# Designing in Thirds



*love this picture*

by Jenifer Juris

# Design Beautiful Pages

## Lesson 01-01: Designing In Thirds—Classic

In this lesson, I'll show you how Designing In Thirds can be one of the easiest ways to make a page with high visual impact. Most designs focus on the placement of photos, but with Designing In Thirds, the focus is on the background.

### Credits

Photo and page by Jenifer Juris
Kit: Family Time by Meg Designs
Fonts: Veteran Typewriter, Money Penny



### Two Room Cabin Analogy

Here's an analogy to help you understand what I mean by the background. Let's say "Two Room Cabin" is the name of a particular style of cabin that only has two rooms. You can put as many pieces of furniture in the cabin, as you wish, but nothing you add to the cabin will change the floor plan. It's still a Two Room Cabin. Since you only have two rooms, you'll want to tastefully decorate them and avoid cramming them with too much stuff!

In a similar way, Designing In Thirds is the floor plan, or style of background for your page. Like our two-room fictitious cabin, it has two spaces. One space takes up 2/3 of the background and the other space takes up the remaining 1/3 of the background. You can flip or rotate the design, but it still has two sections, a 2/3 section and a 1/3 section. You can fill each of these background sections with either a photo or a paper—it's up to you.
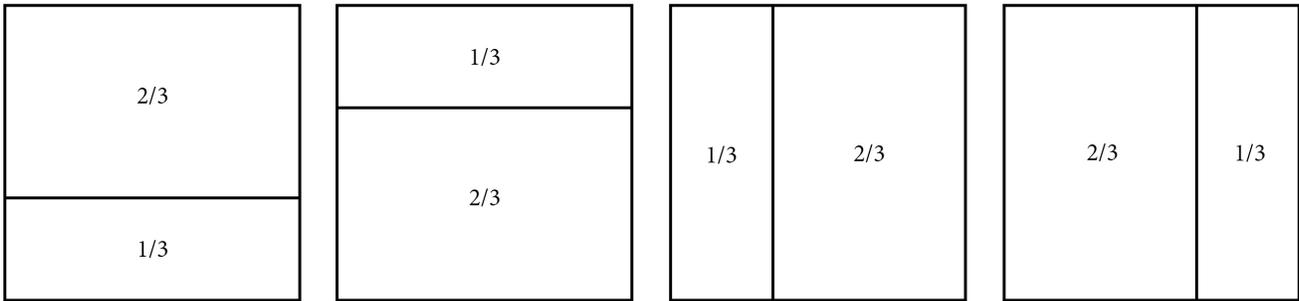


## Definition of Designing In Thirds

A Designing In Thirds scrapbook page has a background that's divided into two parts: 1/3 and 2/3 AND each part is filled with either a photo or paper. There are four classic ways to fill these sections.

## Classic Style #1

Use two different but complementary papers, one in each section, with the plainer paper in the larger section.
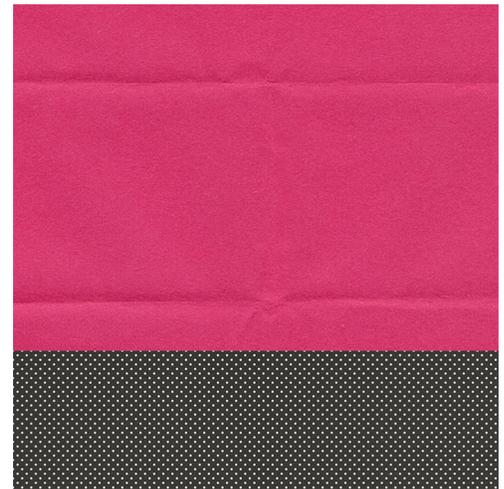


Here's a page using Classic Style #1. Adding photos, elements, and journaling does not change the design. It's still a Designing In Thirds page using paper for both background sections.

(Orcas Island page credits at the end.)

Here's another page that uses Classic Style #1. Even though the two background sections are rotated they both contain paper, one patterned and one plain.

**Credits**

Page by Jenifer Juris
Photos: Jody Finley (sister)
Kit: XOX by Brandy Murry
Fonts: Betterfly, Glamour Brush
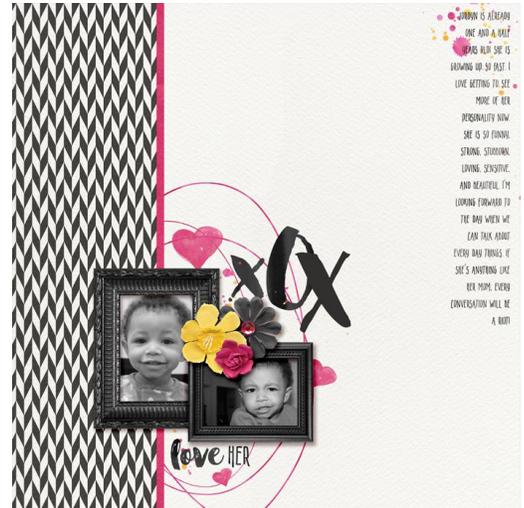


## Classic Style #2

Fill 2/3 of the background with a photo and fill the remaining 1/3 background section with paper.
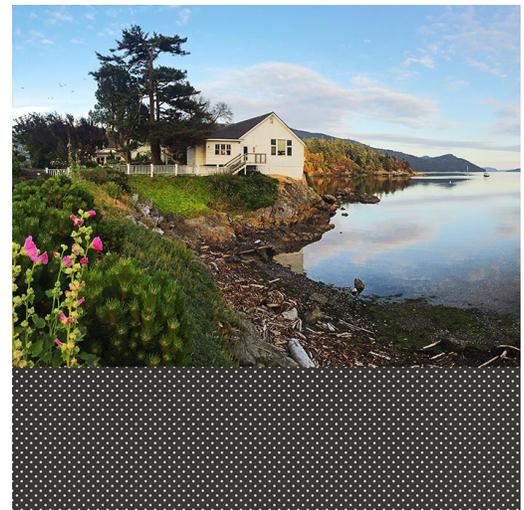


Once you've made your background you can finish your page with any additional items. With Classic style #2 the photo is so large that it can't help but be the main attraction, so you don't need to much more to your page.

(Orcas Island page credits at the end.)
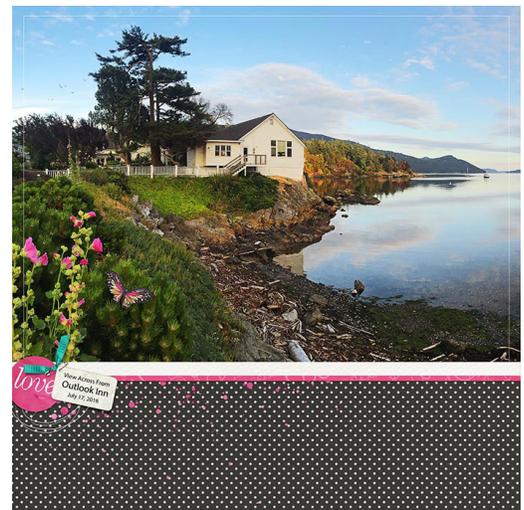
I used Classic Style #2 on this page, only with a different orientation. It's a great for photos that just beg to be the main attraction!

