

Introduction to Scrapbooking

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History

Scrapbooking as a means of photo preservation has been a part of many families since photographs became widely available with the advent of personal cameras. Originally, photos were adhered to black paper album pages with paper corners and information about the photos was written directly on the pages. Often memorabilia was also added to the albums.

In the 1960s and 1970s, scrapbook style photo albums became less popular with the introduction of magnetic photo albums and later pocket page albums. These types of albums were widespread because of the ease of use but had drawbacks; they damaged the photos and limited the layout and journaling options.

In the late 1980s, scrapbook style albums regained popularity and since then the industry has flourished. Scrapbook albums and products are available in many retail stores as well as from direct sales companies such as Creative Memories and Stampin' Up. The mission statement of Creative Memories is to "Preserve the Past, Enrich the Present and Inspire Hope for the Future" and I think that sums up what scrapbookers do: we provide a connection between generations and give meaning to something that without documentation would later be meaningless. I like to compare scrapbooking to making a quilt but instead of quilting squares, I make pages. Page by page, I'm building an heirloom to pass on to my daughter and to generations to come.

Elements of Page Design

Each of us has our own preferences and style; every person who views a completed scrapbook page will see it differently. Judging of scrapbooking will be subjective to a certain degree because of this but there should be common elements to each page that you can look for. The goal is to enhance the photos and tell the story behind them in a way that is visually appealing and holds the attention of the viewer.

1. Photo Selection & Cropping

The photos are the most important element of the page. They should be of good quality; often home printed photos have inks that smear and do not have the same depth of colour as those printed by a developer. Images should be in focus, have no visible red eyes or closed eyes, and not be over or under exposed.

None of us take perfect photos and they often need to be cut (cropped) to remove things in the background that take away from the subject of the photo. Often extras such as backs of heads, large amounts of sky, dark or light areas or pieces of objects are removed to make the subject fill more of the frame and improve the quality of the photo. However, it is also important not to remove parts of photos with historical significance –

for example, a family car left in the background could evoke memories and be a great frame of reference.

Photos can be straight cropped, cut with ‘fancy’ edged scissors or tools, or cut into circles, ovals or more elaborate shapes. Cropping is intended to enhance the images so make sure that the shapes don’t overwhelm the photos. As well, photos may be cropped too much so that some of their impact is removed. Care must be taken to avoid letting shapes overwhelm the photos; cropping is intended to enhance the images.

2. Page Layout

A well balanced page will draw your eye through the photos and a quick scan of the page should make the theme easily understood. The decorative elements should enhance, not overwhelm, the photos. Grouping photos together can make them appear more connected than isolated pictures “floating” on a page. As well, leaving equal (or similar) borders between photos improves the flow between them. In a two page spread, it is more appealing if there are similar amounts of photos on both pages rather than one on the first page and six on the second page. That being said, if there is one 8x10 photo on the first page and five 4x6 photos on the second page, it will appear quite balanced because of the amount of page covered by the photos is similar.

Look for unique layouts that not only stand out because of the design but because of the way they enhance the photographs. A spectacular page layout that takes the focus away from the photos is not as effective as a page that complements the photos.

3. Colour

Good colour usage will enhance the photos, highlighting desired subjects and colours in the pictures. Colours can be used to match the mood or subject of the photos (eg. heritage photos generally look better with subdued colour accents). Based on the colour wheel, there are four different colour combinations that are commonly used:

- 1) **Monochromatic** – one colour used in varying intensities
- 2) **Analogous** – between 2 and 4 colours in a row
- 3) **Complementary** – 2 colours directly across from each other
- 4) **Triadic** – 3 equidistant colours

Any of these combinations will provide an appealing and interesting colour scheme for a page. The entire background of the page may be coloured or it may be used only for matting photos and decorative accents. The handout provided will help you know what to look for.

4. Title & Journaling

Not every page includes a title but it does help to quickly provide information about the theme of the page. A title can also be part of the decoration on the page by utilizing interesting lettering styles, different colours of pens and sizes of pen tips, letter stickers and creative placement.

A completed page without journaling can be attractive but, to someone who doesn’t know the story behind the photos, it is also meaningless. There are different styles of

journaling from the simple “Who, What, When, Where”, to bullet journaling in point form to full paragraphs. At the very minimum there should be a date and names of the subjects (names may not be included on fair projects for privacy reasons) somewhere on each page layout.

Journaling can also be part of the decorative scheme of a page. Often a journaling box (in which all of the journaling is focused in one area instead of underneath each photo) is used in a colour and shape that compliments the page layout. Again, different colours of pens, various pen tips, letter stickers, stamps, etc. used for journaling can add interest to the page.

Whether to use handwriting/printing or computer generated journaling is a personal choice. I encourage all of my customers to journal by hand as it is much more meaningful – how many of us have saved a recipe because it was handwritten by a grandmother? Most of us dislike our handwriting but it is unique to each of us and will evoke memories for those who know us. However, it is becoming more common for people to choose to do their journaling on a computer. This enables the use of different fonts which can be chosen to flatter the page layout.

5. Embellishments

This is an area where an individual’s creativity will really show. The most commonly used decorative enhancements are stickers and paper but the range of products used is seemingly endless: stamped images, fabric, grommets, chalks, eyelets, ribbon, raffia, embossing, and memorabilia are just some of the options. The addition of memorabilia can greatly add to the value of a layout (for example, my stepmother has the hospital bill from when she was born included on a page!) This is a very subjective area as everyone has different ideas of what is attractive and what is not. Be aware of the use of colours and textures and look for originality.

6. Photo Safe Materials

It is vital that the materials used to create the page do not damage the photos or cause them to age prematurely. Examples of problems to look for include:

- Products that are dimensional that might rub against photos on an opposing page
- Stickers adhered directly to a photo may cause deterioration
- Paper that is not acid or lignin free

It may be difficult for you to determine the safety of the materials used without talking with the creator of the page (e.g. you will not know the quality of the paper used).

7. The Finished Product

A completed page shouldn’t have any obvious mistakes that take away from the overall presentation. Make sure that there isn’t any adhesive showing behind photos or mats and watch for misspellings. Photos matted unevenly (unintentionally that is; sometimes mats do not have a standard sized border to provide emphasis) detract from a page as do lines that were supposed to be straight cut but are crooked. With experience, you’ll find it easier to know what to look for!