DESIGN LIKE A PRO

SQUARE ONE

USER GUIDE

VARSITY YEARBOOK

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VARSITY YEARBOOK®

Teach design and build your yearbook — all in one place.

This guide will walk you through Square One, a system that combines streamlining yearbook creation, teaching design fundamentals and making a beautiful book with great coverage.

Templates and resources for Square One are available in your eDesign Catalog or as InDesign templates from Yearbook Discoveries.

WHAT IS SQUARE ONE?

AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO TEACH YEARBOOK DESIGN

More than just a set of templates, Square One is a modular method for students to learn basic design. It allows them to create spreads in minutes while mastering spacing and hierarchy. And, its use of modular design elements (mods for short) fosters teamwork while producing a book with pro-designer polish.

Square One is a step-by-step framework for teaching graphic design fundamentals through yearbook creation.

- **Mods:** It uses "packages" (headlines, copy, photos, captions) that all fit together
- **Built-in hierarchy:** Students learn to build spreads starting with a dominant element → secondary → tertiary
- **Good design habits:** It emphasizes spacing, alignment and hierarchy from the start

In simple terms: It turns design into a repeatable system students can learn quickly.



WITHOUT SQUARE ONE



WITH SQUARE ONE

WHY SQUARE ONE WORKS

SQUARE ONE FOR EVERYONE: Square One content is available for both eDesign and InDesign. See more info on page 13.

BETTER COVERAGE, HIGHER SALES

When students use the Square One design system, they naturally start to include more photos, captions and story elements. They're not wasting space on oversized designs — they're using the spread efficiently.

What that means for you:

- More students end up in the book
- More students feel seen and included
- Buy rates tend to go up



COVERAGE: This one spread includes six different clearly divided areas for content, allowing for tons of quick quotes and photos. Each mod can introduce a new angle to your main topic on the spread.

SUPPORTS STRONGER JOURNALISM

Square One helps students focus on communication instead of decoration. The structure guides them toward clear hierarchy, consistent spacing and intentional placement.

Students start to:

- Think about what matters most
- Organize information in a logical way
- Use visuals to actually support the story

THE PAYOFF: Your book looks cleaner and reads better, and it aligns with real journalistic standards, such as clarity, context, coherence and completeness.

BUILD REAL DESIGN SKILLS

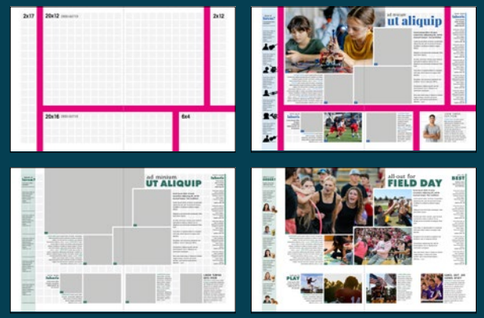
Students aren't just learning "yearbook tricks." They're learning principles that can be applied to all sorts of print and online designs.

They practice:

- Using grids
- Creating visual hierarchy
- Managing spacing and alignment
- Grouping content effectively

WHY THAT MATTERS: These are the same skills used in professional design, and they'll transfer beyond your classroom.





BENEFITS OF GOOD DESIGN

It speeds up production (without lowering quality). Once students understand the Square One structure, they stop second-guessing every decision. They have a clear starting point and a process to follow.

You'll notice:

- Pages get done faster
- Students spend more time on content, not layout confusion
- Designs stay consistent across the book
- Multiple students can work on elements for multiple spreads

This is especially helpful if you have:

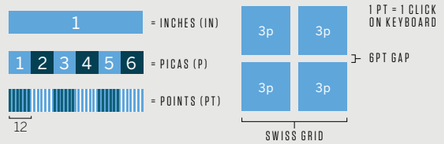
- Tight deadlines
- A large staff
- A mix of experience levels
- Want to submit your yearbook for critiques or awards

CORE DESIGN ELEMENTS

SWISS GRID

Professional designers often use a Swiss grid, a non-printing structure made up of evenly sized squares. Instead of relying on tiny measurements, it uses larger, consistent units — making alignment, spacing and margins much easier to manage.

Square One applies this idea by dividing the page into three-by-three pica squares with half-pica spacing between them. This consistent unit of measurement creates a built-in structure for placing photos, copy and graphics. Because everything fits within the same grid, students don't have to guess about alignment or spacing.