**Credits**

Photo and page by Jenifer Juris
Kit: Eggs In My Bonnet by Amber Shaw
Font: Money Penny



## Classic Style #3

Classic Style #3 is to put a photo in the 1/3 part and a paper in the 2/3 part of your background. This is the exact opposite of Classic Style #2 where the photo resides in the larger 2/3 portion of the page. It's a little harder to find a great photo that fits the smaller one/third portion of the page, but, when it's done right, it's fantastic!
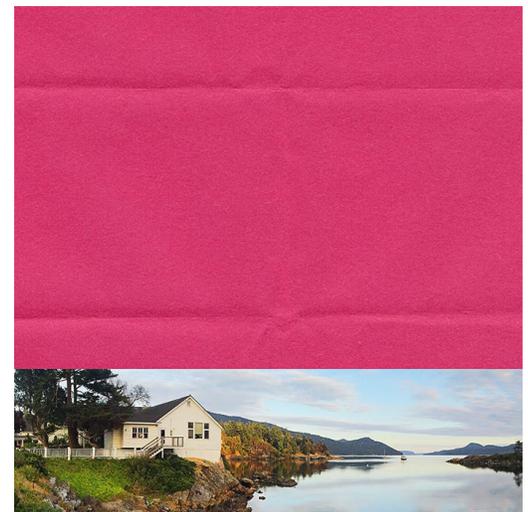


Here's the finished page. Don't feel like you have to fill the entire two-thirds portion. A big part of the beauty of Designing In Thirds is the lovely empty space that draws your eye to the photo.

(Orcas Island page credits at the end.)
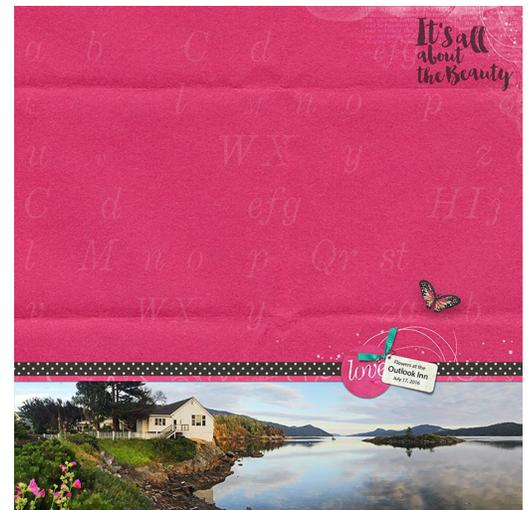
Here's the same page with a cluster of photos. Does this change the Designing In Thirds design? No it doesn't. It only combines a different arrangement of photos with the Designing In Thirds background design, and that's perfectly fine to do. This is an important distinction with Designing In Thirds pages. The design is based on the background, not the photos and elements you put on top of the background.

If we go back to our cabin analogy we can see that adding furniture to a cabin doesn't change the fact that it's a two room cabin. The floor plan doesn't change when you move in some furniture and hang pictures on the wall.

(Orcas Island page credits at the end.)



Even though the additional elements and photos don't define the design, they are very important to getting a great looking page, so I highly recommend that you watch the Finishing Touches video by Jen White where she gives specific suggestions for adding photos, elements, titles, and journaling to Designing In Thirds pages.

Don't forget you can rotate or flip a design. Here I used the same Classic Style #3 that was used on the previous page, but I placed my 1/3 section at the top. I love the predictability and versatility of this design!

### Credits

Photos and page by Jenifer Juris
Kit: Beloved by Katie Pertiet
Fonts: Amelia Script, Monney Penny, Veteran Typewriter



### Classic Style #4

Classic Style #4 is the hardest of all to pull off. This is where you place a photo in both sections of the Designing in Thirds background. When you have two photos covering the background, it's important that the photos complement each other well and are "readable" in the sense that you can tell what each photo is about and that the photos look good together.

(Orcas Island page credits at the end.)

Any time you have a sharply divided background you'll want to place a ribbon or paper strip along that dividing point, which has been done in every example page I've shown. It's part of what makes this design work. This page also has a fun out-of-bounds technique with the flower extending up from the lower photo.

Again, combining two photos, one in each section of the design, is harder than you might think, so if you're just getting started with Designing In Thirds, choose one of the easier classic designs.

## Challenge

Take a look around your favorite gallery to see if you can identify some Designing In Thirds pages and practice making your own!

## Template Folders

The Designing In Thirds templates are divided into two folders, classic and advanced. There's a third template folder for Overlapping Photos.
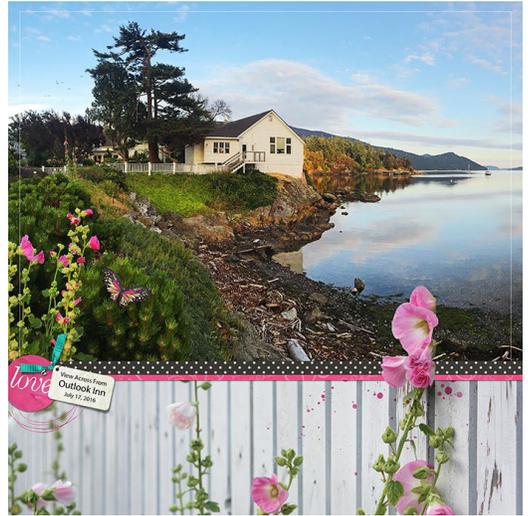


dbp03-tem1-thirds-classic-12x12

dbp03-tem2-thirds-advanced-12x12

dbp03-tem3-overlap-12x12

## Credits for the Orcas Island example pages

Photos and pages by Linda Sattgast
Kit: XOX by Brandy Murry
Tag: A Mothers Love by Misty Cato
Font: Myriad Pro

## Lesson 01-02: Designing In Thirds—Advanced

Now that you're familiar with the concept of Designing in Thirds, let's dig deeper and use some advanced techniques to be a little more subtle and artistic. There are three categories of templates in the Advanced template folder.

### Category #1 Who Moved The Cheese?

In these templates one of the sections has been moved, but it's still a Designing In Thirds page. You may have to train your eye to see it, so don't feel bad if you struggle seeing the Designing In Thirds design in these templates. Designing In Thirds is much easier to recognize when the "room" divisions stay in their proper places!

If we were to carry the cabin analogy over to the advanced templates, we would have a one room cabin with a large area rug representing the 2/3 part of the design. You can move the rug around, but no matter where you put it, the rug will fill 2/3 of the room.



Let's take a look at some ways we could work with this configuration. The template labels the dark gray layer as a photo clipping mask, so you could put a photo there and add a plain paper background and some paper strips.



Or, just because we can, now that the 1/3 section is divided, we can put patterned paper in the lower section and plain paper in the upper section. At this point, though, the designing in thirds design begins to get a little lost, because your eye doesn't connect the two parts of the 1/3 design. There's nothing wrong with doing this, if you're OK with it not being crystal clear that you're designing in thirds.
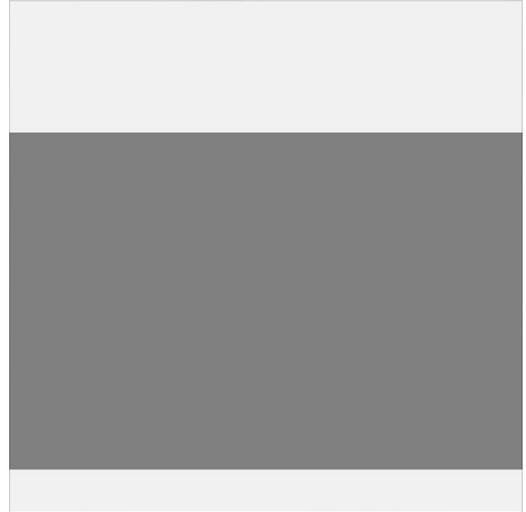
To make it look more like a Designing In Thirds page use two papers that are a lot closer in appearance. Here I simply lowered the opacity of the patterned paper until it matched the plain black paper better. By doing this I can have my fun and still have a proper Designing In Thirds design.

We could also add a second smaller photo overlapping the larger photo. These aren't the only possibilities, but you get the idea. Now let's go a different direction.



You can also fill both sections with plain paper. Or use plain and patterned paper.

