

Rules of Graphic Design



Guide for Family History Projects

B y S h a r o n K o v a c h

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Rule 1: Every design decision should have a purpose | 1 |
| <i>Color</i> | 2 |
| Rule 2: Use a color wheel to build a color scheme | 2 |
| Rule 3: Don't use too many colors | 4 |
| Rule 4: Incorporate the meaning of colors effectively | 4 |
| Rule 5: Choose colors for reading and viewing ease | 5 |
| <i>Text Layout</i> | 5 |
| Rule 2: No more than 3 easy to read fonts | 5 |
| Rule 3: Consistent text guides—headers and subtitles | 6 |
| Rule 4: Left aligned text | 6 |
| Rule 5: Avoid words hanging on the end of a paragraph | 6 |
| Rule 6: Page breaks to maintain page balance | 6 |
| Rule 7: Consistent spacing after paragraphs and headings | 6 |
| <i>Image Composition</i> | 7 |
| Rule 2: Be choosy about the images you select | 7 |
| Rule 3: Direct the eye back into the picture | 7 |
| Rule 4: Rule of thirds | 7 |
| Rule 5: Fill the frame | 7 |
| Rule 6: Balance | 8 |
| Rule 7: Unity and harmony | 8 |
| Rule 8: Identify your images | 8 |
| <i>Website</i> | 9 |
| Rule 2: Short paragraphs for the web | 9 |
| Rule 3: Short pages | 9 |
| Rule 4: Colored and/or underlined text only for links | 9 |
| Rule 5: Standard fonts | 9 |
| Rule 6: No background image behind text | 9 |
| Rule 7: Headers for quick scanning | 9 |
| Rule 8: No more than 2 page layouts per website | 10 |
| Rule 9: Plenty of navigation | 10 |
| Rule 10: Small image size—72 dpi | 10 |
| Rule 11: Maintain | 10 |

Rules of Graphic Design

Design like a pro. There's a distinct difference in the look of a professionally produced movie and a home movie. That's true of printed material as well. Home-made party flyers seldom look like magazine ads. The reason is because professionals follow design rules when making their creations. In fact, that's the first rule of good design—every decision should be done for a reason, not just because it looks cool. If you follow the rules of design, your do-it-yourself family history project can have that professional look without a professional price tag.

Design elements should enhance your family history and photos not detract from them. Some colors draw the attention more than others. For the most part, you will want color to serve as a backdrop. Learn the language of color and special effects and base your decisions on that knowledge. When making a design decision, ask yourself whether it will make the history easy to understand or create a pleasant experience for your reader or viewer.

Rule 1: Every design decision should have a purpose

This is the first rule of color, image and print layout, video, and website design. A good example of a purpose-driven design is underlined, blue text on a webpage. This tells the viewer that if they click on that text it will take them to somewhere else for more information. Regardless of your chosen color scheme for a website, it is appropriate to include blue text for hyperlinks.

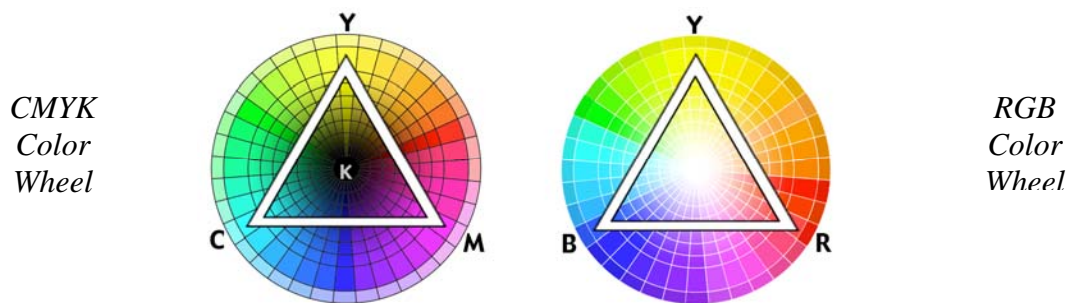
Color

Used properly, color can set the tone for your project and pull all the pieces together. To give your project that professional look, choose a color scheme that you will use throughout the project.

Rule 2: Use a color wheel to build a color scheme

Pleasing color schemes consist of colors that have specific relationships to one another on a color wheel.

Color wheels can be constructed in a variety of ways, but the CMYK and RGB color wheels are the most useful for constructing color schemes for family history projects. Both are based on three **primary colors** spaced equal distance apart. Half way between each set of two primary colors is a secondary color that is a blend of equal parts of those two primary colors. You can continue to add an infinite number of spokes to the wheel in this way.



The second ring from the outside of each color wheel is the pure color. Add black to a pure undiluted color, and you create a **shade**. Add white to a pure color to create a **tint**. Adding white to red makes a tint of red called pink. Adding black makes it a shade of red called maroon.

CMYK Color Wheel

CMYK Color wheels use Cyan, Magenta, and Yellow for the primary colors. The K stands for black. The CMYK color wheel is also known as a subtractive color wheel, based on color balance for black. The outer most ring on the wheel grid is a tint (white added). Inner circles are shades (darkened versions of the pure color).