HIERARCHY

We process information from the largest to smallest elements. Using contrast in scale helps create visual hierarchy to guide the reader, which keeps them interested in your coverage. Make sure your best photos are always the largest and the best reporting is always set in the largest type.

- Primary copy mod: First level of coverage. Usually the most important story or topic of the spread with the largest headline. This is also known as level-one copy or the dominant copy package.
- Dominant photo package: A group of photos, starting with one dominant photo and others getting smaller in size, all sharing a side with the dominant photo.
- Secondary coverage mod: Second level of coverage. Copy and photos are smaller than a level one mod.
- Tertiary coverage mods: Third level of coverage. Copy and photos are smaller than a level two mod, but always readable.
- Supplemental coverage mod: Any small level of coverage used to get more students in the book, often repeated on multiple spreads. Also known as All-Coverage Device (ACD).

THE SQUARE ONE PROCESS

BRAINSTORM: START WITH A BLANK SPREAD, BUT NOT A BLANK SLATE

Tasks to accomplish:

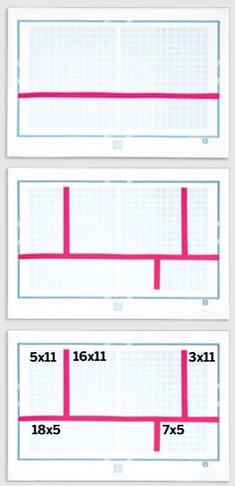
- ☐ **Find the stories for the spread:** Spend some time with other staffers brainstorming every single thing you can think of as a potential story related to your spread topic. This step is completed on your webbing sheet. *Ex: traditional copy, Q&A, talking head and quote, photo and caption, etc.*
- ☐ **Establish levels of coverage:** Using a Spread Planning Sheet, decide on your dominant photo and story then your secondary coverage. This is often determined by the quality and impact of the photography. Choose coverage and photos that will feature the largest number of students who are involved in this group/event. *Ex: Primary copy, secondary mod or sidebar, talking head, Q&A, ACD, etc.*
- ☐ **Create a sketch:** On the Spread Planning Sheet, create a rough sketch of the spread. Think about the space you'll need for each coverage package. This will be easier after you get the hang of modular design. Trust us, this is how the pros do it.



CONCEPTUALIZE: CREATE THE SPREAD ON PAPER FIRST

We recommend you start on paper using the Square One Grid Pads and paper Separators. You can also do this within eDesign or InDesign. When you know the number of coverage packages (mods) you'll have based on your spread planning sheet, you can start building a Separator template.

*Square One Grid Pads and Separators are available at **ybk.link/shop**.*
Make sure to get the Square One Grid Pads, not the generic Graph Pads.



1. **Start with an eyeline:** On the half-pica Swiss grid, place the horizontal Separator to provide a strong eyeline for the spread. These go near or in the top third or bottom third of the page. Think of this horizontal Separator as a magnet. Everything else is attracted to it.
2. **Add vertical Separators:** Place vertical Separators to provide spaces for dominant, secondary, tertiary and any other supplemental coverage elements. Remember, in most layouts, the dominant/largest element crosses the gutter to unify your spread, usually the dominant photo. Vertical Separators can cross the horizontal eyeline or stop at it. You can create different sized spaces if you stop at the horizontal Separator.
3. **Count the squares:** Count the squares in each section and label with size and any specifics, such as "cross gutter." Each square counts as one, and each space between Separators is labeled width x height (***number of squares across by number of squares high***). Mods crossing the gutter will have photos that are two picas wider to accommodate the extra space. Copy should never cross the gutter. Ex: A dominant package might be 16x11 and a space for modular coverage might be 3x11.

The key element of this process is for students to understand how to design using a dominant element and then level down. The photos should get smaller and the visual impact should scale appropriately as you move from primary to secondary to tertiary coverage.

DESIGN: BRING YOUR SPREAD TO LIFE ON YOUR COMPUTER

1. **Place your mods:** Based on the counted squares, you can search the eDesign Catalog or your mod library to find the style that best fits your content, or you can make your own mod from scratch. Within each mod, make sure each element maintains consistent internal spacing of one half-pica square in eDesign.

   PRO TIP: **Group each mod after placing it on the spread so single pieces of a mod package do not accidentally shift out of place.**

2. **Add your content:** First, place your dominant photo package, then add your dominant copy and headline, secondary mod, etc. Check the fonts, character styles and paragraph styles against your staff's style guide. You should have all real coverage (copy, captions, quotes, etc.) placed into your spread.