As before, if you use a combination of patterned and plain paper in the 1/3 area, the page begins to lose its visual impact as a 1/3 2/3 page design. So you can do the same thing we did with the previous example and make the two papers match better.



When it's time to add photos we can use a small photo overlapping one of the dividing lines, which would give us a lot of white space, or empty area, that would lead the viewer's eye to the photo, or we can take advantage of that nice big space and do something else with it—like put a rectangular grid in it!

Does adding a rectangular grid of photos change my Designing In Thirds design? Not at all, because the design is all about the background. Of course, the page as a whole is definitely a combination of styles—Designing In Thirds for the overall page design and Rectangular grid for the photos, and that's perfectly fine. We'll be talking more about how you can combine designs effectively in future lessons, but feel free to try it yourself at any time.

Adding elements and journaling doesn't affect the design either. We still have a Designing In Thirds background coupled with a rectangular grid photo design.
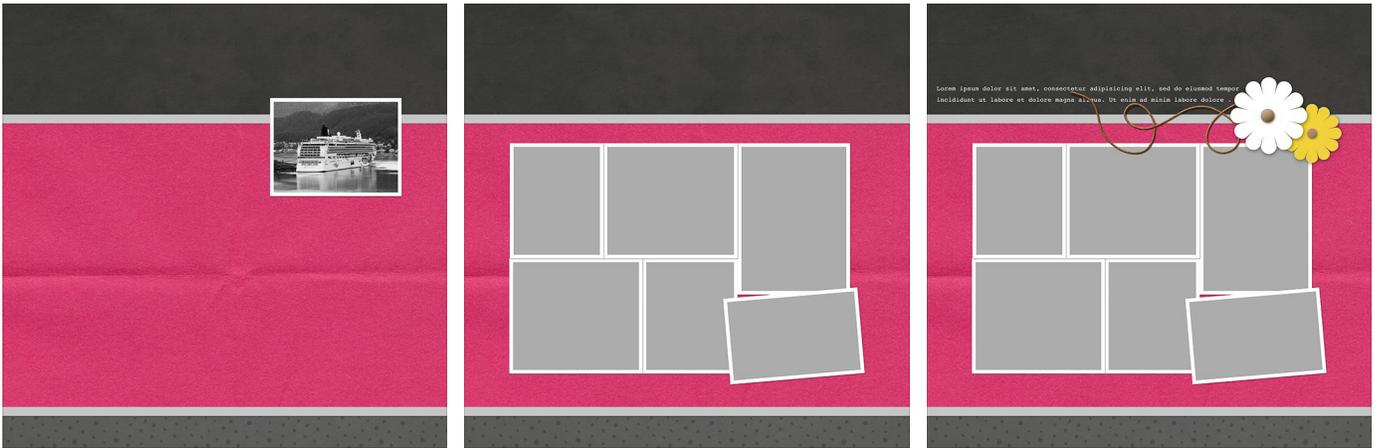


There are three other templates in the "Who Moved The Cheese?" category. This one is very similar to the one I just showed you, but the 2/3 template section is higher on the page and there's a mat behind it.
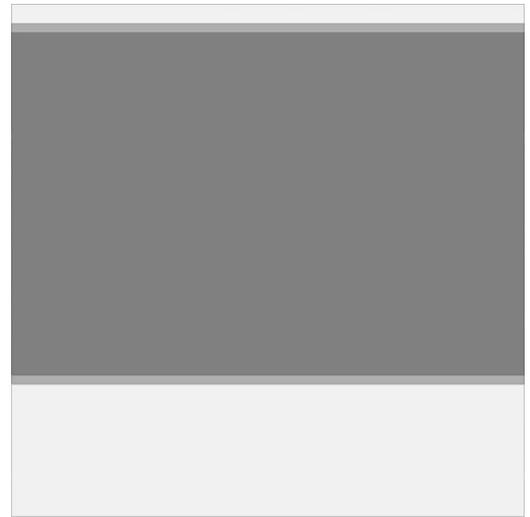


The last two templates are a little crazy. The dark gray rectangles are for photos, but the 1/3 2/3 sections are tipped. It looks as though I had everything lined up nicely and then my dog came along and messed them up! But notice—the two actual template pieces are still in a 1/3 2/3 proportion. So even though they have a crack in the middle, they still touch both sides of the page, which is important for Designing In Thirds.
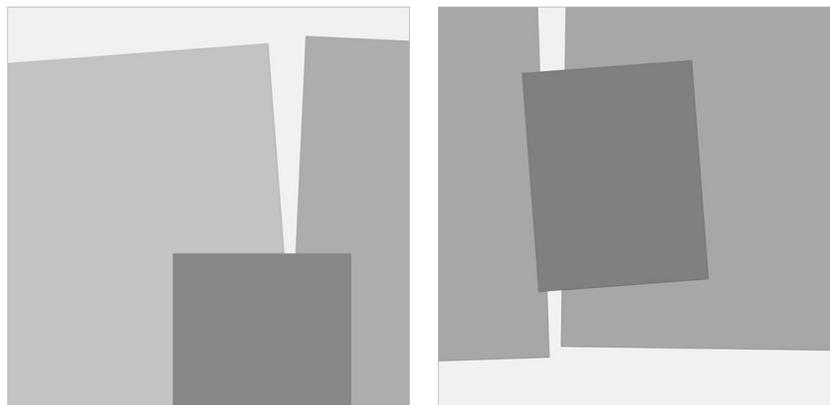
Here's an example of a page that uses this kind of Designing In Thirds template. A page like this is really a lot of fun. Not everyone who sees it will catch the fact that it's a Designing In Thirds page, but, now that you know, you'll be able to spot one of these.

Yes, this template adds a wild card where you also have to include a background paper that will work with your template pieces, but I still consider this an "artistic" Designing In Thirds page.

**Credits**

Vintage photo
Page by Linda Sattgast
template: QwikLearn/Design Beautiful Pages
Kit: Beloved by Katie Pertiet
Staple by Linda Sattgast
Fonts: Special Elite Regular, Myriad Pro Regular



## Category #2 Out Of Focus

Five of the templates fit into this category. Three of the templates have a normal 1/3 2/3 division and two of the templates move the 1/3 section to a different spot, but all five of these templates blur the dividing lines between the sections, allowing for a more artistic look. Even though they look a little different, you'll use these templates in the same way as I've shown you before, by filling each section with either a photo or a paper.



**Out of Focus Templates**
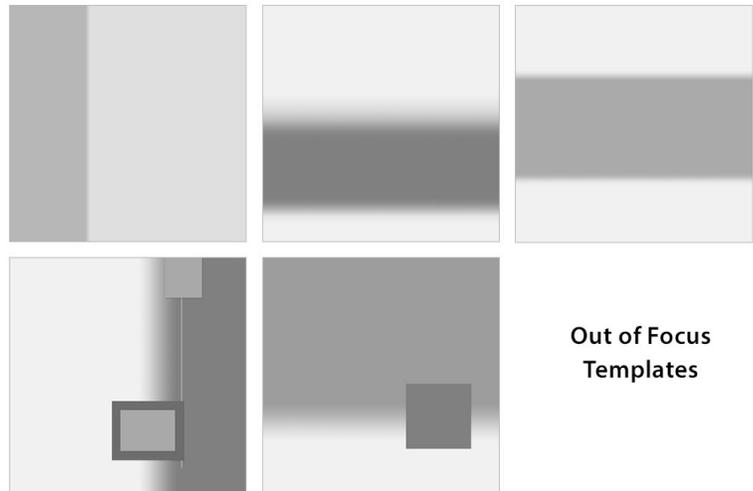
On the left example below I added a large photo to the 2/3 section and paper to the 1/3 section. The example on the right has a patterned paper which doesn't look as good. You don't want it to distract from the main focus of your page.

