Cluster Queen

Lesson 09 Part 2: Dependent Bottom Edge Cluster
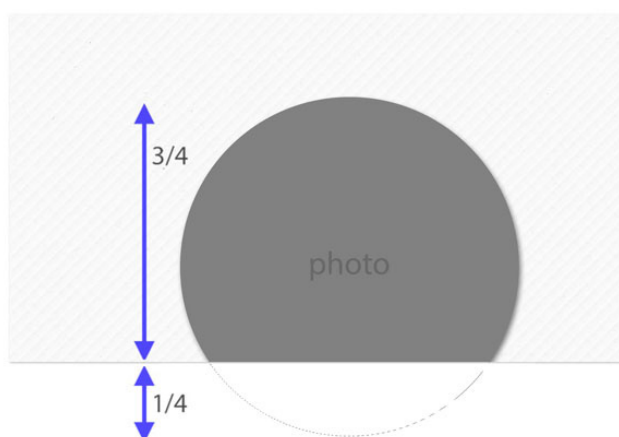

Drop Shadows

Low - envelope

Medium - photo, leaves, string
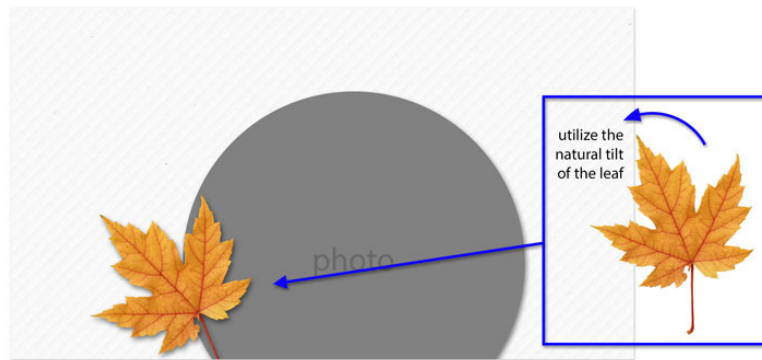
Custom - leaves

Here is one possible example of a dependent bottom edge cluster using the photo mask and the six elements provided. This is an average design, not too minimal and not too fully loaded.
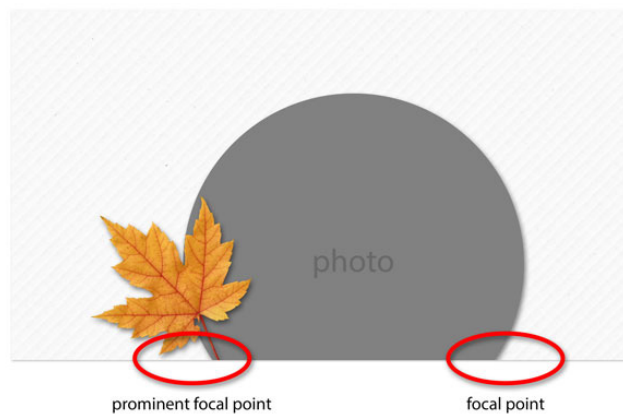
Evaluate My Cluster—Here's What I Did

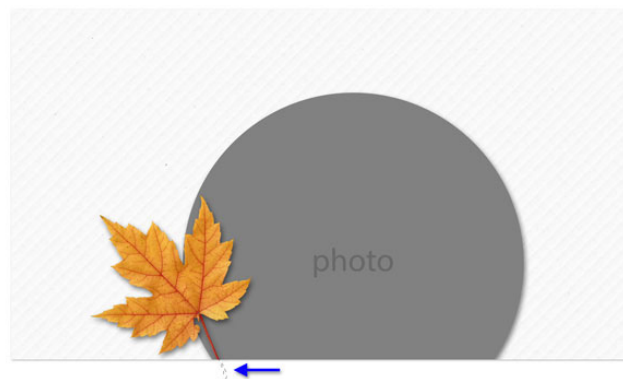Remember, it's okay if your process of cluster creation is different than mine.

