

The Stewart variations

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Here we've moved the headline down, boxing it into the "dead space" in Stewart's chest. Or IS there such a thing as dead space in a photo? (Many photographers and editors would argue that there isn't.) Notice, too, how the text stairsteps down the page as it wraps. Is that awkward? And does the text become too wide at the bottom—or is that OK to do for just a few lines?

YOUR OPINION

- Headline
- Photo treatment
- Style & flair
- Overall appeal



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Placing a headline so far down the page may not work on Page One—but is it OK here? Will it be clear to readers that they should begin reading at the top of the left-hand leg? (That's one good reason to start the story with an initial cap.) Notice, too, that we've cut out the top of Stewart's head. Is that an acceptable treatment for a feature photo? If so, can we cut him out even more?

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In the previous example, we cut out part of Stewart's head. Now we've cut him out completely. Is that permissible? And how about moving him to the bottom of the page? That can be risky. When you park a big photo below the text, it often looks like an ad or intrudes into other stories. But here, with Stewart's head poking into the text, it anchors the page pretty well.

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We've tried a few new tricks here: First and foremost, we've carefully cropped and positioned the photo so we'll have room to reverse the headline out of that dark background beside Stewart. Down below, we've placed a box on the photo and inserted text there. Notice how the stylish headline treatment makes this package seem more like something you'd see in a magazine.

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Let's get conceptual. Since Stewart was celebrating his 10th anniversary when this story came out, why not make more of the number 10? Here, we've built it into the headline AND the sidebars. The first sidebar is a collection of jokes. The second is a guide to Stewart's books and videos. It's always wise to provide readers with useful tools as often as you can.

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How far are you willing to push those Photoshop effects? We'd argue that Stewart is a comedian—so it's appropriate to bend the rules a bit. But is the headline type too corny? Is the Stewart-popping-out-of-the-TV too wacky? It's a risky design, but one with a more aggressive attitude. And your ultimate goal, remember, is to grab readers and lure them into the story.

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Here's another design that relies upon a conceptual graphic effect, and it all starts with the word SLANT. Slanting the page is a comic effect—just as Stewart slants the news for comic effect. That's the best argument you could make to convince a reluctant editor to use this treatment: The design is driven by the story's content. It's not that a nutty layout.

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Here's another treatment that's driven by the story's content. Loyal Jon Stewart fans know he's passionately patriotic even though he's fiercely anti-establishment. (And this aggressive red, white and blue flag-themed design mimics the parodic style he used in his book "America.") But compared to the previous examples, there's not as much text on this page. Is that a problem?

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