In this case the plain paper works much better, and, of course, you can add an overlapping photo on the transition between the photo and paper. As you know by now, it's very common to place a photo on the line between the 1/3 2/3 sections. But making the line transition softly by using a gradient creates a lovely artistic effect!

With gradient transitions don't place a ribbon or paper strip across the entire page as you would with the classic design. Seeing the transition is part of the beauty of this page, but you can still add photos and elements along part of the transition.
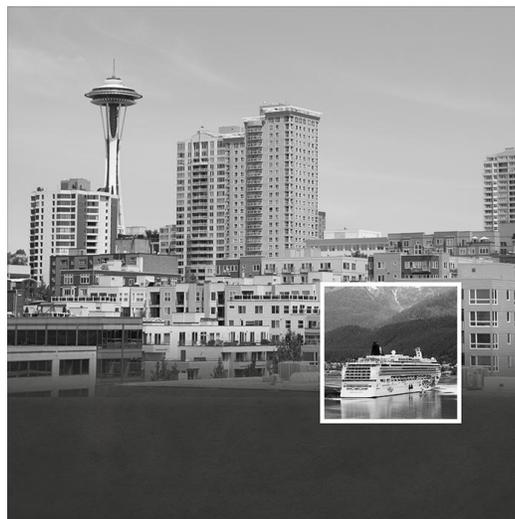


If you place your photo in the 1/3 space, you'll need to choose your photo carefully. It must fit the space and look good with a gradual transition from the paper to the photo. The photo on the left image doesn't work so well. However, if I use an out-of-bounds technique it actually enhances the focal point, and I added a slightly tipped photo as well.




Remember that when placing elements you can follow the suggestions in Jen White's Finishing Touches video. Here I've placed elements along the transition next to the photo and journaling along the side, and I've used a scatter element to get rid of trapped space on the right between the type and the element cluster.

### Credits

Photos and page by Linda Sattgast
Family Time by Meg Designs
Paper and splatter: XOX by Brandy Murry
Twine from Boys And Toys by Digital Scrapper Designs
Leaf from Carefree by Amanda Heimann
Fonts: Courier, Ostrich Sans

A great use of Out Of Focus templates is to blend two papers together, like this plain and patterned paper.

Here's how Linda Sattgast used these two blended papers as a Designing In Thirds background to create her page. Again, it's the 1/3 2/3 background that makes this a Designing In Thirds page, not the photo or element placement.
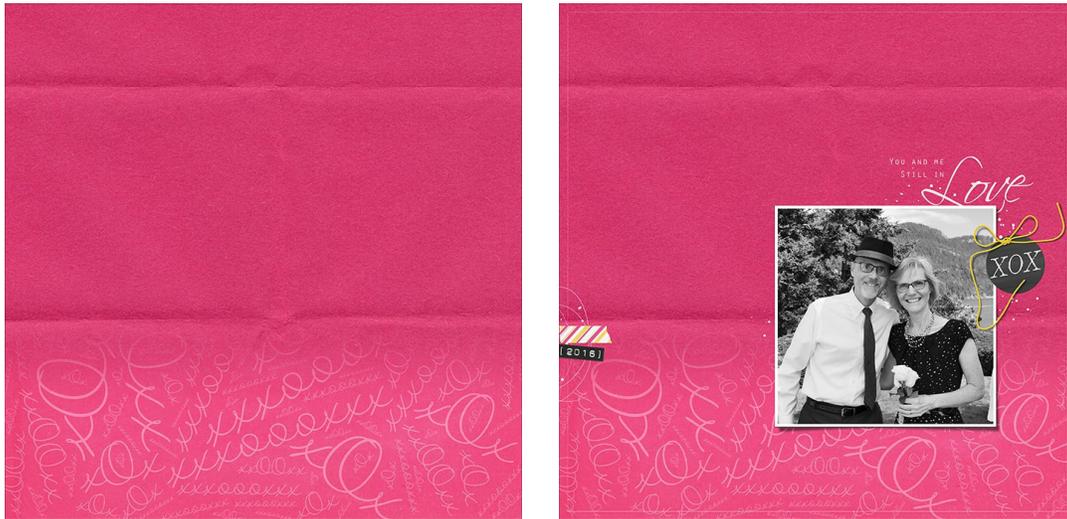


**Credits**

Photo by Sharon Pense
Page by Linda Sattgast
Kit: XOX by Brandy Murray
Fonts: Scriptina and Orator Std

## Category #3 Artistic Mathematician.

There are only 2 templates in this category. These templates split the design even further. The one on the left splits the 1/3 portion in half and the one on the right splits the 2/3 portion in half.



Notice that the dark gray suggested photo placement on the left is part of the background design while the dark gray photo template pieces on the right are not—they're just a suggestion of where you can place additional photos above the background. If you want these pages to register with viewers as a Designing In Thirds Page, be sure to give the divided sections a unified feel. If you don't care about the design you can put anything you want in there.

Dividing the sections up further is the math part, so what about the artistic part? Well, if you can get past the math you can make some awesome pages with these templates!

Here's a page by Linda Sattgast using one of these templates.

She added a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer above the paper layers to desaturate them so her colorful photo would stand out even more. You could also use the Colorize feature of Hue/Saturation to keep the color matching—or just use matching papers from a single kit.

### Credits

Photo and page by Linda Sattgast
Papers: Love You Always by Amanda Rockwell, Mother Is A Verb by Krystal Hartley, Indispensable by Jopke Digital Art
Elements: Photographie by JoanneBrisebois, APP My Camera and APP Give Thanks by Anna Aspnes, Stories365 by Kristin Cronin-Barrow, Jubilee by OneLittleBird, Hello Summertime by Digilicious Design
Font: Myriad Pro
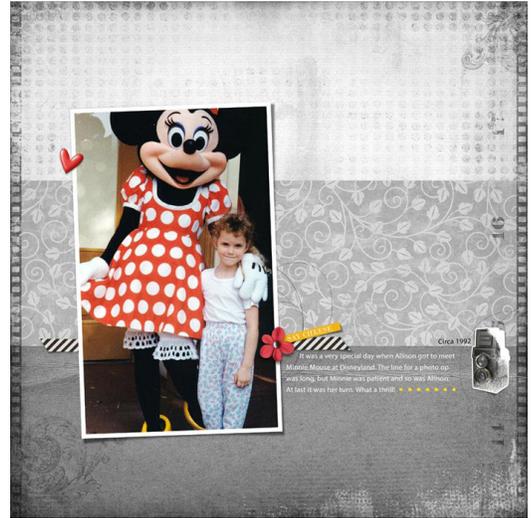
Here's a page I made using the Out of Focus idea. I started with a plain neutral background paper and filled the approximate top 2/3's section with paint and artistic overlays. I left the bottom section plain so I would have room for some journaling. I then used my photo to connect the transition area from the 1/3 section to the 2/3 section.

### Credits

Photo: Jenifer Juris
Kit: APP Airy by Anna Aspnes
Fonts: Veteran Typewriter, Betterfly
Quote: Hans Christian Anderson

So if you have a more artistic bent you can create some really fun pages using Designing In Thirds! If, on the other hand you're feeling a little overwhelmed right now, stick with the classic version of Designing In Thirds until you feel ready to take on more of a challenge!

## Lesson 01-03: Recognizing Thirds

A designing in thirds page can be instantly recognizable or so subtle you might miss it altogether, so don't feel bad or scratch your head when you see a page that's supposed to be a designing in thirds page, but doesn't look like one to you.

So, first, let's more exactly define what a designing in thirds page looks like and then let me clarify what you're looking FOR.