Printers use CMYK colors because all ink colors are created by mixing Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and Black. Color schemes based on CMYK colors will work well for printed books and captioned photo albums.

RGB Color Wheel

RGB color wheel colors are derived from blends of the three primary colors Red, Blue, and Yellow. An RGB color wheel is also called an additive color wheel based on color balance for white. Painters derive all paint pigment from combinations of Red, Blue, and Yellow. You're probably wondering why it isn't called an RBY color wheel then. RGB colors are used for digital projects. Electronic equipment creates all colors from Red, Green, and Blue.

Use an RGB color wheel to build color schemes for websites, video. . . anything digital. Most of the color scheme programs and on-line services derive harmonious colors from an RGB color wheel.

Black and White, the neutral colors, can be included in any color scheme without adding clutter. Variations of white, gray, and beige work easily into many color schemes as well. Beiges or off-white colors tend to take on the complement of the color they are paired with. For example, pair beige with green and the beige has appears reddish.

The different types of color schemes below work on either color wheel. Neutral colors can be added to any of these schemes.

Monochromatic Color Scheme

A monochromatic color scheme uses only one color. Add tints and shades of that color—variations along the same spoke of the color wheel—to give the scheme variety and emphasis. This color scheme is calming and easy on the eyes, especially with cool colors like blue or green. It's also easy to work with because of its simplicity.



Analogous Color Scheme

For a color scheme with a little more pizzazz, use an analogous scheme. This scheme uses one color as the dominant color and adjacent colors on the wheel for enhancement. Use the third enhancing color sparingly. Don't mix warm and cool colors in this scheme.



Complementary Color Scheme

Two colors exactly opposite each other on the color wheel are complementary. They have high contrast.



Split Complementary Color Scheme

The split complementary scheme is a variation on the complementary. Choose one color as your dominant and then find its complementary—the exact opposite on the wheel. Choose two adjacent colors, one from each side of the complementary color for your highlight colors. This still gives you contrast but tones it down a bit.



Triadic Color Scheme

For the greatest variety, use a Triadic Color Scheme. This scheme uses three colors equally spaced on the color wheel—the basic primary color combination of the wheel is an example of a Triadic Color Scheme.



Rule 3: Don't use too many colors

Use as few colors as you can—3 is a good number. You want your color scheme to have harmony. Think of it this way. . . if you hit 3 or 4 evenly spaced notes on the piano, it produces a pleasant sounding chord. But, if you press down your outstretched hand on the keyboard, it just makes a noise—too many notes with no balance. Your color scheme should make a pleasant visual chord in the same way. *When choosing colors, each shade of a color is considered a separate color.*

Pick one color to be the dominant color. This will occupy the greatest percentage of color on the page or sequence. Color number 2 is the main accent color. It is usually a color that is close to the dominant color. The 3rd color, the most contrasting, is used for highlight.

Rule 4: Incorporate the meaning of colors effectively

Color evokes an emotional response in the viewer, so be aware of this when choosing your colors.

Warm Colors *Reds, Oranges, and Yellows*

Warm colors are energetic and playful. Objects composed of warm colors appear larger than cool colors and seem to move toward you.

Cool Colors *Blues, Greens, and Purples*

Cool colors are peaceful and seem to recede. Blue is the color of trust, green the color of nature and friendliness, purple the color of royalty.

Dark Colors *Darker shades of any color*

Deep dark shades are more formal and elegant. Darker shades ensure that the focus is on the content and photos. Don't use shades that are too close to black.

Rule 5: Choose colors for reading and viewing ease

Use color consistently to assist your viewer. If you choose to make chapter titles brown, for instance, make all of your chapter titles the same shade of brown. If you're building a website, set aside blue text for linked items only.

A black and white combination offers the greatest contrast. For this reason it is the easiest to read. Black text on a white background goes with any color scheme as well. Never use a bright colored background for text, especially bright yellow. Another text scheme to avoid is the combination of blue and red.

Text Layout

Reading your family history in print layout should be a pleasant journey. It should be easy to read. If you keep the text format simple and consistent it will be easy and pleasant to read. Consistency will make it easy for the reader to recognize what's important and how you have organized your text.

Rule 2: No more than 3 easy-to-read fonts

Too many fonts give a cluttered appearance, and clutter is difficult to navigate through. Most of your text should use a single font. You can use a larger size in bold for headers and subtitles. Add emphasis with bold or italic. You can use a different font for the title and yet another for page numbers or image captions.

Stick with simple fonts for the body of your text. You can get away with a fancy font for the title, but that's about it. You can use a serif type font like Times New Roman or Palatino for a more formal, traditional look. Serifs are the little tails on some letters, such as on the T, N, R, and P in the samples. For a more modern look, choose a sans serif font such as Verdana, Arial, or Tahoma. For this tutorial I used Verdana.

Rule 3: Consistent text guides—headers and subtitles

Text guides provide a map that lets your readers know where you are going with your text. Before you begin to write your text, decide how you will distinguish the text guides—main title, chapter titles, headings, subtitles, caption notations, emphasis text, page numbers, etc.—from each other. You can use font color, size, style, and underlining. To make sure you remain consistent with your font styles and formats throughout your project, use the Styles and Formatting tool that comes with your word processing program.