- I placed the photo mask at the bottom edge of my document.
- When using a circular photo mask, a ratio of three-fourths showing to one-fourth hidden will produce a nice design but still give plenty of room for your photo to show.
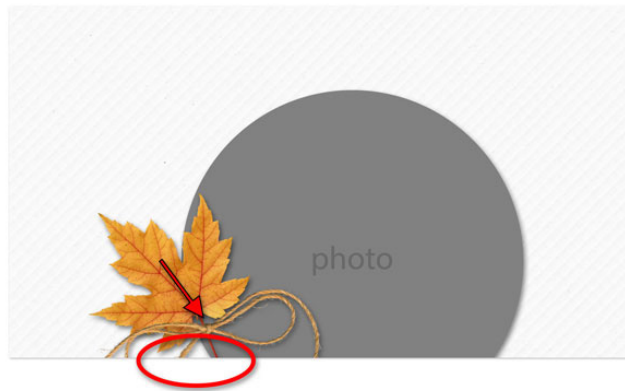
- Working from the top down, I choose to work with the yellow leaf first.
- Because the leaf already contained a natural tilt to the left, I placed it on the left edge of the photo mask and tilted it a little farther so that less of the photo would be obstructed.
- I might need to alter the tilt or position of this element later depending on what photo I clip to the mask.
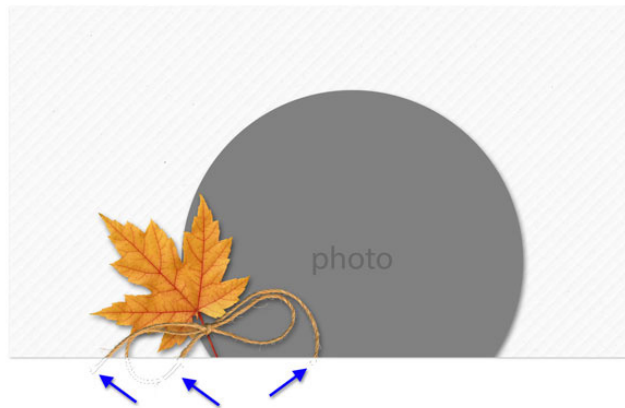

- Adding the yellow leaf on the left established which side of the photo mask would contain the prominent focal point.
- Remember, this style of cluster will have two focal points. The prominent focal point will contain the bulk of the elements and be the most showy.
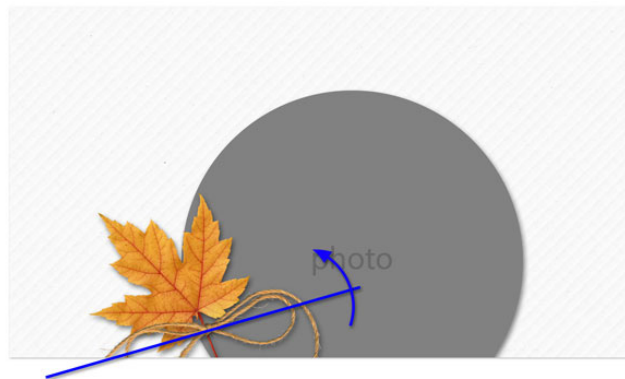