So first, when we say the term, "designing in thirds", what we mean is on any given page, the background design is split with the thirds fraction in mind as we showed examples of in the first teaching video.
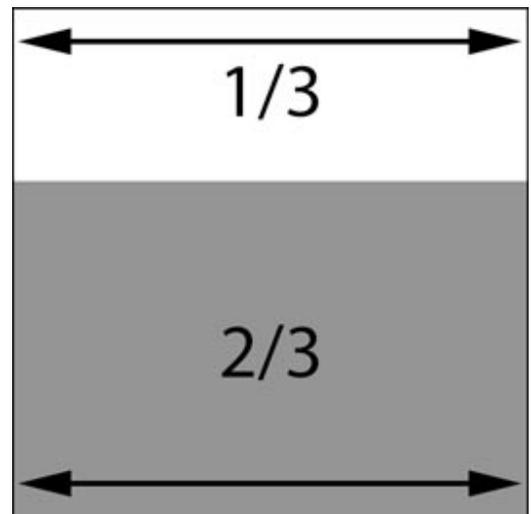
These (usually) two background sections will reach across the page from one edge to the other. So, keep this in mind when creating your own thirds page design.

Now, let's practice finding the one-third two-thirds connection with some actual pages. But first, here's the key to recognizing a designing in thirds page.

Designing in Thirds has to do with the background of the page—not the additional photos or elements you might add on top of the background.

When I say the word "background" many people automatically think of paper only. But in this case, when I use the word background, I mean whatever fills the entire background of your scrapbook page in a 1/3 2/3 combination— whether photos or paper.

Here's a classic example of a designing in thirds page that most people will recognize right away.
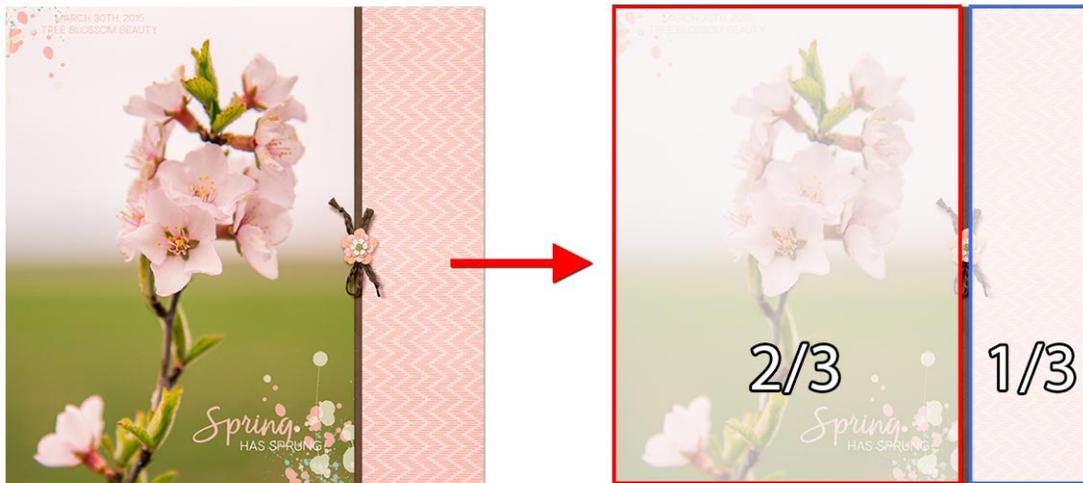


A photo fills the two-thirds portion of the page and paper fills the one-third portion of the page. Along the dividing line between the two is a ribbon and a few elements.

These are the easy designing in thirds pages to spot! Now let's try some that aren't quite so easy.
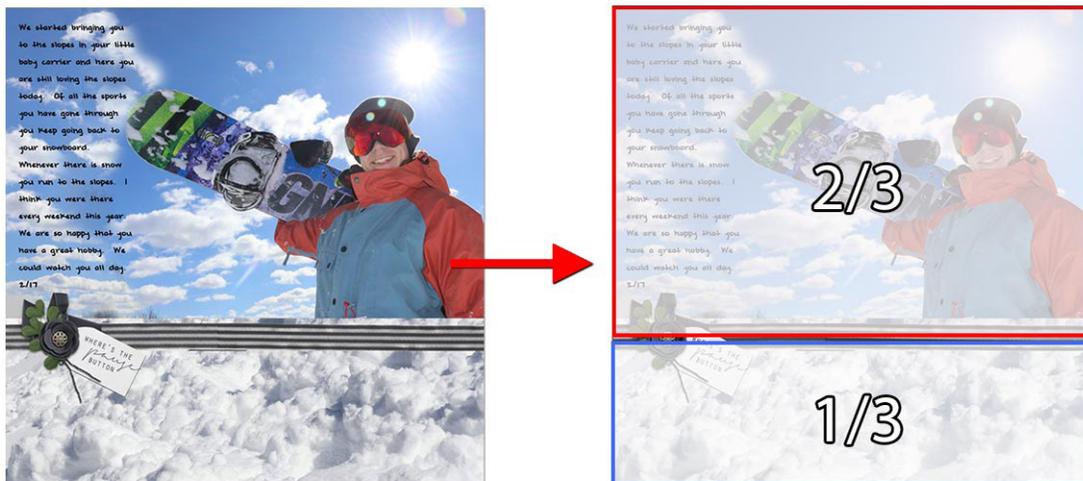
What's in the background? We have two photos…

Are they arranged in a one-third two-thirds position on the page? Yes…As long as the background is one-third two-thirds, this is a designing in thirds page. What you do with the rest of the page should enhance the design, but is wide open for your imagination.

Recall, though, that I gave suggestions for the best way to enhance a designing in thirds page, so keep those in mind!
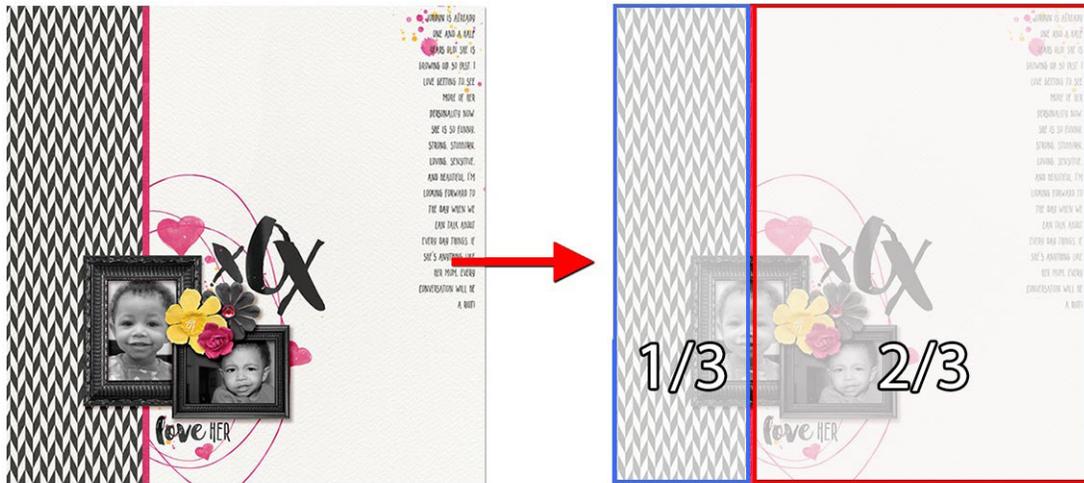


Here's an example of a page I created where different papers fill the 1/3 and 2/3 sections of the page.

So while one or both of the thirds sections can be filled with photos, it doesn't have to be that way. You can use paper for both if you prefer.



In this example, a large photo constitutes 2/3 of the page. It might be hard to recognize as a thirds page at first because the 2/3 section is moved up some from the bottom of the page.

But even though it was moved, it's going from the left edge to the right and it still covers roughly 2/3 of the document's space. So, this is another great example of how to vary a thirds design.