3. **Delete Separators:** Once coverage is placed, delete the pink Separators. You can clearly see the structured internal margins between each mod package. From here, review your spread with the grid turned off. Make any internal margin and alignment adjustments to clean up any uneven objects. Consider keeping the eyeline consistent throughout a section or through the book.

   PRO TIP: **Notice how every side of a mod touches an internal margin. Mods do not need to fill every square within the designated space, as long as one piece touches a margin — specifically the side touching the eyeline.**

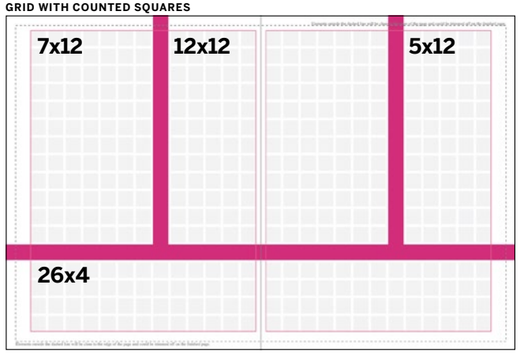
HERE TO HELP

STYLE WIZARD

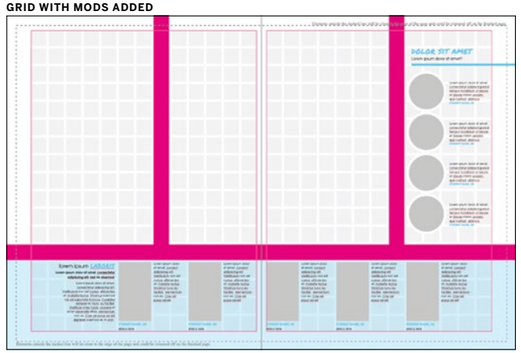
If your mods have different fonts and colors when you first place them, you can save and exit the spread, select it in Book view and Edit it with Style Wizard. Quickly swap any fonts and colors you don't want for the ones you're using.



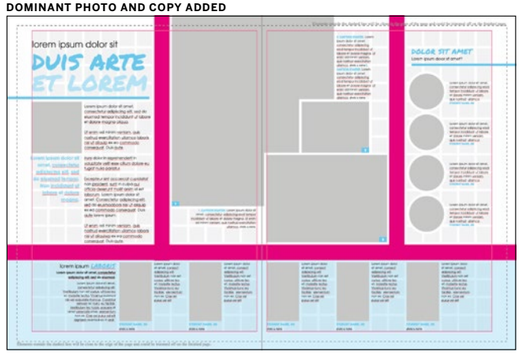
GRID WITH COUNTED SQUARES



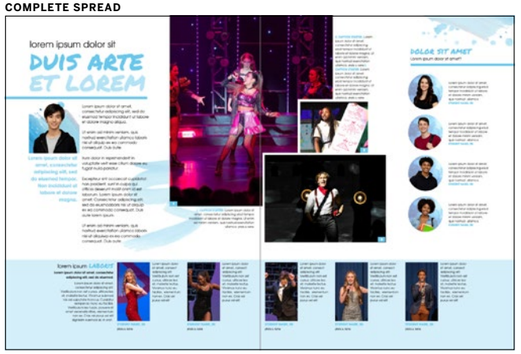
GRID WITH MODS ADDED



DOMINANT PHOTO AND COPY ADDED



COMPLETE SPREAD



USE VARIATIONS: **Once you finish a template, save it in your library and create spin-off versions using it as a base. Switching out mods or flipping the spread can give you additional options to use on other pages.**

FILLING IN YOUR MODS

USING PRE-DESIGNED MODS

You can find ready-to-use options in the eDesign Catalog or in the InDesign Mod Libraries. Search by size, or scroll through and find a design you like. You can use them as-is or adjust as needed.



Place your mod: Once you've found the mod that closely fits your space, drag and drop onto your template.



Fill it all in: Mod fits perfectly? Fill with your content and customize the fonts and colors to match the theme.

ADJUSTING MODS TO FIT



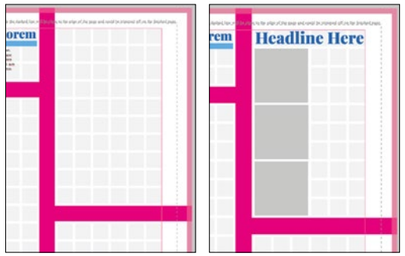
For a similar size: This example shows a mod that almost fits, but it was designed for a single page — not crossing the gutter. Some of the content is outside of the safe printing margins. By scooting the silhouettes over and swapping the headline to the right (where there's a little extra space), you're left with great coverage without concern of content being left in the gutter.