- As instructed for all edge clusters, part of the leaf is traveling off the edge of the page.
- I made sure to leave a little room to tie the bow to the leaf in the next step.
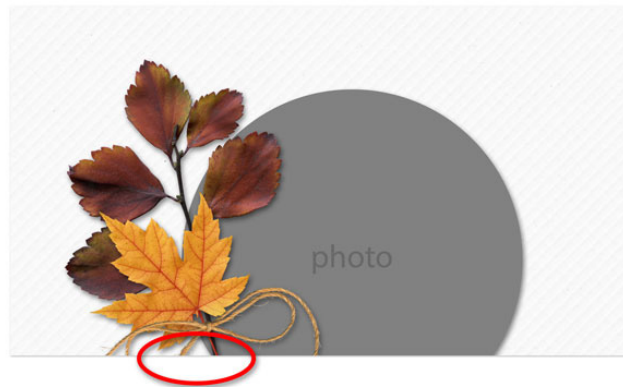
- Because the left side of the photo mask contains the prominent focal point, I next added the bow to that side.
- I personally always try to make sure a bow is tied to something, so in this case the bow is tied to the stem of the leaf.
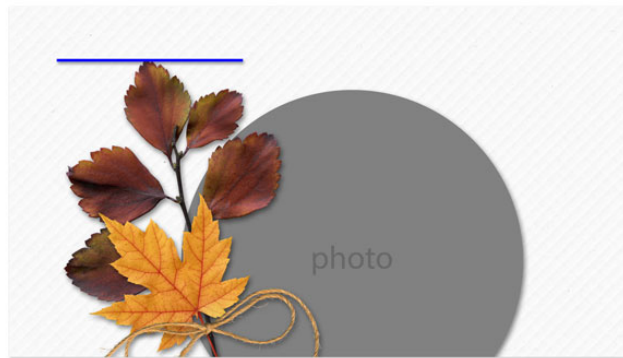

- Placing the bow this low also insured that it would travel off the edge of the document, but it's still high enough that I can still tell it is a bow.
- I made sure the size of the bow was in good proportion to the size of the leaf.
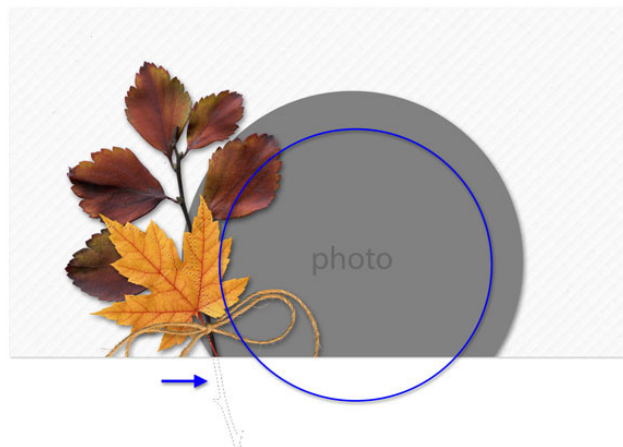

- The bow is tilted to the left, which is up and away from the bottom edge of the photo mask.
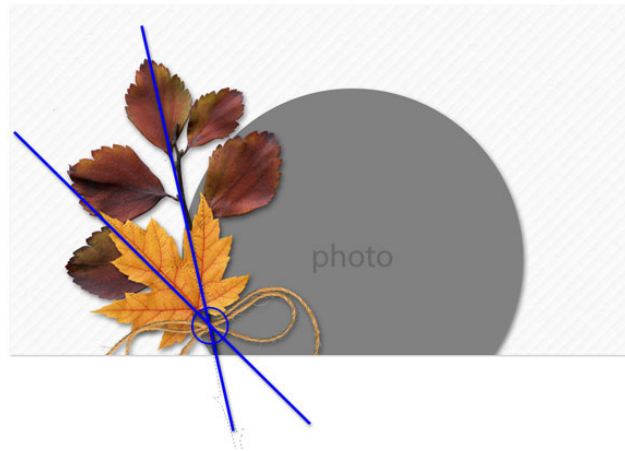- All elements should point up and away from that edge.

- I added the reddish leaves as a nice contrast to the yellow maple leaf.
- They were added to the left side of the photo mask to support the prominent focal point.

- The natural length of the element was used to give the cluster a bit of height, but I made sure the leaves didn't extend too much higher than the photo mask.
- The proportion of the reddish leaves to the yellow leaf is also as it would be in real life.

- As with all the other elements in the cluster, a portion of the reddish leaves is traveling off the edge of the document.
- The reddish leaves are positioned so that none of the leaves are majorly obstructing the photo.
- This element may need to be adjusted after a photo is clipped to the mask.