Here's a page that has a thirds design but it's not the typical 1/3, 2/3 split. In this case, the 2/3 section is split in half giving the background a less traditional three sections.
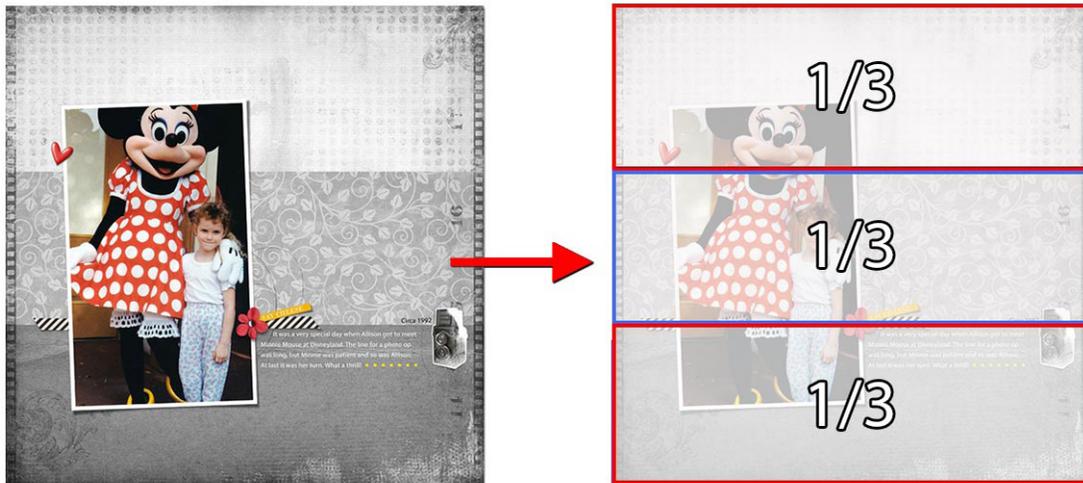


From here, the pages will have a less obvious thirds design but I hope that working through these examples will help you more easily recognize a page that has a subtle touch.



In this example, I used the thirds design when breaking up my background. For the upper 2/3 section, I used overlays and paint to create an artistic look. For the bottom 1/3 section, I left the paper as it was, a solid neutral color. It's a very subtle design but it's a thirds design nonetheless.

### Additional Creative Team Page Credits

**Snowboarding**
Photo: Scrapapicture
Template: Digital Scrapper
Kit: Press Pause By Blue Heart Scraps
Font: Short Stack

**Point Vicente**
Page and photo: Vynette
Template: Digital Scrapper
Kit: Studio Flergs Beachy Keen, and Syndee Nuckles Summer Passport
Extras: Scotty Girl Design a Banner Vol 3 template
Fonts: Lobster Two Italic, and Lucinda Handwriting
Poem by Longfellow

In this example, Renee used a large photo for the top 2/3 and used a plain paper for the bottom 1/3. The line that separates the two sections is blurred because the top photo fades into the bottom with the use of a gradient. She did help distinguish the split by placing the rest of her page design along this line as talked about in the finishing touches section of this class.
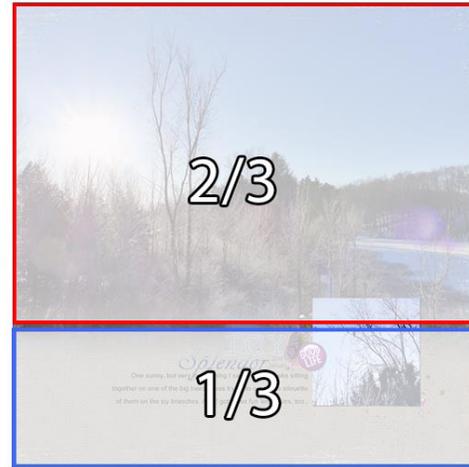


In this example by Terri, She used the same idea. She took a large photo and used it for the top 2/3 of the page and filled the bottom 1/3 with a paper. Again, the line of separation is subtle but it's there.

But what happens if you don't want to use only one or two photos? Can you still use the thirds design in your favor? You bet you can! Linda Sattgast has provided us two examples from her collection of pages:
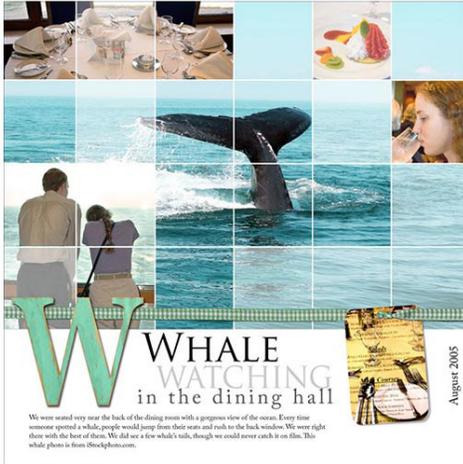




For the whale watching page, can you see the thirds design here? She used a grid of photos for the top 2/3's of her page and then used a plain white paper for the bottom 1/3.

In the Catalina Island page, she took her 2/3's section and moved it down a bit and then placed a grid of photos (and the rest of her page design) all on the 2/3 section. She kept the 1/3 section simple by just letting the blue paper speak for itself.

I hope going through these examples will help you better recognize what makes a "thirds" page design and gives you the confidence you need to start creating your own.

**Credits**

**Whale Watching**
Photos and page by Linda Sattgast
Ribbon: Real Ribbons by Jenny Binder
Fonts: Adobe Caslon Pro, Georgia ("W") and Trajan Pro

**Credits**

**Catalina Island**
Photos by Charlie and Linda Sattgast, Page by Linda Sattgast
Kit: In Pursuit Of Liberty by Michelle Coleman
Fonts: Myriad Pro and Paulinho Pedra Azul

## Lesson 01-04: Overlapping Photos

### Lesson by Linda Sattgast

The Overlapping Photos design is included in the same set of lessons with Designing In Thirds for two reasons:

- It's a simple photo design that doesn't need a lot of explaining.
- It's often used in conjunction with Designing In Thirds, our main design feature for this class module.

### Overlapping Photos Definition

Overlapping Photos is the use of only two photos that overlap. Anything more than two photos will morph into a different design.

When you design a page with overlapping photos, the size difference between the photos can be large or the size can be similar or exactly the same. If there's a smaller photo, it will almost always overlap the larger photo.
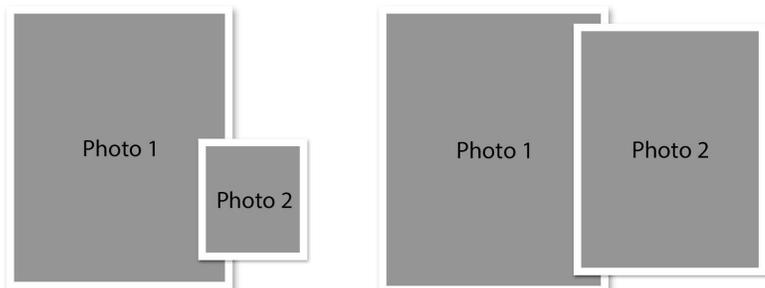


Vary the size of overlapping photos.

You can also vary the shape by mixing circles with rectangles, or rectangles with masks and one or more of the photos can be tilted.