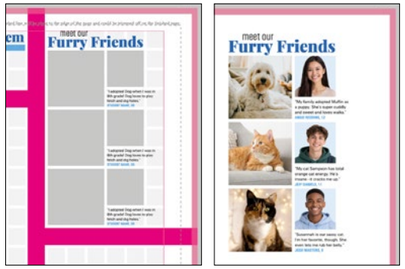
For bigger adjustments: If you select a mod but it's a significantly different size, try adding or removing elements. In this example, a headline, subheadline and a fourth photo were added, and the text boxes for quotes were expanded. Adjust the design to match your book as needed.

MODS FROM SCRATCH

Ready to design your own mods from scratch? Start with the reserved space for your mod and an idea of what your coverage will be.



Start with the basics: Add the core elements of the mod: your headline and photos. If you have any large visual elements such as a horizontal line or a decorative graphic, plan for those as well. In this example, we've placed a headline and three photos, but the same space could also fit four smaller photos and a subheadline. Use your webbing sheet to confirm what you need to include for your coverage.



Add in the details: Add in captions and smaller details. Here, a smaller spot for a student portrait and an area for a short quote are added in next to the main photos. Fill in your content, confirm the design details, and you're all done.

SAVE YOUR MODS: Once you've built the basic elements of your custom mod, save it to your mod library. You can reuse it or modify it on other spreads.

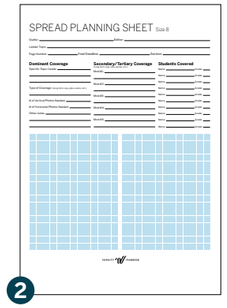
TEACHING SQUARE ONE

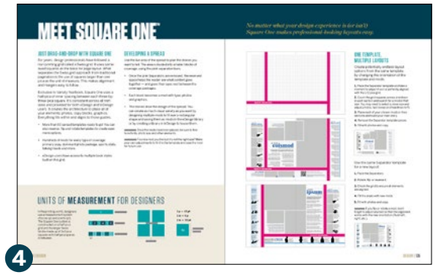
Ready to start teaching Square One? Gather up these helpful resources, then explore the Design Bites activity on the next page for hands-on learning.

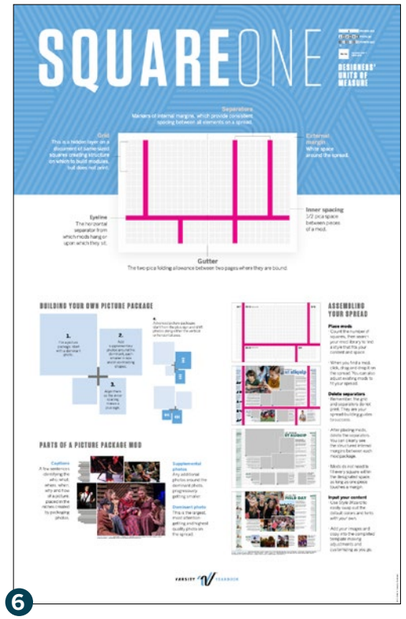
RESOURCES

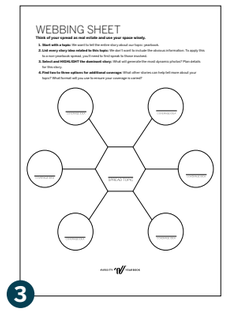
1. **PowerPoint Presentations**
   Yearbook Discoveries > Education > Design
2. **Spread Planning Sheets**
   Yearbook Discoveries > Education > Design
3. **Webbing Sheets**
   Yearbook Discoveries > Education > Coverage
4. ***Welcome to YBK* Workbook: Pages 134-138**
   Yearbook Discoveries > Shop
5. **Square One Grid Pads and Separators**
   Yearbook Discoveries > Shop
6. **Classroom Poster**
   ybk.link/kit-extras

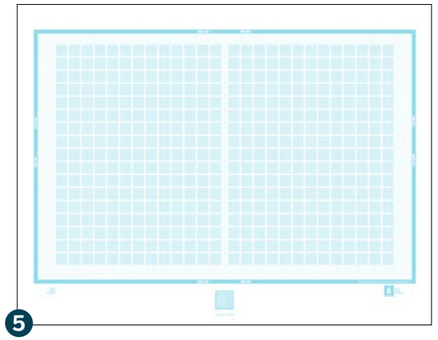














MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

SQUARE ONE GRID PADS

Available at **ybk.link/shop**. Allow up to two weeks for delivery.

