

Some dos and don'ts of design

Setting out golden rules is a proven way to trip over your own good intentions but there are some things one should always consider doing when designing pages and so

I offer my own golden rules:

- Choose your entry point with care and make it the focal point of the page;
- Break up long stories into easily manageable articles linked together by design;
- Use pictures and graphics wherever possible;
- Break type up to add interest;
- Consider using subheads and crossheads to add emphasis to sections of the text;
- Consider using bulleted pars, drop letters and bold pars to add emphasis;
- Keep things simple and easy to follow;
- Consider carefully how long each article should be, depending on your readership profile;
- Try to avoid clashing with adverts. Ads with large areas of half-tone should be cordoned off using text. Text-based adverts could be put next to pictures;
- Consider how best to get over the information. An annotated aerial picture may do more to describe the scene of an accident for instance than pages of text could hope to do. It will be the designer's job to arrange for the text and pictures to be turned into a diagram;
- Consider using just parts of a picture, or cutting out the image or overlaying it with type;

- Ensure that there is a suitable amount of white space around the headlines and any other elements;
- Ensure that there is always a caption beneath any picture. Readers get very irritated if they can't find the caption to a picture;
- Emphasise your entry point with larger intro type, bold faces, drop letters etc;
- Ensure that the strength of your stories is reflected in the design.
- The reader should be in no doubt where the story goes to after it has ended in one column;
- Be imaginative in how you deal with the elements of a page.

Similarly there are things that it is wise to avoid. Sometimes it is not always possible not to do these things and occasionally, if you've thought it through properly, it might be OK to do them, but otherwise, try to avoid:

- Running headlines over adverts. Always break the space with text, pictures or whatever. If the space above a run of adverts is too small to be useful. Don't be afraid to give it up and float the ads to the top or ask the advertising dept to fill the space. Anything less than 6cm is going to give you problems;
- Running a headline next to another headline unless the stories are connected or you have some way of ensuring they are not connected such as column rules or by using very different styles and sizes of font;
- Cover the page with lots of different typefaces. Too much variation will end up just looking a mess. Best to limit yourself to one font and using varieties of that;
- Using cut outs on a picture just for the sake of it. Whether the picture is cut away from its background, or a section is cut out, it will lose context and start to look isolated. A cut out without any good reason usually looks ridiculous

because it is clear you are trying to edit the picture and the reader will wonder why;

- Turning copy to another page. It's a great way of ensuring the reader loses interest in the story.

This excerpt is from *Designing for Newspapers and Magazines* by Chris Frost

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