

PHOTO SPREADS

At many papers, photographers shoot special assignments, then design their own photo pages. Usually, however, the layout is done by an editor or designer who's handed some photos, given a headline and asked to leave space for a certain amount of text. Here's a typical example of how that might work.

DESIGN EXERCISE: PHOTO SPREADS

Using these four photos, let's design a photo page for a tabloid. The photos were shot at a folk music festival, so the headline can simply say "Folk Fest." There's no story, but let's assume someone will write a short text block (3-4 inches) to describe the event.



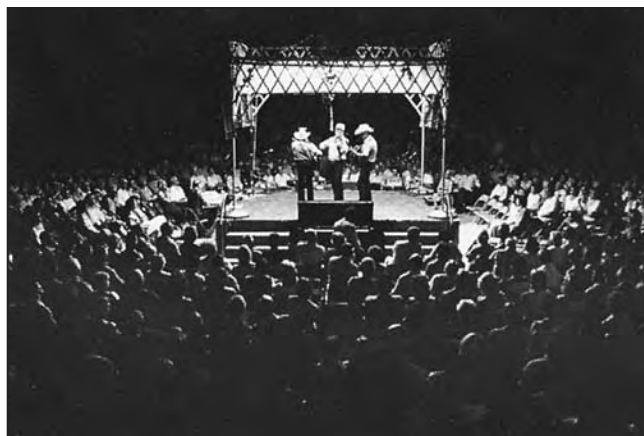
This shot is the photographer's favorite. He wants it to be the dominant image on the page. And this is the way he'd like the photo cropped. You can make slight cropping changes to suit your layout, but you should always respect the composition suggested by the photographer.



This shot provides "color," showing the ordinary folks attending the folk festival. It's an appealing alternative to the performance shots. And besides, it's a vertical, and the layout needs at least one alternative to those other three horizontals.



Another nice shot. This little girl was a real crowd-pleaser, so be sure to run this photo big enough that we can see her.



This is the scene-setter (sometimes called an "establishing shot") showing the stage platform. As these four photos demonstrate, a good photo layout combines close-up, mid-range and wide-angle shots to tell the whole story.

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Here are six layouts using those photos from the facing page:

This layout alternates the sizes of photos — big, small, big, small — to achieve balance. Note how the page is bordered by two sets of outer margins: 1) a thin margin around the entire page, and 2) a wider indent beside the text and that vertical photo. Balancing two sets of indents gives you more flexibility in sizing photos and keeps pages from getting too dense.



This layout treats the headline as an independent art element, placing it squarely in the center of the page, aligned with the two photos below it. The leg of text then runs beside it — an arrangement that might not work in a standard news story but fits neatly here. Note how all the open space runs along the left edge of the page.



This design is a variation on the layout directly above. Placing the headline and text in the center of the layout divides the photos into two separate groups. Is that a problem? Regardless, the page looks well-balanced and appealing.



This layout is a mirror image (with minor changes) of the page at far left. The text runs in two legs instead of one, and there are now two pairs of shared cutlines. Notice how, of all the layouts on this page, this one is the most tightly packed. The rest all allow more air in their outer margins.



This page moves the text into a bottom corner. Since there's not enough text to fill the hole, it's indented (to match the photo indents on the right side of the page), and the photo credit pads the remaining space. Note how the text is indented more than the headline — a kind of hanging indent. A final note: Placing cutlines in a top corner sometimes looks awkward, but here it balances the cutline in the bottom corner of the page.



This approach is an old favorite: Park the scene-setter beside the headline at the top of the page, then smack readers with the loud lead photo. The text begins below the lead photo, directly beneath the headline. That breaks the usual rule about keeping headlines with text — but it works here. Note how the elements above and below the lead photo align with each other; all are indented equally along the edges of the page.