PHOTOS

Cheez-Its or paper

- Use small squares to block out the areas for your photos.
- Use multiple squares for larger photos.

COPY BLOCKS

Graham cracker or paper

- These larger materials can be used to block out areas for copy.
- Cut or snap them down to the size you need!

SEPARATORS

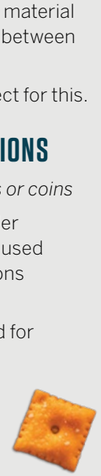
Twizzlers or string

- Use a long, narrow material to block out space between your mods.
- Twizzlers are perfect for this.

HEADLINES & CAPTIONS

Marshmallows, candies or coins

- These will be smaller pieces that can be used to represent captions and headlines.
- Use a different kind for each type.



DESIGN BITES

HANDS-ON LEARNING ACTIVITY

Use this fun activity to teach students design principles. Try to keep it as hands-on as possible before jumping onto a computer. You can use these same approaches when teaching in eDesign or InDesign.

Students will learn how to:

- Use a grid to organize a layout
- Show clear hierarchy so readers know where to look first
- Group related content into clean, organized mods
- Create flow across a spread using an eyeline
- Use spacing and white space intentionally

STEP ONE: PLAN THE SPREAD

Using a Spread Planning Sheet, have students list what coverage will be included on the spread. You can have students work on the same content, or have groups use different spread topics.

The list should include their primary coverage, which will be the main topic of the page, and two to five mods that add additional coverage.

STUDENT LIFE EXAMPLE:

Primary: Homecoming Dance (lots of photos)
Secondary: Photo-led - behind the scenes dance prep
Tertiary: Talking heads - favorite songs to dance to
Supplmental: Quotes - Seniors on their last homecoming

SPORTS EXAMPLE:

Primary: New lacrosse team (long-form copy and photos)
Secondary: Talking heads - First game as a team
Tertiary: Q&A about equipment
Supplmental: Short copy from coach
Supplmental: Season scores



STEP TWO: START WITH THE GRID

Now, bring their attention to the grid. Before students begin designing, make sure they understand one key idea: the grid is not optional. In Square One, the grid is what holds the entire spread together and makes everything work.

Have students:

- Place materials only where the grid allows
- Start and end every element on a gridline
- Keep spacing consistent across the spread

As they work, remind students the grid is doing part of the work for them. They don't have to guess where things go. The structure is already in place.

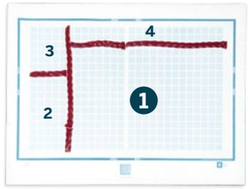


STEP THREE: ADD SEPARATORS

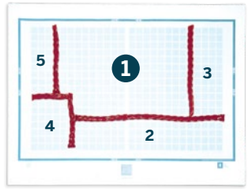
Have students divide the spread into usable spaces based on their planned coverage. This is where the layout really starts to take shape.

- Place Separators to create a large area for primary coverage and progressively smaller areas for secondary, tertiary and supplemental
- Have students include a horizontal Separator to create an eyeline connecting both pages
- Primary coverage, specifically the dominant photo package, should cross the gutter
- Use these spaces to plan where each coverage level will go

Encourage them to think about how much space each part of the spread needs. Larger areas should be reserved for the primary coverage, while smaller sections can hold lower levels of coverage. The goal is to map out the page first, so everything has a place.



STUDENT LIFE EXAMPLE

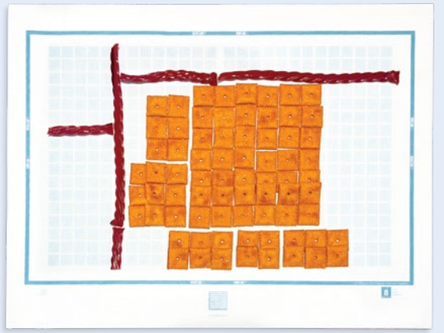


SPORTS EXAMPLE

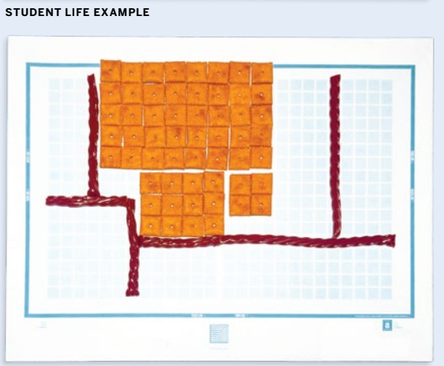
STEP FOUR: PLACE THE DOMINANT MOD

This is where the layout really begins. Students now establish hierarchy by placing one dominant visual first.

