

Designing in *Thirds*

love this picture



by Linda Sattgast

Design Beautiful Pages

Lesson 04-01: Creative Team Inspiration

In this crop of inspirational pages I found that one main factor made the pages I chose to feature in this video stand out instantly—the photos. The single best thing you can do to create an awesome page is to use photos that contain some or all of the following features:

Uncluttered

It's so easy to take photos that include unwanted clutter, whether it's a messy house or a busy landscape, so look for ways to capture a photo without the clutter, or crop the clutter out if you can.

Using a camera with a short depth of field can allow you to blur out unnecessary clutter in the background, but if you don't have that, work with the photo in Photoshop or Photoshop Elements using tricks to minimize the cluttered part and focus on the good part.

Vynette made her page as uncluttered as the photo, and I love it! The background paper is lightly patterned and matches some of the tan colors in the photo, and her cluster, which uses the Rule of Odds is just right. By putting her journaling in the upper right she created a diagonal flow, and notice that since it's on the right she made the type right justified, which is a nice touch!



Well-Lighted and Color Corrected

The page by Joyce illustrates another good photo principle: It's well-lighted with correct color. If a photo needs correction in either of those areas, it can be done pretty quickly in Photoshop or Photoshop Elements. I use the actions from my class *Fix Photos Fast* to make short work of lighting and color problems.

Even though there's a lot of detail in Joyce's photo, the background is slightly out of focus and the main subject is sharply in focus.

Candid

Here's another thing I like about both photos on Joyce's page—they're candid! While a posed photo can be great, a good candid photo is a jewel.

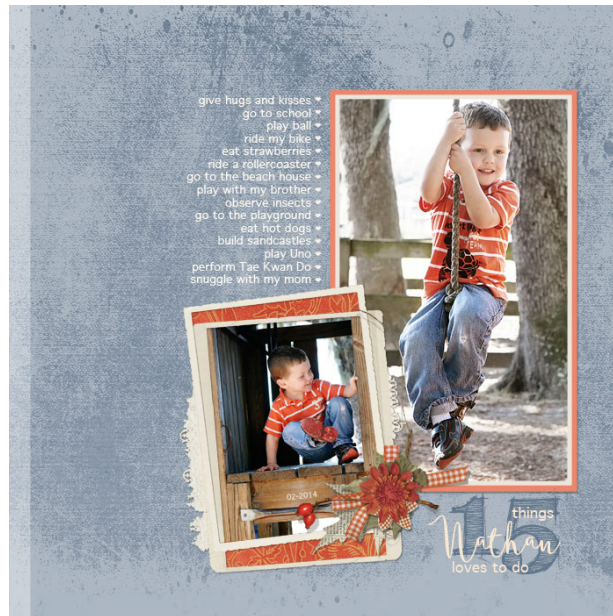
The page design is so inviting as well. There's a triangle of orange T-shirts, which is fun. Rather than trying to incorporate more orange, Joyce used the complementary color of green to keep her page calm and inviting. I love the word art for the title, and the white type makes the journaling stand out. .

Joyce also uses only a few elements. Don't feel like you need to add a lot of elements onto a page. Often, fewer elements are better than many.



This page, also by Joyce, doesn't demonstrate designing in thirds but it's a great example of overlapping two photos, which Jenifer also talked about. The photos are candid and well composed with good lighting. I love how Joyce used colors on her page that match the boy's orange shirt and jeans.

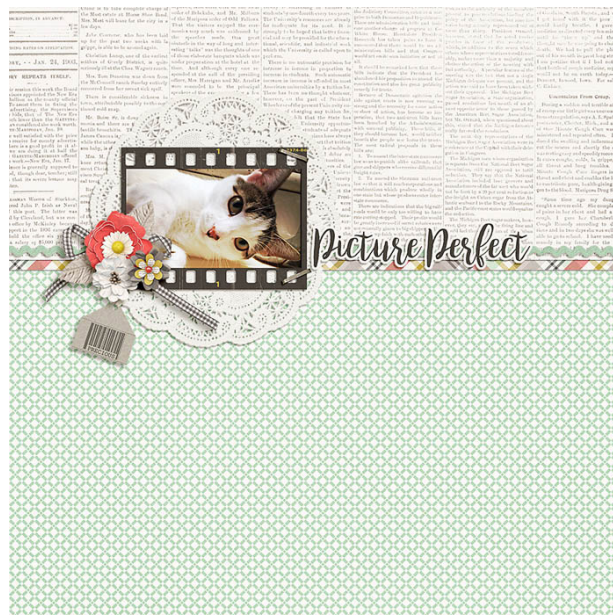
This is a good example of proximity with all the photos and elements snuggled up together for a unified look!



Readable

Another good quality of a photo is that it's "readable." You can tell instantly what the photo is about, whether it's large or small.

This page by Danica has a great photo of her kitty, and her page is delightful! She's used patterned paper to good effect on both sides, and placed her photo and beautiful cluster on the line between them, which is a great spot for a designing in thirds page!



So, to review, these are the most essential photo qualities:

- Uncluttered, or, if busy, at least with a detectable main focus
- Well lighted and color corrected
- Readable. You can quickly tell what it is.

In addition, here are some other photo qualities to look for:

Inspiring

Don't you love a photo or page that inspires you? This page by Kathy has two inspiring photos. I love the sharp focus of the blossoms on the right in contrast with the out-of-focus trees in the background.

The bicycle photo is also inspiring. I don't know why, but there's just something about a bicycle that inspires me, especially if it's a fun color like this one. The green color and spot of pink matches the colors in the larger photo.

Kathy's page design is also beautiful. She used artistic paper and formed a triangle with her three element clusters: the photo and raffia ribbon, the line of journaling, and the decorative button.



Endearing

Another great characteristic is a photo that's endearing. There's just something about this sweet little doggie face on Lori's page that's irresistible! Same with babies and kitties, but really any photos that evoke an emotion can be endearing.

I love the monochromatic page Lori created using thirds with three different papers. The colors perfectly match the photo, from the light tan colors to the black talk bubble that matches Callie Jo's nose. Lori's clusters are beautiful and well placed to form a diagonal line through the photo, and the journaling is delightful!



Photo Effect

And finally, I wanted to point out that giving your photo a “Photo Effect” to enhance it is often a fun way to go as Deborah did here. It appears that the photo has been lightened and slightly desaturated, which makes it look terrific.

Deborah's page is also terrific. Her title and elements form a circle of focus around the main subject, and her colors are delicious. I love how designing in thirds gives such a great opportunity to feature one excellent photo in a big way!



Priority: Good Photos

Make your first priority the photo. Then create a designing in thirds page keeping it simple like this excellent page by Vynette. I love the triangle of pink with the rose, the hearts in the upper right, and the rose colored part of the element cluster.



Keep in mind that designing in thirds is perfect for featuring patterned paper as well. Here's an example by Danica of using patterned paper with a designing in thirds page. The patterned paper works because the photo is sepia and doesn't clash with the colors, and the cluster perfectly complements the background floral paper.



You can also use bright colors and patterned paper to add some spunk to your page as Lori did here. The patterns aren't over-powering and simply add to the fun of the photo. Notice she's used two main colors, the teal and the orange. It'll be easier to create a great page if you stick with two colors.

So now that you're inspired, go forth and create your own inspiring pages using designing in thirds or overlap!