Photo 1
Photo 2

Photo 1
Photo 2
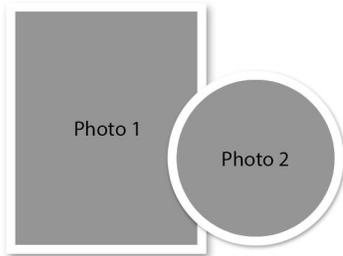
Photo 1
Photo 2
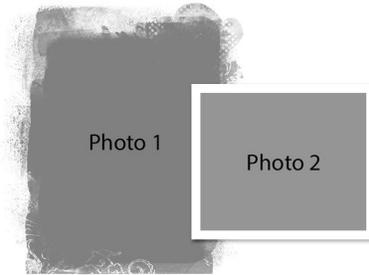
Mix shapes.          Overlap a mask.          Tip photos.
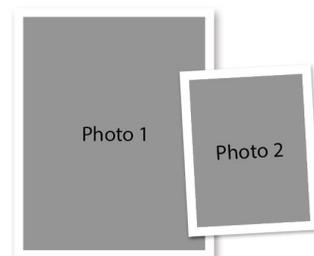
Here's a tip to keep in mind when using the Overlap technique: The amount of overlap is important. If you overlap too much or too little, it can create a visual disconnect. If you overlap too much, you may cover up something important in the photo below. If you overlap too little, it just looks like you made a mistake.

Ph    Photo 2

Photo 1          Photo 2
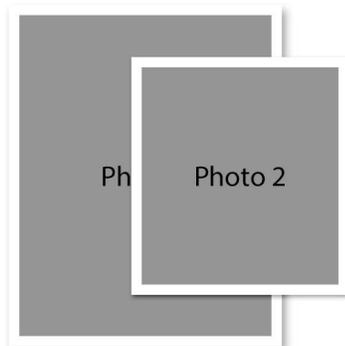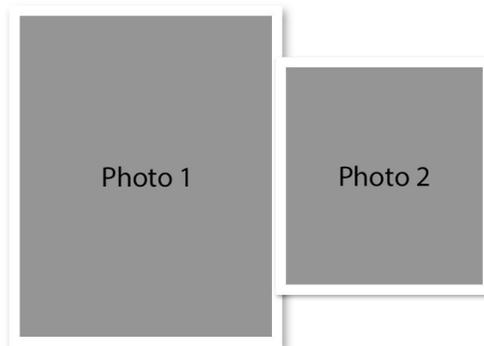
❌ TOO MUCH          ❌ TOO LITTLE

But, when the overlap is just right, it looks great!

Photo 1          Photo 2
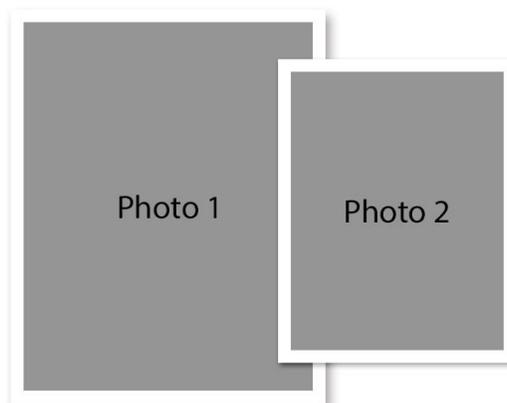
✔ JUST RIGHT

## Create Your Own Overlapping Photos

Check out the Overlap template folder in your downloads for five overlap templates to get you started. But this is such an easy design that it isn't hard to create your own. Just take two photos and overlap them!

On this page I tipped both of the photos. Notice that I've combined the Overlapping Photos design with a Mask design where I've used the mask as an anchor behind the photos.

### Credits

Page by Linda Sattgast
Kits: Me And You by Sahlin Studio and ArtPlay Palette Airy by AnnaAspnes.
Mask template from Design Beautiful Pages
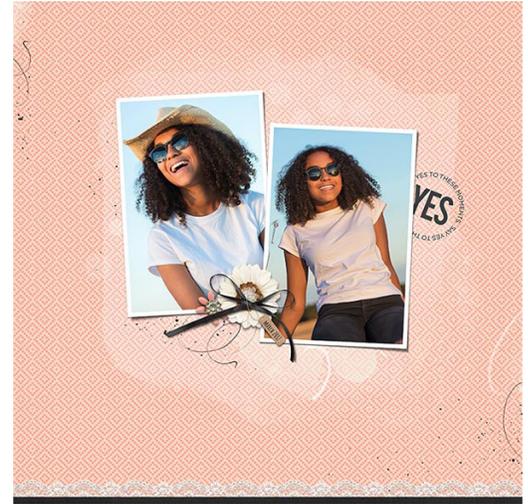
## Design Quiz

Which of these is an Overlapping Photo page and which is a Designing In Thirds page? If you're having trouble with the answer think about the definition of the designs.
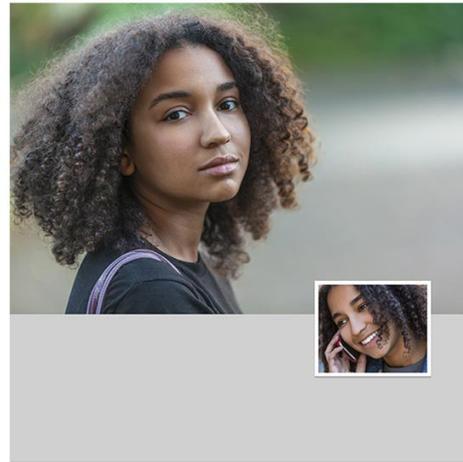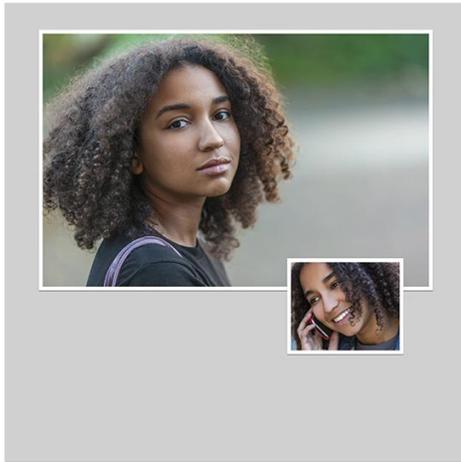
Overlapping Photos are two photos that overlap, so both pages use the Overlapping Photos design.

Are either of these pages a Designing In Thirds page? That means it has a background that's divided into two parts, 1/3 and 2/3, AND each part is filled with either a photo or paper.

The page on the left doesn't have a background that's divided 1/3 2/3. It just has a plain gray background with two overlapping photos placed on top of the background. Remember, it's the background that determines whether a page is a Designing In Thirds page or not—not the photos on top of the background.

So the page on the left is NOT a Designing In Thirds page. The other dead giveaway is that the large photo isn't big enough to touch the sides of the page, so it's not filling the entire 2/3 space.

The page on the right does have a background divided in a 1/3 2/3 proportion. One section is filled with a photo, which goes all the way to the edge of the page and the other section is filled with paper, so this page fulfills the criteria for a Designing In Thirds page.
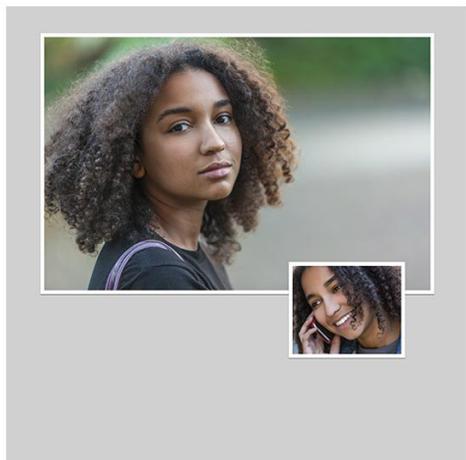


Overlapping Photos
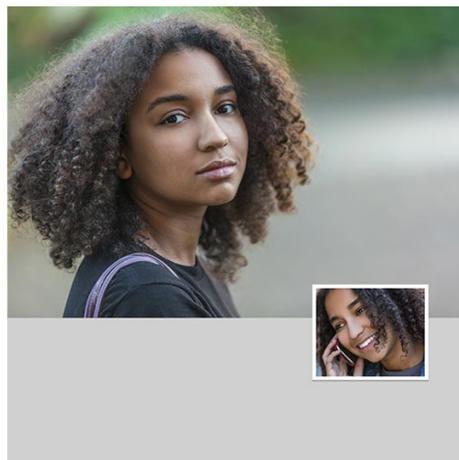


Overlapping Photos AND Designing In Thirds

Here's the finished page. It would still be a Designing In Thirds page without the smaller overlapping photo, but the overlapping photo looks great with this design!