- Add a dominant photo first and place it where it clearly stands out
- Once the dominant photo is placed, add your supporting photos nearby
- Save space for captions and supporting text that connect to those images



STUDENT LIFE EXAMPLE



SPORTS EXAMPLE

Ask "Where does your eye go first?" If the answer isn't obvious, have students adjust the size or placement of the photos.

Remind them the dominant photo should be 2-3x larger than the others and cross the gutter. Guide them in making those adjustments. This reinforces that strong design is not about making everything equal — it's about guiding attention.

PRO TIP: If you think students will struggle with these concepts, start by displaying a Square One template and have them re-create it before making one of their own.

MORE ON MODS

As students build, guide them in choosing the right type of mod based on their content. Not every story should be told the same way.

If they have strong quotes, a talking head mod works well. If they need to explain details, use an extended caption or sidebar. If the visuals carry the story, focus on photo-driven mods with strong captions.

MOD EXAMPLES



TALKING HEAD • MOUNTAIN VIEW HS • AZ



TALKING HEAD
LANGLEY HS • VA



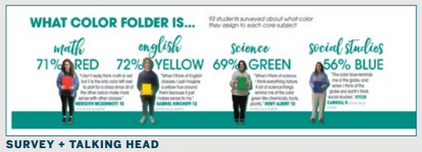
PHOTO-DRIVEN
MICDS • MO



EXTENDED CAPTION
CLOVER HS • SC



Q&A
PARKWAY WEST HS • MO



SURVEY + TALKING HEAD
FORT ZUMWALT WEST HS • MO

MORE INSPO: **Check out ybk.link/portfolio to see these mods in action and other ideas.**

STEP FIVE: BUILD SUPPORTING MODS

Once the dominant photo package is placed, fill in the other elements around it. First, add your headline package and dominant copy to your dominant photo package. If your dominant copy is in a wide area, split it into two columns to better fill the space.

Then, it's time to build your mods:

- Build the remaining mods based on planned coverage
- Group elements within each mod so that they feel connected, not scattered
- Every photo must have a caption
- Include at least one sidebar or additional mod
- Aim for 7-10 photos on the spread for strong coverage

This is a great moment to reinforce that nothing stands alone. A photo and its caption are one unit, not separate pieces. You'll start to see layouts look more organized



STUDENT LIFE EXAMPLE



SPORTS EXAMPLE

STEP SIX: USE THE EYELINE TO CONNECT THE SPREAD

Now for one of the most helpful parts of the activity — confirming the use of an eyeline. Students should have added an eyeline with a Separator in Step Three, so use this step as a quick review and check for consistency.

- The eyeline should act as a clear horizontal division across the spread
- It can be broken, but should not be interrupted more than once
- Elements can sit on the eyeline or hang from it

Then ask students to step back and look:

- Does the page feel connected from left to right?
- Or does it feel like two separate left and right pages?

This is where things usually click. Students can actually see the idea of flow.

STEP SEVEN: CLEAN UP SPACING

At this point, everything is on the page. Now it's time to refine.

- Check spacing between all elements
- Keep it consistent (for example, one gridline apart)
- Adjust anything that feels too tight or too loose

Students often want to keep adding more. This is a good moment to remind them that white space is part of the design, not empty space.

A NOTE ON ALIGNMENT

If you're using candies and marshmallows, some of your odd-shaped materials probably won't line up perfectly with the grid. That's ok! This exercise teaches the principles of Square One without needing to worry about exact details.

Prioritize keeping consistent spacing between photos and putting captions and headlines next to the photos and copy they're associated with.



SEEING EYELINES

Need a little help understanding eyelines? Here are some more examples of how they work.

Connecting the pages: A spread without an eyeline can end up looking like two separate, unrelated pages. Even though the eyeline is a blank space, it helps guide the eye between the pages and gives an anchor for the other elements to connect to.

