda Sattgast

Kit: Autumn Days by Kristin Cronin-Barrow

Font: Myriad Pro