### Credits

Page by Linda Sattgast
Kit: Beloved by Katie Pertiet

The #1 rule you need to follow when using overlapping photos with Designing In Thirds, is to place the small photo along the split between the 1/3 2/3 sections.
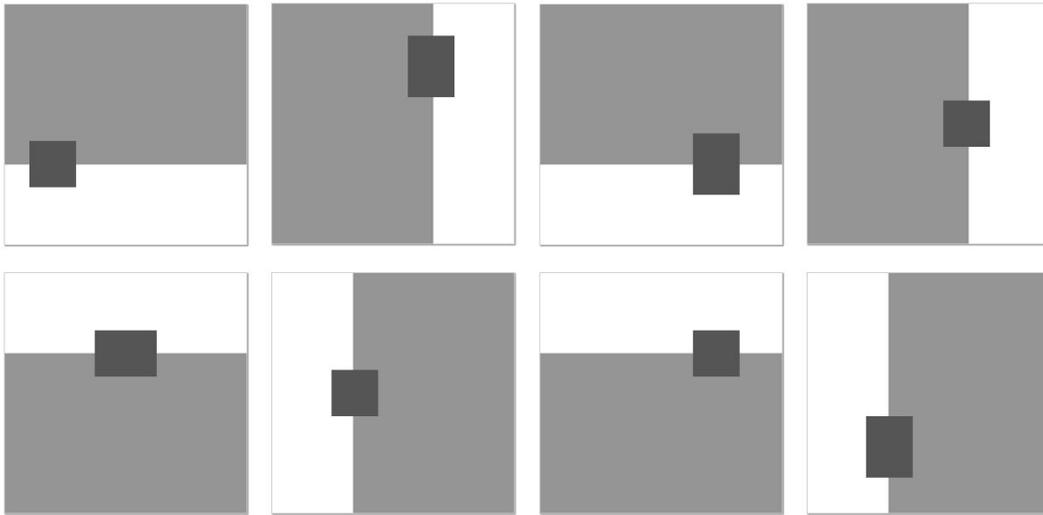
## Why Design Knowledge Is Important

You must be able to visualize a design or you can't or won't use it. Without design guidelines to follow you're starting from scratch every time you make a page, but if you really understand a design and know exactly how to make it, you'll have the power and confidence to create great pages!

> # Why Is Understanding Design Important?
>
> You must be able to visualize a design or you can't or won't use it.

## Lesson 01-05: Photos for Designing In Thirds

Because Designing in thirds often lends itself to using large photos, we're going to look at what's important when selecting a large photo to scrap.

There's only ONE Rule - It must be an excellent photo. Since a large photo will fill a major portion of your design, it will have a lot of impact for good or for bad. If you want it to have a good visual impact, the photo you use needs to be of good quality.

Here are the 3 main things to look for when selecting a large photo:

#1-The Focus. The photo needs to be sharp and have a clear focal point. A crisp photo, as opposed to one that is blurred, really is important.

#2 - It needs to be well lit. Look at your photo's brightness. Is it bright enough to see the details or is it a bit dark? A great way to tell is by looking at the highlights and shadows in your photo. If your shadows are so dark you lose detail, this is a good indicator you need to increase the photo's brightness. You can go too far, though, so make sure you don't brighten the photo so much that your highlights are blown out and lose detail there, too.

#3 - Lines. Pay attention to the lines in your photo. Is your horizon straight? If not, fix it before you use it. If your photo has leading lines like the bridge you see here, make sure they appear level before you place the photo on your page.
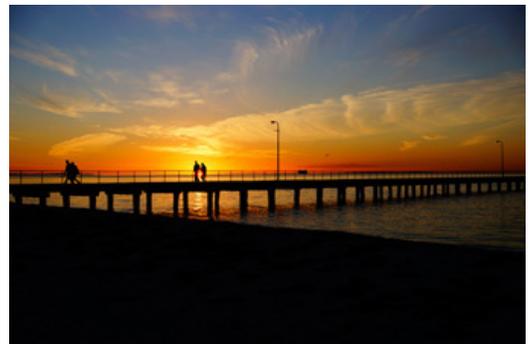
The same rules we talked about for large photos, apply to smaller ones, too. These three things are so important and yet these three rules are the ones most often broken. So, take a few minutes, to think about these basic photo rules when you get ready to start your next scrapbook page.

But there is one more factor we should explore when it comes to photos large or small and that's color. When it comes to colors in photos, there are two parts to consider. Part 1 is do the photos match themselves?
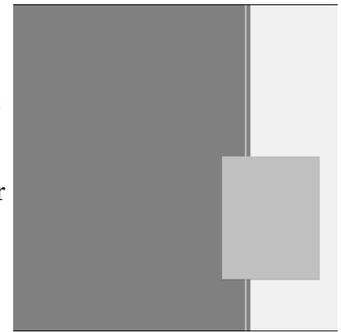
What I mean is this: If you're using more than photo, do the photos have similar lighting? If the photos are very different in hue or saturation, you should consider making the photos black and white or treating them in some way (such as sepia). In this example, you can clearly see that one photo is very yellow in nature and the other photo had use of a flash so the lighting is different. Because of this, I chose to convert the photos to black and white.

**Credits**

Photos: Jody Finley (sister)
Kit: XOX by Brandy Murry
Fonts: Betterfly, Glamour Brush



The second part of the color factor is if the colors in your photos go with the colors of your scrapbook page. For example, if the kit you're using is light or pastel in nature but the photos have deep saturated reds, this is another time to consider a photo treatment or converting your photos to black and white.

So, using the same example as before, I really wanted the colors of the kit to pop and in the color version of the photos, the blue and red shirts get in the way of that. So, again, I opted for black and white photos.

Now that we know what to look for when selecting photos for our pages, Here are three ways you can use overlapping photos in a creative way.

#1 - You can repeat the same photo by zooming in on one of them.

#2 - You can use two similar photos from the same setting or event.



#3 - Another great combination is to use a large landscape photo with a smaller photo that has a personal touch. A portrait, or in this case, a close up of someone's hiking shoes, can add depth to the story you're trying to tell.
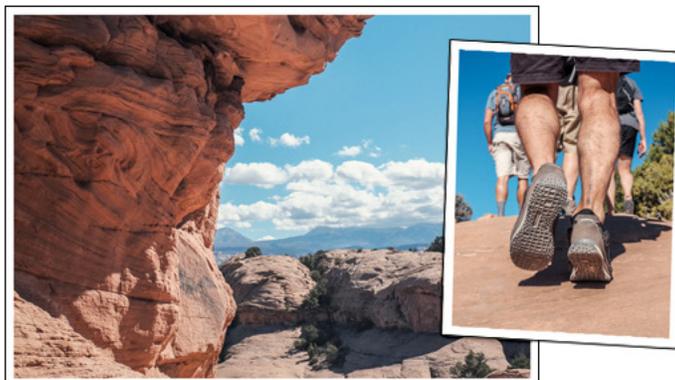


Here's an example of using two photos from the same setting.

**Credits**

Photos: Jenifer Juris
Kit: Beloved by Katie Pertiet
Fonts: Amelia Script, Monney Pen-
Veteran Typewriter