Touching edges: The elements surrounding the eyeline help define it. Having the content in the mods surrounding the eyeline touch the top or bottom of the blank eyeline area helps create a clear edge.

FRANCIS HOWELL HS • MO



RULE OF THIRDS: **Generally, the eyeline is in the top third or bottom third of the spread.**



WITHOUT EYELINE



WITH EYELINE



WITHOUT EYELINE



WITH EYELINE

REVIEW AND FINISH



FINISHED STUDENT LIFE EXAMPLE



FINISHED SPORTS EXAMPLE

GUIDE WITH QUESTIONS

Before you finish, walk around and look at how the spreads are coming together. Ask these questions to help them clarify what's working and determine if adjustments are needed.

Q: What's your dominant element?

A: Usually a photo crossing the gutter.

Q: Where does my eye go first?

A: This should be the dominant photo or primary copy package, not any of the mods.

Q: What content belongs together?

A: Photos and captions, headlines and copy, etc.

Q: Is everything aligned to the grid?

A: Alignment and spacing should be consistent.

Q: Does the spread feel connected?

A: A clear eyeline and elements crossing the gutter help connect the spread across both pages.

DESIGN BITES EXAMPLES KEY



Separators: Twizzlers

Photos: Cheez-Its

Headlines: chocolate

Body copy: graham crackers

Captions: M&Ms

DIY MATERIALS KEY

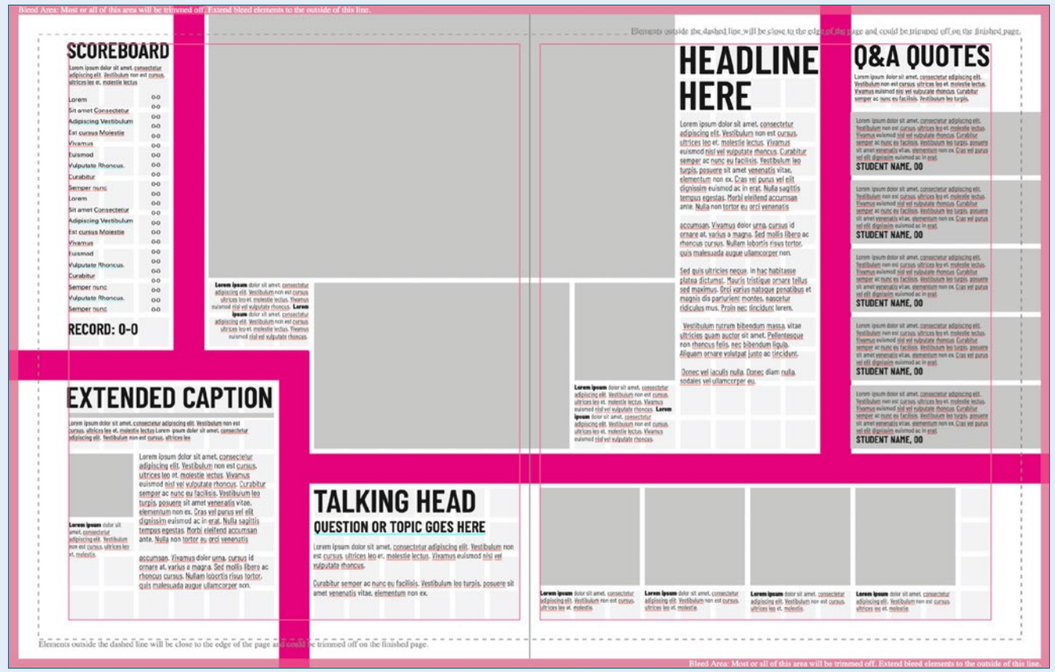
Separators: _____

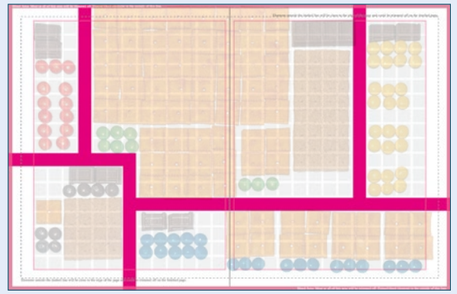
Photos: _____

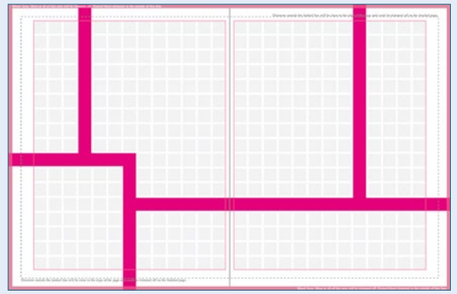
Headlines: _____

Body copy: _____

Captions: _____







CONNECT IT ALL TO PRODUCTION

Once students have a layout that works, bring it back to real production. Explain that this is exactly how they should approach design on the computer:

1. Start with structure
2. Establish hierarchy
3. Build in mods
4. Refine spacing and flow

Consider taking a photo of each completed Grid Pad to recreate these spreads in eDesign. Use placeholder photo and text boxes to create your mods — you can fill them in later when you have your photos and copy ready. Once everything is placed, you can delete the Separators.

Save your finished template and individual mods into your eDesign library to reuse and edit on later spreads.

EXAMPLE GALLERY

Check out these example spreads that use Square One principles with clear hierarchy, an eyeline across the spread and consistent spacing.



WEST BROWARD HS • FL



SMOKY HILL HS • CO



LAKE OSWEGO HS • OR



PLEASANT GROVE HS • TX



LAFAYETTE HS • MO



MOUNTAIN VIEW HS • ID



DESERT RIDGE JR HS • AZ



SAMUEL V. CHAMPION HS • TX



OAKVILLE HS • MO



OWYHEE HS • ID



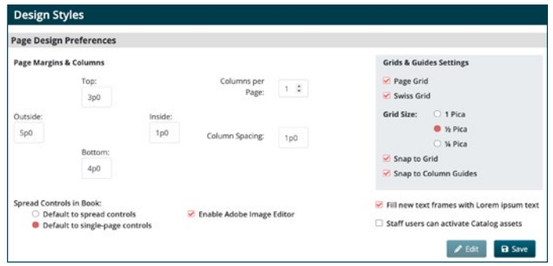
WILLIAM FIELD HS • AZ



LAWRENCE FREE STATE HS • KS

WANT MORE INSPO? **Find more ideas for mods and layouts in *Portfolio*, our annual yearbook showcase. Find the latest volume online on Yearbook Discoveries: ybk.link/portfolio**

TOOLS AND RESOURCES



SETTING UP eDESIGN FOR SQUARE ONE

Use these settings in eDesign to make your spreads automatically show the Swiss Grid and more. Plus, it makes the process smooth from day one.

Go to Settings > Design Styles > Page Design Preferences.

1. Click Edit
2. Set Columns per Page to 1
3. Set Column Spacing to 1p0 pica
4. Select Page Grid and Swiss Grid
5. Select half-pica grid

OTHER RECOMMENDED SETTINGS:

- **Snap to Grid:** Helps with alignment of elements.
- **Save reusable pieces:** Save any mods (or headlines, photo grids and other reusable pieces) you make into your mod library for future spreads.
- **Fill new text frames with Lorem ipsum text:** Gives the designer a sense of what the page looks like once text is written and placed.
- **Enable Adobe integration:** Take advantage of this powerful photo editing and graphics utility.

SQUARE ONE MODS AND TEMPLATES

Using the Square One assets inside the eDesign Catalog makes page design easier from the start.

- **Templates:** Predesigned spreads built on Square One principles give you instant structure and hierarchy. Use them as-is or customize the fonts and colors.
- **Mini Styles:** Mini Design Styles are collections of five to 10 spreads built from Square One templates. They show how different visual styles can be created from the same starting point.
- **Separators:** Separator templates are otherwise blank spreads with premade Separators that define spaces for each mod. They can be used to help jumpstart the process of making custom templates.
- **Mods:** Prebuilt units (photo packages, copy blocks, quote bars and features) designed to fit the Square One grid. Mix, resize and save them to use throughout your book.

SQUARE ONE ASSETS FOR INDESIGN

Square One Templates and Mods are also available in InDesign. To access them, go to **ybk.link/indesign-users**.

WHY LEARN THIS IF THERE ARE TEMPLATES? **That's the beauty of modular layouts (and eDesign's yearbook-centric tools). A template can be a starting point, and students can use this framework to create a variety of cohesive spread looks by switching out mods or flipping the spread. Use Style Wizard to adjust the fonts and colors to create your own library of template options.**

NOTES AND IDEAS

FIND THE LATEST VERSION
OF THIS RESOURCE ONLINE

VARSITY
YEARBOOK



VARSITY
YEARBOOK