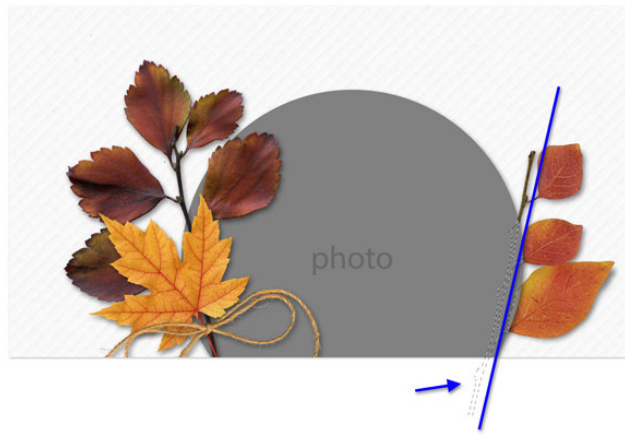- Because of the presence of a bow, I also made sure the stem of the reddish leaves was lined up with the stem of the maple leaf and the knot of the string. Details like this can make a big difference.
- The tilt of the leaf stem is also something I paid close attention to, making sure the tilt of the reddish leaves is different than the tilt of the yellow leaf.

- I used the orange leaves to balance out the cluster and add interest at the other focal point.
- This element not only brings balance, it also adds a nice splash of coordinating color.
- The size of orange leaves is proportional to the other leaves, but I made sure to vary the height of them to give the cluster interest.
- Placing the orange leaves behind the photo mask also makes the right side of the cluster less prominent.

- As with the other elements, the stem of the orange leaves is traveling off the bottom of the document and is tilted up and away from the bottom edge of the photo mask.
- Notice that the leaves are pointing up and away from the edge as well.
- If this element were on the left side of the photo mask, I would have flipped the element so the leaves were pointing the opposite way.
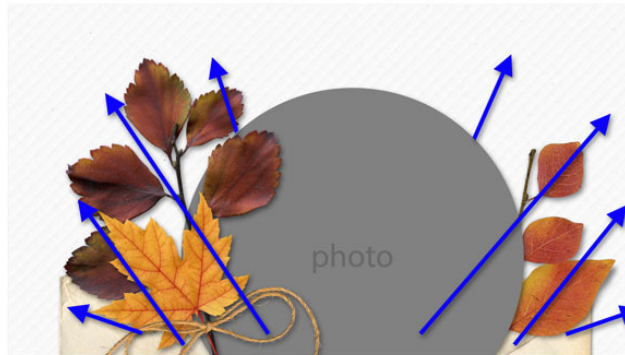

- I added the envelope as an anchor.
- If you compare the original entire envelope to what you see here, you can see that I only placed about one-fourth of the envelope on the document.
- As in most situations, you don't need to see a lot of an anchor in order for it to be effective. Think of this style of anchor as a foundation from which to build your element house.

- When deciding how wide to make the envelope, I used the width of the entire cluster as a guide.
- If the envelope was much skinnier, you wouldn't really notice it was there.
- If it were much larger, it would look awkward in comparison to the rest of the cluster.
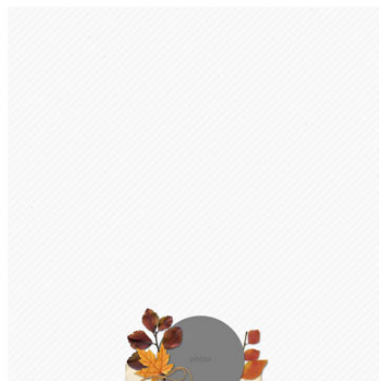
Test the Cluster

Let's put my design to the two tests for this style of cluster.

- I put the cluster to the arrow test.
- The arrow test shows that all elements should be pointing up and away from the bottom center of the photo mask.
- This this test does not mean that the area around the photo mask has to be filled up with elements. Less is more.