Rule 4: Left aligned text

Left aligned text is best for a family history book or album captions. Justified works better for newsletters and magazines that are written in columns. Centered is for quotes.

Rule 5: Avoid words hanging on the end of a paragraph

When the last line of a paragraph has only 1 or 2 words, the paragraph lacks symmetry. This is called a hanging paragraph. It usually requires a little rewriting to shorten or lengthen the paragraph to correct this.

Rule 6: Page breaks to maintain page balance

Chapters don't always end at the bottom of a page. You wouldn't want a chapter or section heading at the bottom of a page. Use page breaks to lock those sections in place and begin chapters and sections at the top of the successive page.

Rule 7: Consistent spacing after paragraphs and headings

Never hit return to make a space. Use the paragraph spacing tool. You can control how much space there will be after a heading or listed item. Make sure to maintain uniformity—all paragraphs should be spaced the same and all headings should be spaced the same.

Image Composition

This section will help you with image placement in text material, albums and scrapbooks, and when cropping photographs.

Rule 2: Be choosy about the images you select

Select only the best photos to put into your project. It's better to make a differently cropped version of the one good photo of an ancestor than to use a variety of poor quality photos.

Rule 3: Direct the eye back into the picture

Images of people should face toward the center of the page. The same goes for geometric shapes like arrows and chevrons.

Rule 4: Rule of thirds

Place an imaginary grid with 3 equal rows and 3 equal columns over your picture. Where the grid lines intersect are areas of interest. In landscapes, the horizon should line up with a horizontal grid line.

Rule 5: Fill the frame

Every part of the picture should contribute to the composition. In a portrait photo, the head should be near the top of the picture.



See how much more interesting this picture is by cropping the picture and applying rule 4 (Rule of 3rds) and rule 5 (Fill the frame). During cropping, the picture was rotated slightly to level the horizon.

Rule 6: Balance

Your picture should not look like it is tilting to one side. You can achieve balance by placing equally weighted objects on each side of the composition. Objects can be equally weighted in a variety of ways.

Size

Equal size objects both sides or large object/cluster of smaller objects

Color

Large neutral object one side offset by small bold object on the other.

Value

Large light object one side offset by small dark object on the other.

Shape

Large simple object one side offset by small complex object.

Texture

Large plain object one side offset by small textured object.

Position

Large object close to center line one side offset by small object far from the center line.

Rule 7: Unity and harmony

Everything in the picture or on the page should work together so that it makes a single composition rather than a hodge-podge of images. Colors and content should look harmonious (pleasing).

Rule 8: Identify your images

Every image should have a caption that tells who is in the photo, Include the location, date, and who took the photo, if possible. Photo placement should be logically placed with appropriate text. Give credit to the provider of the photo in the caption as well

Website

The rules for building websites center on readability, easy navigation, and reliability. Website viewers tend to scan the contents, so a good website makes it easy to find information quickly.

Rule 2: Short paragraphs for the web

Paragraphs should consist of 5-6 sentences. Keep sentence structure and word choice fairly simple. Since family members are all ages, target an audience that reads at an 8th grade level. Use lists and bullets wherever appropriate to break up the text.

Rule 3: Short pages

Don't put your entire family history text on one long scrollable page. Break it into sections and make each section a page in itself.

Rule 4: Colored and/or underlined text only for links

Body text that is a different color (especially blue) and underlined is understood by most web users to be a link. Reserve this type of text for that purpose only. The best way to indicate a link is to use both colored and underlined text.

Rule 5: Standard fonts

Choose a standard sans serif font. Verdana and Arial are the most popular fonts on the web because they are easy to read. Verdana was designed especially for the web. Times New Roman is better for print publishing. Choose font sizes in pixels rather than points. Make the font size 14px. at 85%.

Rule 6: No background image behind text

Text with a background image behind is difficult to read. A plain white, off-white, or light gray background with black text is best. Background images work behind chapter numbers and perhaps the title.

Rule 7: Headers for quick scanning

Use bold headers to direct your reader to specific sections of your text. Headers divide your text up into chunks, making it more readable.

Rule 8: No more than 2 page layouts per website

Keep the look of your website consistent. You can have a different layout variation for the home page, but use the same layout for the rest of the pages. Use only one column for your family history text.

Rule 9: Plenty of navigation

Put a navigation menu at the top or left side and another at the bottom of each page. Be sure there is a home button and the back arrow works on each page.

Rule 10: Small image size—72 dpi

Images should not overwhelm the text. Don't use too many or too great a size. A good rule of thumb is to not make your images more than 300 pixels wide or high. Manipulate the image in high resolution, Reduce to 72 dpi as the last step before importing to your web page.

Rule 11: Maintain

Check your website once a week to make sure everything works.

Rules of Graphic Design
By Sharon Kovach
The Family History Coach

Copyright July 25, 2009 www.FamilyHistoryCoach.com
Do not reprint without permission