- I put the cluster to the clip test.
- The clip test is where you should imagine two clips, each placed on the edge of the document and positioned where the photo travels off the edge.
- In this test all elements should find themselves clipped down.

- Here is how my dependent bottom edge cluster looks in relation to my 12x12 inch scrapbook page.
- Dependent bottom edge clusters are not meant to be mini, but they are also not meant to be big and bossy.
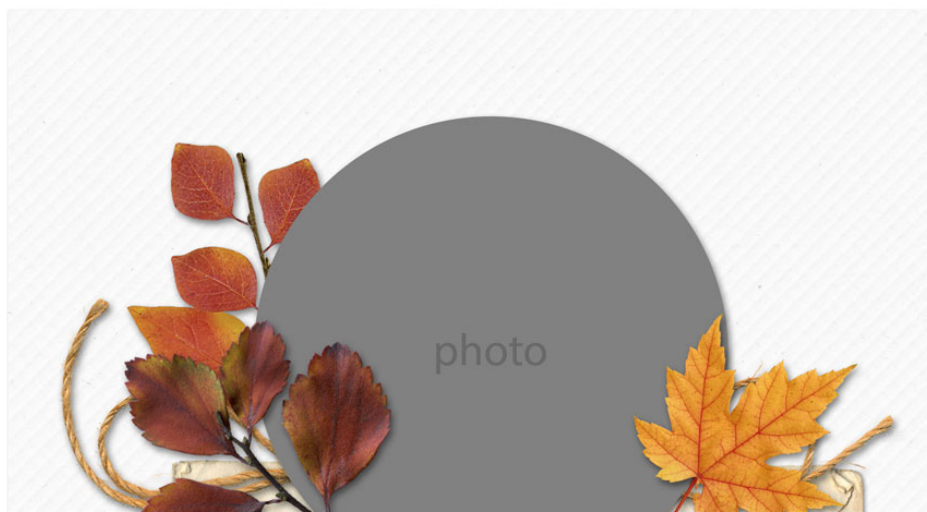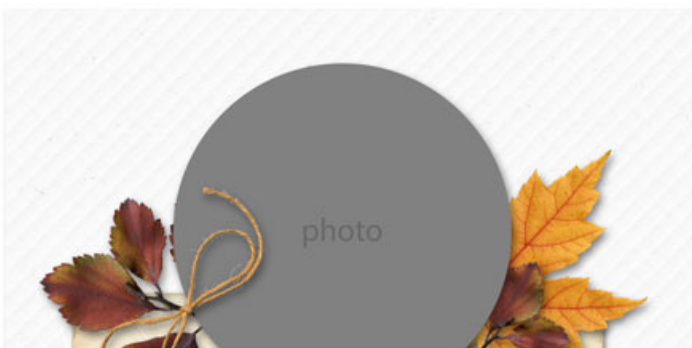
Step Two: Copy My Cluster Exactly

- Take the time to create an exact copy of my dependent bottom edge cluster above. Use the photo mask and elements I provided.
- Pay special attention to the order and position of each layer and element.
- Follow the advice of drop shadow depth for the photo mask and each of the five elements.

More Inspiration

Did you happen to try the Additional Challenges above? I had a little bit of time to play. For some extra practice, try copying these designs as well.

In the cluster above, I used the string as an anchor rather than an accent bow.

I really enjoy making average sized clusters, but I find my style of scrapbooking is more minimal in design and often only includes two or three elements per cluster. Here are some examples of what I came up with.

What's Your Preference?

Which of my additional clusters do you like best? Your answer might help you narrow down what your style preference is when it comes to clusters.

ATTENTION: Please do not post your results of Step Two on the class Facebook Group. Doing so may sideline the creative process for your fellow classmates.

If you're mega excited to share your result of Step Two, I'd love to see it. You can email it to me or send it via the Help Desk.

CAUTION: Don't rush to Step Three until you've successfully completed Step Two.